

Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) December 2023 – Requests for Information

RECRUITMENT BARRIERS

In accordance with DACOWITS' Terms of Reference, the Recruitment and Retention (R&R) Subcommittee will assess potential recruitment barriers which inhibit the accession of women into the Military Services. In addition, the R&R Subcommittee will examine existing policies and procedures to determine whether current practices inhibit the recruitment of women, specifically assessing medical accession standards and the application of these standards.

1 The Committee is concerned medical accession standards may have a disproportionate impact on the pool of women qualified to join the Military Services as compared to men. In [June 2023](#), via RFI 2, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R)), via the Office of Military Personnel Policy (MPP), reported that 62.5% of all applicants with a diagnosis from the Military Accession Record Pilot (MARF) list of 49 conditions were able to enlist, with a reduced timeframe for disqualification. However, only 50% of female applicants were able to do so. In addition, MPP also stated less than 5% of women applicants were disqualified for women-specific health issues.

The Committee requests a **written response** from the **USD(P&R)** on the following:

- a. Provide the number of applicants accessed through MARF in aggregate and by gender since its implementation in June 2022.
- b. Provide the percentage of applicants accessed through the MARF in aggregate and by gender (e.g., X% of applicants who joined since June 2022 have joined under MARF, X% of women who joined since June 2022 have joined under MARF, etc.).
- c. Identify any trends in the percentage of women and men assessed under MARF.
- d. Highlight any factors that may contribute to differences in the number of or rates of accessions for women and men under MARF.
- e. Provide the number of applicants accessed for each of the 49 conditions for which disqualifying time frames were reduced, in aggregate and by gender (e.g., X applicants with ADHD were accessed under MARF; X female applicants with ADHD were accessed under MARF, and X male applicants with ADHD were accessed under MARF).
- f. Provide the number of applicants accessed under MARF that have shipped in aggregate and by gender.
- g. Provide the number of applicants who were accessed into the military under MARF who have separated from their Service in aggregate and by gender.
- h. Identify whether medical conditions waived under MARF are related to their separation and if there are any differences by gender.
- i. Provide length of service for separated applicants by gender.
- j. Describe any positive or negative trends the Services have identified with the performance or outcome of applicants accessed under the MARF in aggregate, by gender, and by condition.

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RETENTION INITIATIVES

In accordance with DACOWITS' Terms of Reference, the R&R Subcommittee will identify opportunities and innovative initiatives to more effectively retain servicewomen, utilizing retention incentives such as bonuses, special schools, retraining, and choice duty assignments.

- 2** The Committee is interested in retention rates of women in the midst of the current recruiting challenges and the Service's ability to fill their ranks. The Committee is interested in retention data from 2019-2023, separated by gender and grade, to determine if there is disparity in the retention of women versus men.
- The Committee requests a **briefing** from the **Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, and National Guard** on the following:
- a. Provide annual retention rates (e.g., percentage of Service members who decide to stay in the military following their current obligation) for each paygrade in aggregate, and by gender (e.g., E-3: Overall X%; males X%, females X%, and so on for each paygrade) for Fiscal Years 2019-2023.
 - b. Provide annual retention rates by gender in aggregate (e.g., all male Service members: X% & all female Service members: X%).
 - c. Identify the MOSs with the lowest retention rates for women and for men.
 - d. Identify factors that impact the retention of women in the military and whether these factors differ from the factors that impact the retention of men, including:
 - e. Identify efforts (e.g., programs, policies, benefit adjustments) your Service has undertaken to improve the retention of women.
 - f. Identify any mechanisms your Service uses to identify factors that impact the retention of women in the military.
 - g. Identify the top ten reasons Service members leave the military by gender, by rank (officer & enlisted), and by gender and rank (e.g., male officers: XX, female officers: XX, male enlisted: XX, female enlisted: XX).
 - h. In previous RFI responses, some Services have described factors impacting retention as broad categories (e.g., work/life balance, focus on the family). Describe the level at which the Services review exit-survey data to ensure nuanced reasons for leaving the military are considered when planning to address these factors.

