

SUBJ: DACOWITS RFI #11 - March QBM

FROM: Personnel Service Center, Personnel Services Division, Military Uniforms Branch (PSC-PSD-MU); Coast Guard Academy; Coast Guard Training Center (TRACEN) Cape May.

TO: DACOWITS Committee

THRU: Office of Diversity & Inclusion (CG-127)

EFFECT OF GROOMING STANDARDS ON WOMEN'S HEALTH (WB&T)

The Military Services' written responses to the December 2019 RFI acknowledged awareness of alopecia possibilities and some reported incidence of alopecia among servicewomen, but they do not track or monitor this condition or other hairstyle-related conditions.

The Committee requests a **written response** from the Military Services describing what and how female recruits are taught to style their hair, to ensure compliance with Service hair grooming standards, specifically those styles which entail pulling or twisting hair into "up-do" or "pull back" styles. The Committee is particularly interested in how servicewomen are taught to achieve the following hair styles: buns, ponytails, and braids.

CG Response:

a. Please provide copies of instructional materials, curricula, videos or other media used to demonstrate and teach servicewomen how to achieve these and any other styles which require pulling or twisting the hair.

CG-MU: Personnel Service Center-Personnel Services Division-Military Uniforms (PSC-PSD-mu) serves as the author and maintainer of the Coast Guard Uniform Regulations, COMDTINST 1020.6(series), which establishes authority, policies, procedures, and standards governing the uniform, appearance, and grooming of all service personnel. (See enclosure)

CGA:

- CGA cadets must adhere to the Regulations Of The Corps Of Cadets, SUPTINST M5215.2(series). The following pages are specific to female hair; these pages are attached for your review: pages 362, 366, and 376.
- On page 376 of SUPTINST M5215.2N, it references the CG Uniform Manual, COMDTINST M1020.6(series). The following pages of COMDTINST M1020.6J are specific to female hair; these pages are attached for your review: pages 32-35.
- During the CGA Swab Summer Training Program, Swabs are taught about the approved ways to wear their hair in their uniforms.

TRACEN CAPE MAY: Cape May does not have instructional videos or materials that teach or demonstrate how to achieve the hairstyle. All of the demonstrating and teaching is done "live" by female Company Commanders during the INDOC portion of recruit training, and throughout the 8 week period of boot camp.

b. If “how to” styling demonstrations are used to train, please provide the Committee video demonstration of this training.

CG-MU: The Military Uniforms Branch does not directly create or provide direct instruction on military grooming other than the descriptions provided in official policy along with examples to assist members in determining proper application. (See enclosure)

CGA: Training to female Swabs regarding proper hair style is provided by female 2/c Cadre members. Attached is a video clip showing the training to Swabs on how to pull hair back and wear it in a bun.

TRACEN CAPE MAY: N/A

c. Are servicewomen specifically, and Service members generally (particularly supervisors/commanders), educated about the potential harm resulting from hairstyles that excessively pull/twist hair and, if so, how?

CG-MU: N/A

CGA: No

TRACEN CAPE MAY: Cape May does not provide any educational materials or other information to recruits as it relates to potential damage/harm to hair resulting from these types of hairstyles. Individual recruits are addressed if they bring a problem to the attention of a staff member.

d. Although Service grooming standards do not require “tight” pulling of the hair or “tight buns,” Committee members have observed many servicewomen who do wear such hairstyles. Is there any unit practice or encouragement to achieve a more professional looking appearance by employing this styling technique?

CG-MU: N/A

CGA: No. The only styling technique that is encouraged is the reduction of “fly-aways” via the use bobby pins and hairspray/gel. Gel/hairspray is not provided to swabs during initial indoc, but they are encouraged to bring their own products or can purchase items at the exchange if desired.

TRACEN CAPE MAY: In Cape May, we teach the “tight” pulling of hair, in order to meet the grooming standards (policy) and attention to detail required in a boot camp environment. We recognize a graduate may relax this level of grooming when they graduate, but while in boot camp it’s taught and demonstrated that way. Female Cape May Company Commanders also set the example by wearing their hair “tight.”

e. The Coast Guard advised, in its December RFI response, that its Uniform Board recently recommended revisions to female grooming standards based on information it had received about the adverse medical effects (i.e., headaches and permanent hair loss) of “repeated pulling of the hair to form ponytails or pulled back hairstyles.” To assist the Committee in its study of this matter, we request the Coast Guard provide information about the proposed changes.

CG-MU: Draft policy (included) is in concurrent route for approval and is a result of service members submitting a Uniform Change proposal and engaging the Coast Guard Uniform Board with a sound recommendation. Changes to manuals are released via CG message (included) and then promulgated via CG manuals/Instructions. Pages from the upcoming CG Uniform Regulations, COMDTINST 1020.6(k) have been included as attachments, along with sections of the message announcing the Uniform Boards approved policy changes.

CGA: N/A

TRACEN CAPE MAY: Cape May has adopted the larger bun size into the training environment for those recruits who can put their hair into a bun-we also address other hairstyles that may come into play (short hair, hair not long enough for a bun etc....). We would have to see if any of the training evolutions or situations would prohibit or support changes to how women can wear their hair-specifically to avoid the excessive pulling and tightening of the hair. There may be situations where it's absolutely acceptable and not an issue, and other times the bun (or slicked back hairstyle) may be the most appropriate style for the training environment. We request to be part of any changes or recommendations to ensure it fits into boot camp and the training environment.