



DACOWITS



Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services



2017 Executive Summary



Executive Summary

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The Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) (hereafter referred to as the “Committee” or “DACOWITS”) was established in 1951 with a mandate to provide the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) with independent advice and recommendations on matters and policies relating to servicewomen in the Armed Forces of the United States. The Committee is composed of no more than 20 members who are appointed by the SecDef and serve in a voluntary capacity for 1- to 4-year terms.

Each December, the Committee selects study topics to examine during the following year. For 2017, DACOWITS studied 13 topics. The Committee gathered information from multiple sources in examining these topics; for example, briefings and written responses from Department of Defense (DoD), Service-level military representatives, and subject matter experts; data collected from focus groups and interactions with Service members during installation visits; and peer-reviewed literature.

Based upon the data collected and analyzed, DACOWITS offers 17 recommendations, which follow.

DACOWITS 2017 Recommendations

Recruitment and Retention

Accessions and Marketing

- The Secretary of Defense should require the Military Services to tailor their marketing to reflect the most salient reasons women join in order to inspire more women toward military service.

Dual-Military Co-Location Policy

- The Secretary of Defense should direct the Military Services to review and consider revising their active duty dual-military co-location policies to incorporate the best practice from the Navy of establishing additional oversight from a higher level authority should an assignment manager/detailer be unable to accommodate co-location.
- The Secretary of Defense should consider establishing a DoD policy that would make it mandatory for assignment managers/detailers to work across the Military Services to maximize the co-location of inter-Service active duty dual-military couples.
- The Secretary of Defense should consider expanding the co-location policy to include any active duty dual-military parents, regardless of marital status, who share parental custody of the same minor child(ren) and desire to be assigned within the same geographic location for the benefit of his and/or her minor child(ren).

Mid-Career Retention

- The Secretary of Defense should direct the development and adoption of an exit survey or surveys to assess why the attrition level for women is higher than for men at various career points.
- The Secretary of Defense should consider seeking legislation and making appropriate policy changes to facilitate the smooth transition of military members between the components of each of the Military Services, to include inter-Service transfers.

Propensity to Serve

- The Secretary of Defense should require the Military Services to increase and measure outreach efforts that most effectively educate and leverage key influencers to positively impact women's propensity to serve.

Recruiting Strategies

- The Secretary of Defense should require the Military Services to examine successful strategies in use by foreign military services to recruit and retain women, and to consider potential best practices for implementation in the U.S. military.

Employment and Integration

Gender Integration

- The Secretary of Defense should direct the Military Services to share lessons learned and best practices on the progress of their gender integration implementation plans and to communicate strategically that progress with the members of their Services as well as the general public.

Gender-Integrated Boxing Programs at the Military Service Academies

- The Secretary of Defense should endorse the U.S. Military Service Academies' gender-integrated boxing programs as part of the broader curriculum and direct the Academies to standardize concussion event protocol, share lessons learned to promote safety and strengthen the learning objectives, and adapt their programs as needed based on emerging concussion protocol research.

Key Job Opportunities and Assignments to Facilitate Promotion

- The Secretary of Defense should direct the Military Services to create policies similar to the Air Force best practice of mandating diverse gender slates for key developmental/nominative positions such as those for aides and military assistants, which are routinely considered springboards to higher ranks.

Physiological Gender Differences

- The Secretary of Defense should require all military organizations to use scientifically supported physical training methods and nutritional regimens that allow for gender-specific approaches to achieve the same required occupational standards.

Well-Being and Treatment

Childcare Resources

- The Secretary of Defense should expand affordable, quality childcare resources and offer more 24-hour options to Service members to meet increasing demands.

Family Care Plans

- The Secretary of Defense should conduct a review of the Military Services' implementation of the Family Care Plan Instruction (DoDI¹ 1342.19) to ensure the policy is being utilized as intended for operational readiness and not used inappropriately.

¹DoDI = Department of Defense Instruction

Impacts of Social Media/Online Harassment

- The Secretary of Defense should endorse the 2015 DACOWITS recommendations on the impacts of social media and sexual harassment online and ensure the ongoing efforts of the Military Services continue to emphasize and enforce acceptable behavior and Service member accountability.

Parental Leave Policies

- The Secretary of Defense should consider allowing the Military Services to permit flexible (noncontinuous) use of maternity and parental leave if requested by the military parent(s).

