

**Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services
December 2023 Request for Information**

**Military Personnel Policy Response
November 2023**

BACKGROUND

The Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) is seeking information regarding access to family planning. The Committee has requested the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness provide information on Department of Defense policies to support access assisted reproductive services. The office of Military Personnel Policy (MPP) within the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs will provide a response to applicable sub-questions.

In accordance with DACOWITS’ Terms of Reference, “the Well-Being and Treatment (WB&T) Subcommittee will examine existing Defense Department and Military Service’ institutional policies and procedures to identify gaps that potentially inhibit family planning, to include eligibility for fertility services. In addition, the WB&T Subcommittee will assess the demand for expanded fertility access within a constrained supply of resources and identify obstacles and challenges to obtain access to care.”¹

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION No. 6

In December 2022,² via RFI 8, the Defense Health Agency (DHA) provided the Committee with an overview of Assisted Reproductive Services, which included preliminary information related to fertility. The Committee is concerned there may be inadvertent policy limitations which is inhibiting women’s ability to plan their family. Among the many issues of critical importance to military Service women is the ability to plan for an have families without sacrificing their ability to continue military service.

Many Service women expressed concerns during the 2023 DACOWITS’ focus groups³ about the difficulty in planning pregnancies at a time best suited to their career progression goals, about the impact of delayed pregnancies on fertility, and about the lack of fertility services needed to assist them in balancing the demands of military service with their desire to have a family. The

¹ DACOWITS December 2023 Requests for Information. Available at: <https://dacowits.defense.gov/Home/Documents/2023-Documents/>.

² DACOWITS December 2022 Quarterly Business Meeting. Available at: <https://dacowits.defense.gov/Home/Documents/2022-Documents/December2022Business/>

³ DACOWITS 2023 Focus Group Report. Available at: <https://dacowits.defense.gov/Portals/48/Documents/Reports/2023/DACOWITS%202023%20Focus%20Group%20Report.pdf>

Committee is interested in examining institutional policies and procedures that may inhibit family planning and to assess the demand for and the availability of fertility resources for Service women.

The Committee requests an updated **written response** from the **USD(P&R), DHA, and the Military Services (Army, Department of the Navy, Marine Corps, Department of the Air Force, and Coast Guard)** on the following:

- a. **USD(P&R) and Military Services:** Provide copies of links to all DoD and Service instructions, regulations, and policies that address the subject of fertility services and availability to the military personnel.
- b. **USD(P&R) and Military Services:** What policy accommodations exist to provide for leave, travel reimbursement, or other measures to enable Service women to seek civilian fertility care when it is not available to them through the military healthcare system?
- c. **USD(P&R):** Provide detailed information about:
 - i. the range and nature of fertility services offered by DoD/Services to Service women;
 - ii. Service women's eligibility for fertility services, conditions qualifying or disqualifying Service women from access to fertility services; and
 - iii. alternative options or avenues for Service women to access fertility services.
- d. **DHA:** Provide detailed information about what fertility services, if any, are available to Service women through Tricare and what costs they incur for such services.
- e. **DHA:** Is there any difference in eligibility for fertility services/treatment between female military dependents and Service women? If so, describe fully?

MPP RESPONSE

MPP can provide a response to the following requests for information:

- a. **Provide copies of links to all DoD instructions, regulations, and policies that address the subject of fertility services and availability to the military personnel.**

[Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Memorandum, "Administrative Absence for Non-Covered Reproductive Health Care," February 16, 2023](#)

[Joint Travel Regulations, current edition, paragraph 033013](#)

- b. **What policy accommodations exist to provide for leave, travel reimbursement, or other measures to enable servicewomen to seek civilian fertility care when it is not available to them through the military healthcare system?**

Secretary Austin has made it clear that the health and well-being of our Service members and their family members is a top priority. In February 2023, the Department of Defense

announced the following policies that support access to non-covered reproductive health care:⁴

- The *Administrative Absence for Non-Covered Reproductive Health Care*⁵ policy provides eligible Service members the ability to request an administrative absence for a period of up to 21 days to receive, or accompany a dual-military spouse or dependent who receives, non-covered reproductive health care without taking leave.
- The *Travel and Transportation Allowances for Non-Covered Reproductive Health Care*⁶ provides eligible Service members and dependents travel and transportation allowances to receive non-covered reproductive health care services when timely access to non-covered reproductive health care services is not available within the local area of the member's permanent duty station, temporary duty location, or the last location the dependent was transported to on authorized government orders.

Service members who do not want to request an administrative absence for non-covered reproductive health care or travel and transportation allowances for non-covered reproductive health care may choose to request regular leave or special liberty.

The Department policies on access to non-covered reproductive health care, developed thoughtfully, deliberately, and in compliance with the law, reinforce the commitment to taking care of people, protecting their health and well-being, and ensuring the Force remains ready and resilient.

⁴ Non-covered reproductive health care is defined as lawfully available assisted reproductive technology and non-covered abortion. Per Department policy, only the following components of assisted reproductive technology are included:

- a. Ovarian stimulation and egg retrieval, including any needed medications and procedures required for retrieval, processing and utilization for ART or cryopreservation.
- b. Sperm collection and processing for ART or cryopreservation.
- c. Intrauterine insemination (IUI).
- d. In vitro fertilization (IVF) inclusive of the following procedures for beneficiaries when clinically indicated:
 1. In vitro fertilization with fresh embryo transfer.
 2. Gamete intrafallopian transfer (GIFT).
 3. Zygote intrafallopian transfer (ZIFT).
 4. Pronuclear stage tubal transfer (PROST).
 5. Tubal embryo transfer (TET).
 6. Frozen embryo transfer.

⁵ Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Memorandum, "Administrative Absence for Non-Covered Reproductive Health Care," February 16, 2023. Available at:

<https://media.defense.gov/2023/Feb/16/2003163307/-1/-1/1/MEMORANDUM-ADMINISTRATIVE-ABSENCE-FOR-NON-COVERED-REPRODUCTIVE-HEALTH-CARE.PDF>

⁶ Joint Travel Regulations, current edition, paragraph 033013. Available at: <https://media.defense.gov/2022/Jan/04/2002917147/-1/-1/0/JTR.PDF>