

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

RECRUITMENT INITIATIVES TO INCREASE WOMEN’S PROPENSITY TO SERVE	
<p>In accordance with DACOWITS’ Terms of Reference, the Recruitment and Retention (R&R) Subcommittee will assess the scale and effectiveness of the Military Services’ recruitment programs with the goal of providing actionable recommendations on how to best increase adolescent women’s propensity to serve. In addition, the R&R Subcommittee will examine existing policies and procedures to determine whether current practices inhibit the recruitment of women, specifically assessing the inclusivity of existing marketing strategies; current recruitment goals for women; improvements in the representation of female recruiters; virtual recruiting capabilities; and potential innovative best practices gleaned from the establishment of the Space Force.</p>	
1	<p>In September 2022, via RFIs 1-3, the Committee received briefings from the Military Services and the Defense Department’s Office of People Analytics (OPA) outlining strategies to attract young people, particularly women, to serve in the military and challenges in doing so. The Committee is interested in frontline perspectives on these challenges. The Committee requests a briefing from the recruiting Chiefs (senior enlisted personnel) within the <u>Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, and Coast Guard</u> on the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What barriers, inhibitors, challenges, and/or concerns are recruiters encountering when engaging with potential female applicants? b. What specific strategies are or could be used to address/mitigate these barriers/challenges? c. What training do recruiters receive to keep well-informed of current benefits of military service that appeal to and attract female applicants? d. Are there any additional challenges not already annotated that are impacting your Service’s ability to recruit women?
2	<p>In 2020, the Committee made the following recommendation: <i>“The Secretary of Defense should increase oversight and assess the effectiveness and scale of outreach programs with the objective of directing new programs and/or adjusting the purpose of existing programs to positively impact adolescent women’s propensity for military service.”</i> In December 2022, via RFI 1, the Committee received a briefing from the Defense Department’s Outreach, Policy & Programs (Civil-Military Programs) Office on youth outreach programs (e.g., DoD STARBASE); however, the Civil-Military Programs Office is not responsible for improving the propensity of adolescent women to serve.</p> <p>The Committee requests a written response from the <u>Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R))</u> which identifies the office with primary responsibility to promote adolescent women’s propensity to serve in the military.</p>
3	<p>The Committee is concerned about the inability of the Military Services to meet their annual recruiting goals and the continued underrepresentation of women in the Armed Forces. In March 2020, the Congressional National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service published a report, Inspired to Serve, which included a number of recommendations to help encourage a new generation of Americans to serve.</p> <p>The Committee requests a written response from <u>USD(P&R)</u> on the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Has the Defense Department taken steps to implement any of the military specific recommendations contained in the "Military Service" section of the Commission’s report (pages 8-9)? b. Please describe the steps taken to specifically inspire young women to serve, based on the Commission’s military recommendations.

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4 The Committee remains concerned about the inability of some of the Military Services to meet their annual recruiting goals. Data suggests that the two major reasons potential recruits are disqualified are due to low academic qualifications and the inability to meet physical fitness/body fat requirements. Recently, the Army implemented a pilot program, titled the [Future Soldier Preparatory Course](#), to address these challenges. The Army’s prep course is an incremental three-week, pre-basic training, aptitude improvement program for those who are not yet fully qualified to join the Army due to low test scores or an inability to meet fitness requirements. Access to this pilot program allows individuals who meet all of the other qualifications for enlistment a potential opportunity to serve.

The Committee requests a **briefing** from **Army** on their Future Soldier Preparation Course. Specifically, the Committee requests the briefing include:

- a. A detailed description of the pilot program for prospective future Soldiers, who lack either the academic aptitude and/or physical fitness/body fat requirements to otherwise enlist, to include entry requirements and curricula.
- b. How was the program developed? What subject matter experts (internal and external) assisted in the program’s development?
- c. What is the duty status and pay grade of prospective future Soldiers, including provisions of their conditional enlistment?
- d. What authorities (e.g., statutory, policy, or regulatory) oversee the implementation and execution of the pilot program?
- e. Describe any obstacles, challenges, or resistance encountered during the implementation or execution of the pilot program. How were these resolved?

5 In [2016](#), Committee made the following recommendation: *The Secretary of Defense should require each of the Military Services to adopt a policy regarding accession of single custodial parents into the military to allow such accessions when facts, circumstances, and occupational requirements would allow, and when the Military Services would benefit.* At the time, the Air Force allowed single parent applicants (both male and female) to join via a waiver with up to three dependents whereas the other Services only allowed male applicants to join with a waiver. Female applicants were required to sign over custody of any minor children for the duration of their first enlistment to join the military.

The Committee requests an update via a **written response** from the **Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Department of the Air Force, and Coast Guard** on the following:

- a. The status of your Services’ single parent policies regarding male and female applicant’s ability to join via a waiver and the details of these policies.
- b. The status of your Services’ single parent policies regarding male and female applicant’s ability to commission via Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC), Officer Candidate School (OCS), Direct Commission Officer (DCO) programs, etc.
- c. The status of the Military Service Academies implementation of the [CADET Act](#) outlined in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for FY22, which ensures cadets and midshipmen preserve parental guardianship rights and can become commissioned officers while raising a family.
- d. Provide copies of these policies and instructions for both officer and enlisted applicants.