- The Secretary of Defense should consider removing the marriage stipulation from parental leave in order to be consistent with policies that recognize nonmarried parental benefits.

A one-page synopsis for each recommendation and the reasoning follows. Detailed reasoning supporting each of these recommendations is provided in the full annual report for 2017, which is available on the DACOWITS Website (<http://dacowits.defense.gov>).



Accessions and Marketing

DACOWITS continues to believe the accession of increasing numbers of women into the Military Services will help create a stronger, more capable force. However, as more information becomes available regarding women's motivations to join the military, the Committee questioned whether the Military Services might be missing key opportunities to tailor their marketing to the female population. To inform its recommendation on this topic, DACOWITS collected information from several data sources during the past year, all of which are listed in the references for this report.

Recommendation

- ▶ The Secretary of Defense should require the Military Services to tailor their marketing to reflect the most salient reasons women join in order to inspire more women toward military service.

Reasoning Summary

Women comprise more than 50 percent of the recruitable population. However, despite increases in female accessions in recent years, women continue to be underrepresented across the Military Services. For this reason, the Military Services have worked to recruit more women by using outreach initiatives that target female audiences and marketing campaigns that depict women in the Military Services. However, research has suggested that further efforts to tailor marketing to

prospective female military members may be fruitful. Tailored marketing to the persistent differences in men's and women's motivations for joining the military could increase recruiting and branding success.

A 2016 survey of new recruits by DoD's Joint Advertising, Market Research & Studies (JAMRS) Office found women were more motivated to join the military by certain factors than were men. In particular, women were more likely than men to be motivated by travel, education, and helping others and their communities. Consistent with these survey results, female focus group participants commonly mentioned educational opportunities when discussing the factors that motivated them to join the military.

Taken together, data such as these can help the Military Services optimally tailor marketing messages to encourage more women to consider the many benefits of military service. Although a marketing strategy focused on patriotism may have been successful at recruiting men in the past, current data indicate that strategy does not align with the motivations of prospective female military members, and the data also illustrate more effective ways to recruit women. For example, the Military Services could attract and recruit more women if their marketing strategies highlighted the educational benefits the military offers.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 2 of the full annual report for 2017, which is available on the DACOWITS Website (<http://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Dual-Military Co-Location Policy

DACOWITS continues to be interested in the retention of servicewomen and believes the co-location of dual-military couples is a contributing factor to success in this area. Given the large proportion of female Service members in dual-military couples, the Committee wondered if additional steps could be taken to further support the co-location of such couples, thus removing one of the obstacles that might prevent women from continuing their service. To inform its recommendation on this topic, DACOWITS collected information from several data sources during the past year, all of which are listed in the references for this report.

Recommendations

- ▶ The Secretary of Defense should direct the Military Services to review and consider revising their active duty dual-military co-location policies to incorporate the best practice from the Navy of establishing additional oversight from a higher level authority should an assignment manager/detailer be unable to accommodate co-location.
- ▶ The Secretary of Defense should consider establishing a DoD policy that would make it mandatory for assignment managers/detailers to work across the Military Services to maximize the co-location of inter-Service active duty dual-military couples.

- ▶ The Secretary of Defense should consider expanding the co-location policy to include any active duty dual-military parents, regardless of marital status, who share parental custody of the same minor child(ren) and desire to be assigned within the same geographic location for the benefit of his and/or her minor child(ren).

Reasoning Summary

Proportionally more women are married to a military spouse than are men, indicating that co-location policies can disproportionately affect servicewomen compared with servicemen. Evidence suggests that efforts to maximize the co-location of dual-military couples could minimize this challenge and thus improve the retention of female Service members. For this reason, the Committee firmly believes each of the Military Services should review and revise its co-location policies to require an additional level of oversight when an assignment manager cannot accommodate a co-location request; require assignment managers to coordinate across the Military Services to better support dual-military couple assignments; and expand co-location policies to support all dual-military parents who share custody of their minor child(ren) and desire to be assigned to the same geographic location regardless of marital status (i.e., including those who are divorced and/or unmarried).