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IMPLEMENTATION OF WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY REQUIREMENTS

In accordance with DACOWITS' Terms of Reference, the Employment and Integration (E&I) Subcommittee will examine the Military Services' efforts to fulfill requirements of the U.S. Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS), specifically related to the WPS Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan. In addition, the E&I Subcommittee will examine WPS long-term defense objectives to assess women's meaningful participation within the Joint Force, as well as women's representation across all ranks and all occupations.

3 The U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) was originally stood up in 2012 via a Department of State [implementation plan](#). The [WPS Act of 2017 \(P.L. 115-68\)](#) tasked four agencies, including DoD, with implementation of WPS. The [2019 U.S. Strategy on WPS](#) also included DoD as a key agency for WPS implementation. In 2020, DoD developed the Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan for fulfilling its WPS commitments. In 2022, the White House released a [WPS Congressional Report](#), which addressed four tasks outlined in the U.S. WPS Act of 2017. One key WPS objective is that the “*The Department of Defense exemplifies a diverse organization that allows for women’s meaningful participation across the development, management, and employment of the Joint Force.*” The Committee is interested in understanding how DoD, the Joint Staff, and each Service are progressing towards this WPS objective.

The Committee requests a **briefing** from the **USD(P&R), OUSD Policy, Joint Staff, and the Military Services (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force)** on the following:

- a. **Military Services:** Describe how the WPS Strategy has been incorporated into senior leader training, professional military education (PME), and entry level training curriculum (as appropriate).
- b. **USD(P&R):** Provide data on the number of personnel serving in Joint duty assignments; broken down by gender and paygrade.
- c. **OUSD(P):** Provide an overview of current progress towards implementation of WPS Defense Objective 1.
 - i. Has a DoDI been issued to direct implementation of WPS by the Services? If so, please provide a copy.
 - ii. Does DoD have a workflow management tool that is used to track data on WPS security cooperation activities? If so, please provide an overview of recent activities.
- d. **Joint Staff:** As discussed in the 2022 WPS Congressional Report, provide an overview of the DoD gender analysis framework that aligns with the Department of State and US. Agency for International Development framework to enhance interagency coordination.
- e. **Air Force:** As discussed in the 2022 WPS Congressional Report, provide an overview of the most recent independent disparity review report which identified racial, ethnic, and gender disparities and an underrepresentation of women and minorities in leadership positions.

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IMPACT OF KEY INFLUENCERS ON SERVICEWOMEN’S CAREER PATHS

In accordance with DACOWITS’ Terms of Reference, the Employment and Integration (E&I) Subcommittee will examine female officer experiences with key influencers while at the Military Service Academies (MSAs), Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), or Officer Candidate School, that impact career selection into previously closed positions, such as special operations forces. In addition, the E&I Subcommittee will examine female enlisted experiences with key influencers that impact career selection into previously closed positions, such as special operations forces.

4 Over the last decade, DACOWITS examined women’s career progression, resulting in numerous recommendations. In December 2015, the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) opened all remaining occupations and positions to women with no exceptions. As a result, the Defense Department opened approximately 213,600 closed positions and 52 closed military occupational specialties to women for the first time. Afterwards, the SecDef directed the Secretaries of the Military Departments and Chiefs of the Military Services to provide their final, detailed Gender Integration Implementation Plans no later than January 1, 2016. Once approved, the Military Services were tasked with executing their plans by April 1, 2016. The Committee continues to observe modest increases in the percentage of women joining the military and consistently low rates of women entering previously closed positions, such as special operations forces.

The Committee requests a **written response** from the **Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, and National Guard** on the following:

- a. Provide information on key influencers and recruitment efforts for female officers currently attending the MSAs and ROTC to pursue careers in special operations forces (SOF) and other previously closed career fields.
- b. Provide information on key influencers and mentoring efforts for enlisted women that impact career selection into SOF and other previously closed career fields, such as submarines and artillery forces.

