

Pilot Program on Cryopreservation and Storage of Gametes of Certain Members of the Armed Forces



March 2024

Background



- This briefing is provided in response to House Report 118-301, page 1111, accompanying H.R. 2670, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024, which requests the Secretary of Defense conduct a study on the feasibility and advisability of providing reimbursement to Service members for expenses incurred in the testing, cryopreservation, shipping, and storage of gametes in a private storage facility deemed appropriate by the Secretary.
- The study was to focus on Active-Duty Service Members (ADSMs) on orders for assignments for which they will receive hazardous duty pay or will result in geographic separation lasting 180 days or longer.

Background, continued



- The study was also to assess the impacts of such a program on the retention of Service members, including:
 1. The number of members of the Armed Forces who elect to leave the Armed Forces for family planning reasons, disaggregated by gender, age, and military occupational specialty;
 2. Whether the option of cryopreservation of gametes would lead to greater retention of members of the Armed Forces;
 3. Methods for the Department of Defense to offer cryopreservation of gametes for the purposes of retention of members of the Armed Forces;
 4. The cost to the Department of offering cryopreservation of gametes to active-duty members of the Armed Forces; and
 5. Such other matters relating to family planning and cryopreservation of gametes for members of the Armed Forces as the Secretary considers relevant.



Element 1

- **Description:** The number of members of the Armed Forces who elect to leave the Armed Forces for family planning reasons, disaggregated by gender, age, and military occupational specialty.
- **Response:** Limited data available from surveys (e.g., DoD-wide Women's Reproductive Health Study, or Service-specific surveys such as Department of the Army Career Engagement Survey), suggests family building is an issue of concern for many respondents. However, there is no formally documented reason or required exit survey that captures why an ADSM chooses to leave military service, thus there is no clear, data-driven link between family building challenges and retention. Retention is a complex and multifaceted issue that may require further assessment.



Element 2

- **Description:** Whether the option of cryopreservation of gametes would lead to greater retention of members of the Armed Forces.
- **Response:** For ADSMs and their dependents, the military introduces unique considerations related to fertility preservation, as military service and deployment have the potential to compromise fertility through combat-related injury, exposures, and physical separation from a partner. However, there is no data to support the direct impact associated with providing cryopreservation on retention of ADSMs and their families. Family building decisions are multifaceted and impacted by more than just future fertility potential.



Element 3

- **Description:** Methods for the Department of Defense to offer cryopreservation of gametes for the purposes of retention of members of the Armed Forces.
- **Response:** In accordance with statute, the Department covers supplies and procedures for diagnosis and treatment of an illness, injury, or bodily malfunction of the male or female reproductive system. Assisted reproductive technologies (ART), including cryopreservation of gametes, embryos, and/or reproductive tissue, are excluded. While there are programs that provide some limited access to cryopreservation of gametes for select ADSMs, they are not designed specifically for the purposes of retention. The Department has no recommendations for expanding access to ART based on statutory prohibitions.



Element 4

- **Description:** The cost to the Department of offering cryopreservation of gametes to active-duty members of the Armed Forces.
- **Response:** The near-term costs associated with non-medically necessary fertility preservation services are expected to be significant, although it is unclear how many ADSMs would utilize such a service if available.
- If such a benefit were available to ADSMs (age 18 to 51), costs are anticipated to be anywhere in the range of \$801 million (based on 25 percent utilization by eligible ADSMs) to \$3.21 billion (based on 100 percent utilization by eligible ADSMs). Future costs are anticipated to rise.

Element 5



- **Description:** Such other matters relating to family planning and cryopreservation of gametes for members of the Armed Forces as the Secretary considers relevant.
- **Response:** The Department has no other information to share relevant to this brief.



Conclusion

- Providing reimbursement for non-medically necessary fertility preservation services would result in substantial cost to the Department and cannot be directly correlated to improvement in enrollee satisfaction, recruitment, and/or retention with any data available at this time.
- Based on known cost, without substantial and dedicated funding, the feasibility and advisability of providing reimbursement to Service members for expenses incurred in the testing, cryopreservation, shipping, and storage of gametes in a private storage facility is outside of current capacity and funds available.
- The Department continues to assess all available opportunities to support family building to the extent authorized.