A detailed reasoning supporting these recommendations is provided in Chapter 2 of the full annual report for 2017, which is available on the DACOWITS Website (<http://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Mid-Career Retention

As part of its ongoing examination of the recruitment and retention of women into the Armed Forces, DACOWITS continues to be interested in the reasons why servicewomen decide to leave the military at various points in their careers and in the ways DoD might promote retention. The Committee believes the Military Services can improve the data they collect on why Service members leave the military. The Committee also believes that career flexibility is a contributing factor to retention. To inform its recommendations on this topic, DACOWITS collected information from several data sources during the past year, all of which are listed in the references for this report.

Recommendation 1

- ▶ The Secretary of Defense should direct the development and adoption of an exit survey or surveys to assess why the attrition level for women is higher than for men at various career points.

Reasoning Summary 1

Each of the Military Services experiences challenges retaining women to a varying degree, with a particularly wide gender gap in operational specialties. Concerns persist that this attrition will result in a disproportionate

impact to mission readiness if left unresolved. The development, adoption, and consistent use of an exit survey or surveys would help DoD assess why more women than men leave the military at various career points as well as inform effective retention strategies.

Recommendation 2

- ▶ The Secretary of Defense should consider seeking legislation and making appropriate policy changes to facilitate the smooth transition of military members between the components of each of the Military Services, to include inter-Service transfers.

Reasoning Summary 2

There is evidence to suggest that fewer women would attrite from the Military Services if they were offered greater career flexibility. The Committee acknowledges the Military Services have policies that allow for temporary separation from service; data on these policies suggest that inter-component and inter-Service transfers could help reduce attrition. The Committee applauds recent DoD initiatives to increase retention and encourages the Military Services to embrace and implement them.

Detailed reasonings supporting these recommendations are provided in Chapter 2 of the full annual report for 2017, which is available on the DACOWITS Website (<http://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Propensity to Serve

DACOWITS continues to be interested in the propensity of women to serve in the Armed Forces and believes engaging adults who influence young people is a contributing factor to success in this area. Given the decline in the proportion of Americans with military connections, the Committee wondered if the Military Services might be unnecessarily narrowing their potential pool of recruits by failing to engage and educate nonparental influencers of youth younger than the recruitable age. Moreover, the Committee wondered if the Military Services could better tailor their messages to emphasize opportunities young women value most and monitor ongoing outreach efforts. To inform its recommendation on this topic, DACOWITS collected information from several data sources during the past year, all of which are listed in the references for this report.

Recommendation

- ▶ The Secretary of Defense should require the Military Services to increase and measure outreach efforts that most effectively educate and leverage key influencers to positively impact women's propensity to serve.

Reasoning Summary

Family members often play an essential role in increasing propensity among potential Service members. However, recent trends suggest that the proportion of individuals with family ties to the military is dropping. Compared with their elders, far fewer young adults reported they had an immediate family member (i.e., a parent, spouse, sibling, or child) who served in the military.

Although parents are the earliest influencers in a young person's life, other adults can have an important impact as well. The Committee acknowledges that the Armed

Services already implement a variety of outreach programs in an attempt to reach the influencers of potential recruits, ranging from parents to teachers to coaches. However, most of these programs center on the "recruitable" age demographic (ages 17 through 24). Individuals younger than 17 are not considered recruitable because federal regulations prohibit the enlistment of and the collection of directory information pertaining to individuals younger than 17. DACOWITS believes that by engaging influencers of elementary- and middle-school aged girls, the Military Services can begin shaping their propensity to serve even before a recruitable age.

As the proportion of veterans in our communities decreases, key influencers will have less familiarity and connection with today's military. This can prove problematic because military recruiters face misperceptions and misunderstandings among the American public. The Committee believes that educating key influencers about the opportunities—particularly those that young women value—available through military service could have a positive effect on women's propensity to serve. For example, the results of a 2016 survey of new recruits by JAMRS, along with suggestions from DACOWITS focus group participants on how the Military Services could improve the propensity to serve, point to one potential opportunity for improvement: an increased emphasis on the diversity of career opportunities afforded by the military. Expanding outreach with key influencers to heighten their awareness and understanding of current military career opportunities for women may help increase the propensity and successful recruitment of women to military service.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 2 of the full annual report for 2017, which is available on the DACOWITS Website (<http://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Recruiting Strategies

As part of its ongoing examination of the recruitment and retention of women into the Armed Forces, DACOWITS researched strategies used by foreign military services to recruit and retain women. As the Nation's demographics shift and the need to attract more women persists, the Committee questioned whether the Military Services might be able to benefit from lessons learned from other countries that face similar logistical and cultural challenges to successfully recruit and retain women for military service. To inform its recommendation on this topic, DACOWITS collected information from several data sources during the past year, all of which are listed in the references for this report.