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INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AND DOMESTIC ABUSE

In accordance with DACOWITS' Terms of Reference, the Well-Being and Treatment (WB&T) Subcommittee will assess updates to the DoD Instruction 6400.06, "Domestic Abuse Involving DoD Military and Certain Affiliated Personnel," dated May 16, 2023, and determine whether the DACOWITS' 2019 recommendations related to domestic abuse were implemented. In addition, the WB&T Subcommittee will examine the status, increase, or decrease in domestic abuse incidents; the effectiveness of current DoD and Military Services' policies; and evaluate whether there are additional policy inconsistencies that need to be remedied (e.g., definition of intimate partner).

- 5** DACOWITS remains interested in assuring the physical well-being and protection of servicewomen who are vulnerable to and may already be the victims of violence or domestic abuse at the hands of either their spouses or other intimate/dating partners. In [2019](#), the Committee made a series of recommendations designed to enhance the protection provided to servicewomen victimized by domestic abuse and to help assure access to needed resources. According to the Department's [Report on Child Abuse and Neglect and Domestic Abuse in the Military for Fiscal Year 2022](#), there were 15,479 reports of domestic abuse. The Committee is interested in assessing progress made on the 2019 recommendations and in examining the incidence of domestic and intimate partner abuse.

The Committee requests a **briefing** from the **Office of Military Community and Family Policy (MC&FP) via the Family Advocacy Program (FAP) Office, and the Military Services (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Department of the Air Force, and Coast Guard)** to address the following questions:

- a. **FAP & Military Services:** Copies of or links to all published regulations, policies, and other instructions or guidance addressing the matter of domestic and intimate/dating partner abuse and outlining the range of response and care resources, procedures, and protection measures.
- b. **FAP & Military Services:** Provide DoD and Service policy definitions of domestic abuse/violence and whether those inflicting such abuse or violence include persons other than spouses, such as intimate or dating partners.
- c. **FAP & Military Services:** Identify policy, reporting, or other changes or updates to policies made in the last four years (FY20-FY23) related to reporting, data collection, resources available to abuse victims and coordination with civilian authorities.
- d. **Military Services:** Provide data/metrics collected regarding the number of domestic and intimate partner abuse incidents reported or otherwise known to authorities for FY12-FY22 and include a breakout of whether the incidents involved spouses or intimate/dating partners, as well as the genders of the abusers and victims. If available, provide a breakdown of the total number by type of domestic and intimate partner abuse incidents (e.g., physical, emotional, sexual). However, do not include data for child abuse or neglect incidents.
- e. **Military Services:** Are military authorities required to notify civilian authorities when a military protection order (MPO) is issued?
- f. **Military Services:** What are the criteria for issuance of an MPO and who has the authority to issue such an order? What is the governing regulation and link thereto?
- g. **Military Services:** How many MPOs have been issued in the last 10 years to safeguard servicewomen?
- h. **Military Services:** What efforts are being undertaken to ensure no dangerous weapons are in a household where both the abuser and victim reside?
- i. **Military Services:** Identify policies in place and resources available which provide immediate assistance and safe housing for military abuse victims.

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FAMILY PLANNING

In accordance with DACOWITS' Terms of Reference, the Well-Being and Treatment (WB&T) Subcommittee will examine existing Defense Department and Military Services' 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.

- 6 In [December 2022](#), 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 servicewomen is the ability to plan for and have families without sacrificing their ability to continue military service. Many servicewomen expressed concerns during the [2023 DACOWITS' focus groups](#) 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 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 servicewomen.

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 servicewomen 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 servicewomen;
 - ii. servicewomen's eligibility for fertility services, conditions qualifying or disqualifying servicewomen from access to fertility services; and
 - iii. alternative options or avenues for servicewomen to access fertility services.
- d. **DHA:** Provide detailed information about what fertility services, if any, are available to servicewomen 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 servicewomen? If so, describe fully?