

18 January 2019

SUBJECT: Air Force Response to the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services December 2018 Quarterly Business Meeting Follow-Up Questions, Request for Information #10

SITUATION: The Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) has submitted follow-up questions from their quarterly business meeting held 11-12 December 2018 in Alexandria, Virginia.

BACKGROUND: In June 2010, the Committee received a briefing from the Military Services on the status of their breastfeeding policies. In 2015, the Committee recommended that “given the importance of breastfeeding to healthy children and mothers, the Department of Defense should require the Services to increase the number and quality of lactation rooms available throughout the Military Services.” Since that time, multiple advancements in breastfeeding and lactation support have been made within the Military Services.

ASSESSMENT: The Committee submitted a follow-up request for information (RFI) from the Military Services on breastfeeding and lactation support (RFI #10). Maj Jeanette Anderson presented responses to the request for information on six specific questions and responded to Committee questions after the brief. Below are the Air Force (AF) responses to the Committee’s follow-up questions.

Military Services: Describe how your Service-branch, to include the Reserve and Guard components, are tracking the effectiveness of the Breastfeeding and Lactation Support Policies. Please describe methods of tracking policy and program compliance; how feedback is solicited from affected servicewomen; and what trends and constraints are noted from those who elect/don’t elect to breastfeed their newborns.

Currently, AF commanders are responsible for oversight of Air Force Instruction 44-102, Medical Care Management, which states that supervisors of AF members should “work with the member to arrange their work schedules to allow 15-30 minutes every 3-4 hours to pump breast milk in a room or an area that provides adequate privacy and cleanliness”.

At this time, there currently is not a mechanism in place to track compliance with this specific policy nor to solicit feedback from affected servicewomen.

Army, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard: During the Navy presentation on this topic, they highlighted having a “Command Advisor on Pregnancy and Parenthood (CAPP).” This is a voluntary command role to ensure Sailors receive proper counseling and support to fully understand their rights, responsibilities and resources regarding pregnancy and as new parents. This is an impressive best practice. DACOWITS is interested in knowing what similar best practices for pregnancy and post-partum are in place by other Military Services.

1. *The New Parent Support Program, a component of the Family Advocacy Program, is staffed primarily with registered nurses and augmented by medical social workers. Support and guidance offered through the program focus on growth and development, care, safety and feeding (including during the prenatal timeframe) for families with newborns, infants and toddlers.*
2. *Multiple private lactation rooms have been developed throughout the AF to meet the needs of breastfeeding women. For example, Nellis Air Force Base (AFB) recently opened two lactation rooms for nursing mothers at the base chapel. These rooms, along with those at the medical center, offer comfortable seating and a relaxing environment.*
3. *Some work centers, such as the 633d Medical Group at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, have purchased Mamava pods (alternate lactation suites) to provide a private lactation space. This is an excellent option when physical space for a lactation room is not available.*
4. *Air Combat Command (ACC) is developing a Pilot Program Working Group to address Pre-/Post-partum Conditioning/Reconditioning across 11 ACC bases.*
5. *Additionally, staff at Dyess AFB, part of the AF Global Strike Command (AFGSC), developed a gestational/post-natal fitness program.*

RECOMMENDATION: By comparing AF breastfeeding and lactation policy and programs with those of the other Military Services, several areas of opportunity were identified. Maj Anderson will continue to work with the Defense Health Agency's Women and Infant Clinical Community, Service subject matter experts, AF Women's Initiative Team, and the AF Office of Diversity and Inclusion (AIDV) to advance breastfeeding and lactation support available for Airmen.

The Air Force Medical Operations Agency (AFMOA) point of contact is Maj Jeanette Anderson, 210-395-9320, DSN 969, or jeanette.m.anderson10.mil@mail.mil