Recommendation

- ▶ The Secretary of Defense should require the Military Services to examine successful strategies in use by foreign military services to recruit and retain women, and to consider potential best practices for implementation in the U.S. military.

Reasoning Summary

According to the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, women serve in the armed forces of at least 74 countries around the world; at least 36 of these rely on voluntary recruitment. The Committee acknowledges that the U.S. military already employs various strategies to reach highly qualified female candidates. However, DACOWITS 2017 focus group results suggest there is still room for improvement and areas in which the United States may learn from the best practices of foreign militaries.

For example, when asked what recruiters or senior leaders in their Services could do to interest more people in joining the military, the top suggestion, particularly among female focus group participants, was for them to better explain the spectrum of career possibilities. By failing

to highlight the benefits of the military lifestyle and the opportunities available to women, the U.S. military may not be maximizing its full recruitment potential. The U.S. military could benefit from leveraging the lessons learned by the Australian Defence Force, which has experienced success with experiential camps allowing young women aged 16–24 to gain first-hand experience and familiarity with and increase their awareness of potential military employment opportunities.

Furthermore, when asked what they thought the military might do to further entice individuals to continue their service, the top suggestion made by focus group participants, particularly among women, was that the Military Services should afford their members greater flexibility to increase work-life balance, including better childcare options. Relatedly, participants reported that obtaining childcare could be quite difficult for certain populations, such as single parents. The limited childcare options the U.S. military currently offers may be deterring single parents from joining the military, thus reducing the potential pool of applicants. However, the U.S. military could benefit from leveraging the lessons learned by the Canadian Armed Forces, which has experienced success by not only providing regular and emergency childcare but also offering discounted rates for childcare that exceeds 24 hours because of lengthened shifts or other emergency situations.

These examples illustrate some of the ways the examination of strategies used successfully by foreign militaries to recruit and retain women could yield insights and help the U.S. military identify best practices for doing the same.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 2 of the full annual report for 2017, which is available on the DACOWITS Website (<http://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Gender Integration

Following the decision to open all previously closed units and positions to women, DACOWITS has closely monitored DoD's and the Military Services' efforts to execute their plans to fully integrate women into all occupational specialties. DACOWITS was interested in the Military Services' progress toward this goal, the barriers they faced, and the ways they were communicating about gender integration to Service members and the public. To inform its recommendation on this topic, DACOWITS collected information from several data sources during the past year, all of which are listed in the references for this report.

Recommendation

- ▶ The Secretary of Defense should direct the Military Services to share lessons learned and best practices on the progress of their gender integration implementation plans and to communicate strategically that progress with the members of their Services as well as the general public.

Reasoning Summary

During DACOWITS focus groups with Service members in 2016 and 2017, it was evident that a noticeable number of participants were not informed about their respective Services' gender integration plans. Many DACOWITS focus group participants identified disparities between how well DoD educated Service members about the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT) compared with the perceived lack of information they received about gender integration. A few participants believed that very little was done to prepare either the units integrating women or the women themselves.

DACOWITS believes DoD did an exemplary job handling strategic communication around the repeal of DADT through its thoughtful and multifaceted approach. DoD's strategic communication and education facilitated

the cultural change toward acceptance of lesbian, gay, and bisexual Service members by reaching all personnel, providing consistent information on policy implementation and timelines, and dispelling rumors. A former Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness and senior fellow at the RAND Corporation described how "opposition to repeal has all but disappeared" because of DoD's strategic communication efforts. This illustrates the ability of Service members to respond quickly and professionally to major DoD policy changes when well informed by leaders and educated in Service-specific implementation plans.

The Committee believes a similar strategic communication plan is needed to educate Service members about the Army Leaders First approach. The Army Leaders First approach calls for integrating female leaders prior to assigning junior enlisted women to combat units. The Army Leaders First approach included an informational road show in which Army leaders briefed units and command leadership about recruiting women for combat roles. Although the road show was designed to entice women to enter combat roles, it is an excellent example of how a similar effort could be used to dispel misperceptions regarding changes in standards, that qualified men were passed over for leadership roles, or other policies associated with gender integration.

