

## INFORMATION PAPER

Department of the Army, G-1  
15 Nov 19

SUBJECT: DACOWITS December 2019 RFI 9: Effect of Grooming Standards on Women's Health

1. Purpose: To reply to the DACOWITS Effect of Grooming Standards on Women's Health for December 2019 Quarterly Business Meeting.

Military grooming standards ensure Service members are able to meet their occupational demands and maintain a professional appearance. However, sometimes these standards can unmask or exacerbate various skin conditions. According to the American Academy of Dermatology, *traction alopecia* is hair loss that is caused by repeat pulling on the hair due to tight hairstyles. Servicewomen can develop this condition if they wear their hair in a tight ponytail, bun, or braids, especially in combination with the use of chemicals or heat. Servicewomen have expressed to DACOWITS that specific grooming standards are causing them non-reversible hair loss. The Committee is concerned about the potential unintended consequences and impact of grooming standards on women's long term health.

### **Question 9a:**

Provide policies, regulations, and other directive sources that describe grooming standards for servicewomen. Include specifics that may be required for certain military specialties or working conditions, as well as any variances or allowances for racial or ethnic groups

**Response 9a:** Army Regulation (AR) 670-1 *Wear and Appearance of Army Uniforms and Insignia*, paragraph 3-2 a. (3) "The requirements for hair regulations are to maintain uniformity within a military population for female Soldiers while in uniform, or in civilian clothes on duty, unless otherwise specified. Female hairstyles may not be eccentric or faddish and will present a conservative, professional appearance. For the purpose of these regulations, female hairstyles are organized into three basic categories: short length, medium length, and long length hair."

Paragraph 3-2 a. (3) (d) "Hair will be styled so as not to interfere with the proper wear of all uniform headgear. All headgear will fit snugly and comfortably around the largest part of the head without bulging or distortion from the intended shape of the headgear and without excessive gaps. When headgear is worn, hair should not protrude at distinct angles from under the edges. Hairstyles that do not allow the headgear to be worn in this manner are prohibited."

Paragraph 3-2 a. (3) (f) “Medium and long hair may be styled with braids, cornrows, twists, or locks (see glossary for definitions). Each braid, cornrow, twist, or lock will be of

Department of the Army, G-1

SUBJECT: DACOWITS December 2019 RFI 9: Effect of Grooming Standards on Women’s Health

uniform dimension, have a diameter no greater than 1/2 inch, and present a neat, professional, and well-groomed appearance.

Paragraph 3-2 a. (3) (i) “Long length hair, may be worn in a ponytail during physical training. A single ponytail centered on the back of the head is authorized in physical fitness uniforms only when within the scope of physical training, except when considered a safety hazard.”

**Question 9b:** Detail any reported or anecdotal information/data related to adverse health impacts of grooming standards, to include general standard or occupationally specific standards. Additionally, annotate which office collects such data and where is it reported.

**Response 9b:** The Office of the Surgeon General notes female Soldier concerns of traction alopecia (hair loss) occurring most frequently in African American women complying with grooming standards outlined in AR 670-1. There are currently no reporting mechanisms for this information.

**Question 9c:** Describe any health impacts noted or reported which may be specific to different ethnic or racial groups (e.g., chemical hair treatments and/or hazardous products servicewomen may utilize to comply with grooming standards).

**Response 9c:** See response to 9b.

**Question 9d:** Detail any studies that have been conducted related to health impacts on servicewomen associated with grooming standards

**Response 9d:** The Army has not conducted studies specific to traction alopecia in female Soldiers.

**Question 9e:** Detail any grooming standard waivers that are provided to Service members for diagnosed medical conditions.

**Response 9e:** AR 670-1 paragraph 3-2 a. (3) (a) *Short Length*. Short hair may be no shorter than 1/4 inch from the scalp (unless due to medical condition or injury), but may be evenly tapered to the scalp within 2 inches of the hair line edges.