DACOWITS recognizes that DoD and the Military Services are required to provide annual reports to the SecDef and Congress on their progress related to gender integration. Although the Committee strongly supports these mandatory annual reports on the progression of gender integration implementation plans, to the Committee's knowledge, there is no current plan to communicate these reports, their positive implications, and lessons learned to Service members and the public.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 3 of the full annual report for 2017, which is available on the DACOWITS Website (<http://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Gender-Integrated Boxing Programs at the Military Service Academies

As part of its review of the Military Services' gender integration efforts, DACOWITS examined the gender-integrated boxing programs at the Military Service Academies (MSAs). In 2016, the United States Military Academy at West Point and the Air Force Academy integrated their boxing programs and made participation by female cadets mandatory (the Navy's program was already integrated). To inform its recommendation on this topic, DACOWITS collected information from several data sources during the past year, all of which are listed in the references for this report.

Recommendation

- ▶ The Secretary of Defense should endorse the U.S. Military Service Academies' gender-integrated boxing programs as part of the broader curriculum and direct the Academies to standardize concussion event protocol, share lessons learned to promote safety and strengthen the learning objectives, and adapt their programs as needed based on emerging concussion protocol research.

Reasoning Summary

Boxing at the MSAs is instructional, well supervised, and part of a larger syllabus on military culture and skills. In general, boxing injuries constituted a small proportion of injuries sustained by cadets and midshipmen compared with other sources of injury. Moreover, the injuries that were sustained through MSA boxing programs resulted in far fewer lost training days than injuries sustained through other activities. These results suggest that boxing poses a less substantial risk compared with several other activities that cadets participate in during their time at the MSAs.

Though MSA instructional boxing takes place in a largely controlled and supervised environment, it is not

without its risks. Injuries—including concussions—are possible, and cadets have lost training days because of injuries sustained during instructional periods. Given the risks, DACOWITS encourages the MSAs to standardize concussive event protocols and safety measures. The MSAs must be able to share best practices to allow them to provide the best instruction to their midshipmen and cadets. Furthermore, the MSAs should standardize and test safety equipment to meet the most stringent concussion-prevention standards, and they should consider gender differences when procuring such equipment. DACOWITS recognizes that the science regarding long-term effects of head trauma is nascent and evolving. Safety requirements are evolving very quickly. The MSAs must stay attuned to the results of developing studies on head trauma and adjust their safety protocols to align with the most up-to-date findings.

Boxing provides an example of a successful gender-integrated training that reinforces task-based unit cohesion. Witnessing individuals struggle with both the physical and mental components of boxing and overcome those struggles through training is valuable. This cohesion has been found to be indispensable to military success. Research suggests that from a combat-effectiveness perspective, gender-integrated teams who were built and trained around a task-based unit cohesion model were more successful than single-gender units at completing complex tasks in a combat environment with lasting positive impacts.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 3 of the full annual report for 2017, which is available on the DACOWITS Website (<http://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Job Opportunities and Assignments to Facilitate Promotion

In response to the challenges related to the employment, integration, advancement, and retention of female Service members that are consistently encountered by all Military Services, DACOWITS investigated the techniques utilized by the Military Services to build a more diverse force. To inform its recommendation on this topic, DACOWITS collected information from several data sources during the past year, all of which are listed in the references for this report.

Recommendation

- ▶ The Secretary of Defense should direct the Military Services to create policies similar to the Air Force best practice of mandating diverse gender slates for key developmental/nominative positions such as those for aides and military assistants, which are routinely considered springboards to higher ranks.

Reasoning Summary

Although women officially began serving in 1948, there continues to be only nominal gender diversity in the military, especially at the highest echelons of DoD leadership. As of July 2017, women made up 17.6 percent of all active duty officers and 15.8 percent of all active duty enlisted personnel. In 2015 the Air Force introduced several diversity initiatives, including efforts to increase diversity in key military development positions. The Air Force expanded upon these initiatives with a mandate to establish diverse slates for key military developmental positions. The Air Force approach to promote diversity, which DACOWITS considers a best practice, is based on the Rooney Rule. The Rooney Rule was instituted by the National Football League (NFL) for hiring head coaches and general managers and equivalent front-office staff positions. The rule mandates that an NFL team must

interview at least one candidate who is a racial/ethnic minority for these jobs. The policy also specifies penalties for lack of compliance. Research suggests that the Rooney Rule has had a positive impact on the hiring of racial/ethnic minorities.

There are also initiatives similar to the Rooney Rule that the corporate sector employs to enhance the opportunity to recruit diverse talent. In most cases, these diversity initiatives stemmed from employee demographic reports that indicated an extreme lack of racial or gender diversity within the industry or field. Many reports have suggested workplace diversity improves performance and is generally positive for business; subsequently, companies have attempted a variety of initiatives to increase diversity in their ranks, including some initiatives similar to the NFL's Rooney Rule.

All the Military Services, to varying degrees, face integration and retention challenges for female officers in the junior and mid/field grades, particularly those in line and combat arms communities. DACOWITS is particularly concerned about hiring female junior officers in combat arms and line communities and believes that a directive for each Service to employ policies similar to the Rooney Rule when hiring for key developmental/nominative positions could prove successful as it has in the private sector. If the approach proves successful with junior officers, the lessons learned could be applied to increase the representation of enlisted women in key developmental positions as well. Applying this approach would require only that a female junior officer be included on the slate among other highly qualified candidates, not that she be hired. Final selections would continue to be merit based.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 3 of the full annual report for 2017, which is available on the DACOWITS Website (<http://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Physiological Gender Differences

Although combat positions have been open to women since 2015, the full, successful integration of women into the combat force may require the Military Services to adapt physical training protocols and nutritional changes. Recent research suggests that gender-specific physical training and nutrition helps women meet the required occupational standards and improves readiness overall. To inform its recommendation on this topic, DACOWITS collected information from several data sources during the past year, all of which are listed in the references for this report.

Recommendation

- ▶ The Secretary of Defense should require all military organizations to use scientifically supported physical training methods and nutritional regimens that allow for gender-specific approaches to achieve the same required occupational standards.

Reasoning Summary

DACOWITS understands that each Service has in place experts in exercise physiology and physical training. The Committee has received detailed briefings from each Service on the physiological differences between men and women and the approaches each Service is taking to train its members to reach the standards. Women may require a more focused and consistent training program than men to reach the same occupationally specific physical standards. Research suggested some of the physical disadvantages women face can be significantly mitigated by implementing effective, comprehensive physical training regimens for women.

Meeting Service members' food and nutrition needs is also fundamental to mission readiness. Although some of

the scientific literature has suggested that the nutritional needs of women who are training are similar to those of men, there are some notable differences. Inadequate nutritional intake is more common in female athletes. Although the effects of occasional low nutrient intake during short training exercises may be inconsequential, they may be significant when inadequate intake occurs routinely or for extended periods during military conflicts.

Each Service has developed physical standards and corresponding tests for each occupational specialty. However, each Service has employed a different approach to training its members to meet the standards and acknowledges the physiological differences between men and women to a different degree. The Military Services also place varying levels of emphasis on individualized training.

DACOWITS believes it is beneficial for the Military Services and the United States Special Operations Command to collaborate centrally on issues related to physical training and nutrition. DACOWITS acknowledges that expert scientists and exercise physiologists are in place at each of the Military Services and that these individuals are aware of the most recent findings and best practices to provide individualized training to Service members. However, DACOWITS sees an unmet need to develop, update, and adopt science-based training and nutrition programs across the Military Services. The Committee believes it would be beneficial to better communicate the information to all Service members to ensure the proper use and adoption of appropriate, individualized training and nutrition approaches.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 3 of the full annual report for 2017, which is available on the DACOWITS Website (<http://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Childcare Resources

Comprehensive childcare has been an ongoing challenge for Service members and has been highlighted as such by DACOWITS for more than 35 years. In 2017, DACOWITS was interested in better understanding Service members' experiences with childcare and the challenges they faced obtaining care, and how childcare might impact readiness. To inform its recommendation on this topic, the Committee collected information from several data sources during the past year, all of which are listed in the references for this report.

Recommendation

- ▶ The Secretary of Defense should expand affordable, quality childcare resources and offer more 24-hour options to Service members to meet increasing demands.

Reasoning Summary

Service members with children represent a large percentage of the overall force, making adequate childcare critical to DoD's mission. As of 2015, 41 percent of active duty Service members had a child or children. This included 58,989 single Service members and 34,478 individuals in dual-military marriages. To serve military families, DoD operates more than 600 Child Development Centers (CDCs) and care facilities for school-age children, serving more than 100,000 children at more than 200 installations. These numbers do not include family child care and community-based care options catering to military families.

Providing childcare for Service members is a critical task, and the Committee has been pleased to see DoD make improvements in this area in recent years, such as establishing a website (militarychildcare.com) that serves

as a "single gateway" for parents to identify and request childcare if they move, but more work remains to be done to meet Service members' needs. During the Committee's 2017 focus groups, participants cited general satisfaction with the value of DoD CDCs but acknowledged the lack of availability (e.g., associated wait lists) and limited operating hours as the biggest challenges in meeting their needs as highly mobile professionals who often work nonstandard or extended duty hours. These participants also noted that certain populations such as dual-military families, single parents, and junior enlisted members may face additional difficulty securing adequate childcare coverage, indicating these groups may require additional support.

DACOWITS believes that childcare is not only a retention issue but also one that affects unit morale and readiness. This is particularly noticeable in military units with a high operating tempo and frequent exercises. A literature review on the needs of single parents serving in the Air Force, for example, found that "military occupational specialties [that] involve long work days (in some cases 12 hours or more) and weekly schedules that frequently involve working or training on weekends and holidays . . . may place inordinately high levels of stress on parents in general and single parents in particular as they struggle to balance their military responsibilities with their parenting." Easing this burden can help reduce the stress of balancing a family and the necessarily dynamic nature of military service. Expanding access to 24-hour childcare and providing other flexible childcare options can help military parents meet the nonstandard schedule typical of many operational units.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 4 of the full annual report for 2017, which is available on the DACOWITS Website (<http://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Family Care Plans

To build upon its study of childcare and emergent discussions from Committee focus groups over the last 2 years, DACOWITS explored Service member experiences with Family Care Plans (FCPs), which are written documents outlining how children will be cared for while military parents are away for work (e.g., during deployments and extended training periods or exercises). The Committee was interested in learning about the perceived utility of FCPs and related challenges Service members faced. To inform its recommendation on this topic, DACOWITS collected information from several data sources during the past year, all of which are listed in the references for this report.

Recommendation

- ▶ The Secretary of Defense should conduct a review of the Military Services' implementation of the Family Care Plan Instruction (DoDI 1342.19) to ensure the policy is being utilized as intended for operational readiness and not used inappropriately.

Reasoning Summary

The Committee has learned of several challenges Service members face while completing FCP documentation. Across the Service branches, many focus group participants shared that they found it hard to find trusted individuals to list as alternate caregivers, struggled to keep the plans up-to-date, and described not having enough time to complete the documentation associated with their plans. Some requirements potentially violate personally identifiable information protections; for example, Soldiers are required to disclose their bank account information to their commands and others reviewing and signing the FCP package (i.e., DD Form 2558).

Once the often-challenging process of preparing an FCP is complete, Service members appear to face additional

burdens as a result of inappropriate or inconsistent use of FCPs. For example, 2017 focus groups participants indicated that some unit leaders directed Service members to enact their FCPs when their sick children needed to be picked up from daycare. The Committee views this type of Service-level implementation as inconsistent with the DoD's intent.

Service members who are separated from the military because of issues related to parenthood, including FCPs, are disproportionately women. DACOWITS focus group participants also commented on variation in how compliance with the FCP was determined and enforced by their leadership.

The Committee recommends that DoD review how Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 1342.19 is currently being managed and suggests that oversight be shifted under the auspices of either Force Readiness (FR) or Military Personnel Policy (MPP). At present, the FCP instruction is aligned as a family readiness requirement under the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy; however, the way it is being implemented creates a force readiness and operational readiness requirement as it affects a Service member's ability to deploy.

The Committee recommends that DoD conduct a programmatic review of DoDI 1342.19 to ensure it is being utilized as intended, identify the best office to oversee implementation, and identify FCP best practices in execution by the Military Services. Promising practices identified by a systematic DoD review should be shared among the Military Services so they may recognize similarities and align their practices where appropriate.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 4 of the full annual report for 2017, which is available on the DACOWITS Website (<http://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Impacts of Social Media/Online Harassment

In 2015, DACOWITS conducted a formal study on how social media affects Service members and made recommendations related to social media and sexual harassment online. In light of news stories published in early 2017 about scandals involving illicit photo sharing by Service members, the Committee revisited its 2015 recommendations to assess what progress has been made since 2015 and what work remains to be done. To inform its recommendation on this topic, DACOWITS collected information from several data sources during the past year, all of which are listed in the references for this report.

Recommendation

- ▶ The Secretary of Defense should endorse the 2015 DACOWITS recommendations on the impacts of social media and sexual harassment online and ensure the ongoing efforts of the Military Services continue to emphasize and enforce acceptable behavior and Service member accountability.

Reasoning Summary

The Committee conducted a comprehensive study of this topic in 2015. The Committee made two recommendations related to social media in its annual report that year, which were based on results from the Committee's focus group discussions, data collected from the Military Services, and additional literature reviews conducted by the Committee. The Committee also issued three recommendations more broadly related to sexual harassment and sexual assault.

The Committee's efforts preceded several media accounts of online sexual harassment among active duty and retired Service members. Given the increased use of social media across the military and the constant

evolution of online harassment, the Committee believes DoD must be explicit when outlining accountability and consequences for online harassment among Service members. Findings from the 2017 focus groups indicate that although most participants received some form of social media training or guidance on appropriate use, the amount of training was insufficient, and some of it was focused solely on operational security. Several participants felt that Service members were still not sufficiently cautious online and that standards for appropriate behavior were not consistently or sufficiently enforced. Strong encouragement from DoD could help maintain focus on these challenges.

DoD endorsement and oversight are particularly important given the disproportionately negative impact of social media on young Service members and women. Women are more likely than men to be affected by the most severe forms of online harassment, including stalking and inferences of sexual assault. The Committee believes that when Service members carry out this type of harassment, it can directly affect unit cohesion and mission readiness.

Although the Committee encourages continued DoD oversight to ensure that the Military Services maintain an appropriate focus on acceptable behavior and accountability online, it acknowledges that the Military Services have made notable progress in addressing the Committee's 2015 recommendations. The Committee supports strategic approaches to addressing both online harassment and the underlying culture that causes it and encourages continued reinforcement of these kinds of approaches across all Military Services. The Naval Criminal Investigative Service's Task Force Purple Harbor is one such example.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 4 of the full annual report for 2017, which is available on the DACOWITS Website (<http://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Parental Leave Policies

Continuing its work from 2015 and 2016, DACOWITS examined issues and concerns surrounding pregnancy, the postpartum period, and parenthood. The Committee explored how recent adjustments to maternity leave policies, and proposed adjustments to parental leave have affected individual Service members and their units. To inform its recommendations on this topic, DACOWITS collected information from several data sources during the past year, all of which are listed in the references for this report.

Recommendation 1

- ▶ The Secretary of Defense should consider allowing the Military Services to permit flexible (noncontinuous) use of maternity and parental leave if requested by the military parent(s).

Reasoning Summary 1

There is some evidence to suggest that Service members' ability to maintain work-life balance is one of the military's top retention challenges, with many 2017 focus group participants expressing concern that a military career is incompatible with having a family. Although current maternity and parental leave policies are a strong step in the right direction, more can be done to tailor leave to families' unique situations. Allowing flexible (noncontinuous) use of maternity and parental leave is a strategy mentioned by DACOWITS focus group participants and modeled in some companies in

the private sector. This is one potential way to support a Service member after a child joins the member's family, whether through birth or adoption. The Committee believes allowing noncontinuous leave, when requested, could help Service members better balance their unique family needs during critical junctures of their lives and, in turn, help support retention efforts.

Recommendation 2

- ▶ The Secretary of Defense should consider removing the marriage stipulation from parental leave in order to be consistent with policies that recognize nonmarried parental benefits.

Reasoning Summary 2

DoD has made strides in promoting the importance of parental time off after the birth of a child, not just for the birth mother but for her partner as well. However, given the rise of nontraditional families in the United States, the Committee believes more should be done to support unmarried Service members following the birth or adoption of a child. For consistency across policies, and to promote parental engagement for all kinds of families, the Committee believes parental leave should be inclusive to all parents regardless of marital status.

Detailed reasonings supporting these recommendations are provided in Chapter 4 of the full annual report for 2017, which is available on the DACOWITS Website (<http://dacowits.defense.gov>).

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