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GENDER INTEGRATION

In accordance with DACOWITS' Terms of Reference, the Employment and Integration (E&I) Subcommittee will examine current efforts to fully integrate women into previously closed combat positions, determine whether barriers are inhibiting full integration, and identify actionable solutions. In addition, the E&I Subcommittee examined recent modifications to women's uniforms, as well as combat gear and equipment, to identify solutions, as required.

- 6 In [September 2022](#), via RFIs 6-7, the Committee received an update on the Military Services' gender integration implementation plans, to include the status of women's integration within special operations forces (SOF). In December 2022, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report, "[Women in Special Operations: Improvements to Policy, Data, and Assessments Needed to Better Understand and Address Career Barriers](#)," which indicates that more information is needed to fully assess barriers affecting women's careers in SOF.
- The Committee requests a **briefing** from following five organizations: **Special Operations Command (SOCOM) and Special Operations Service Components (USASOC, NAVSPECWARCOM, MARSOC, and AFSOC)**, in coordination with the **Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict (ASD(SO/LIC))** on the following:
- a. What is being done to recruit more women into SOF?
 - b. What outreach efforts currently exist to mentor to encourage women to enter SOF?
 - c. Provide an overview of the SOF selection process.
 - d. How are you helping women prepare for the SOF selection process?
 - e. How many Service members enter the selection process annually (broken down by gender and rank (enlisted and officer)), spanning the last five years (FY18-22)?
 - f. Have you examined or established support systems for women to enter SOF (e.g., Army Rangers initially had senior enlisted female observers)?
 - g. Have you considered or reviewed lessons learned from other military integration efforts (e.g., small cohort; buddy program; etc.)?

WOMEN IN AVIATION

In accordance with DACOWITS' Terms of Reference, the E&I Subcommittee will assess the number and percentage of female aviators, as well as factors and policies that may influence female aviator retention and promotion potential, such as recruiting, aircraft/duty assignments, mentoring, pregnancy, healthcare, operations tempo, aircraft design, and flight equipment. In addition, the E&I Subcommittee will examine trends in, and policies related to female aviation accession and identify actionable solutions, as required.

- 7 In [December 2022](#), via RFI 5, the Military Services briefed DACOWITS on the updates to properly fitting personal protective equipment (PPE) and combat equipment for women. As a follow-up, the Committee requests a **written response** from the **Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard** to provide more information on female in-flight bladder relief systems (IBRS) and/or female urinary devices, to include the following:
- a. Current IBRS or female urinary devices available to servicewomen, as well as options being evaluated. Provide pictures with detailed explanations.
 - b. Provide the roadmap for implementation by FY23, broken down by quarter, annotating major milestones (e.g., initial production, final mass production, availability across the Services, and expert training).
 - c. What is the planned funding and who is the specific Office of Primary responsibility (OPR)?
 - d. What is your Service's plan to disseminate IBRS or female urinary devices (e.g., supply chain)?
 - e. What training is provided once IBRS or female urinary devices are sent to installations?

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<p>PHYSICAL FITNESS STANDARDS</p> <p>In accordance with DACOWITS’ Terms of Reference, the E&I Subcommittee will examine the components of the Military Services’ physical fitness tests, to include body fat specifications, height/weight measurements and scales, and physical ability requirements deemed necessary for adequate occupational performance. In addition, the E&I Subcommittee will assess whether the Military Services’ physical fitness standards disproportionately affect women’s career progression and identify solutions, as required.</p>	
8	<p>The Space Force was established three years ago under the Department of the Air Force. In December 2022, via RFI 7, the Committee asked the Military Services to provide updates to their physical fitness training programs. The Space Force was unable to provide a response at that time, due to the information being pre-decisional. The Committee requests a written response from Space Force on the status of their physical fitness training program (include a copy of the physical fitness assessment plan and body composition measurements). Additionally, provide justifications for each event/objective contained within the Space Force fitness assessment plan, to include body composition measurements.</p>
9	<p>In December 2022, via RFI 7, the Committee asked the Military Services to provide updates to their physical fitness training programs. In 2020, the Navy shifted to planks vice sit-ups. Starting in 2023, the Marine Corps will mandate planks, which were added as an option to sit-ups in 2019. The Army’s revised Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT) requires planks in lieu of sit-ups. According to the Army, utilizing the plank as a sole core assessment allows the Service to properly measure soldiers’ core strength consistently and equally, as well as reduce injury rates. The Air Force is the only Service that still allows Airmen to do sit-ups as part of their physical fitness assessment. The Committee requests a written response from the Air Force which provides the scientific and medical justification to keep sit-ups as part of the physical fitness assessment.</p>
<p>PREGNANCY IN THE MILITARY</p> <p>In accordance with DACOWITS’ Terms of Reference, the Well-Being and Treatment (WB&T) Subcommittee will determine if there are gaps in institutional policies and procedures that obstruct pregnant servicewomen from progressing in their military career and recommend policy changes.</p>	
10	<p>In October 2022, Secretary Austin published a memorandum entitled, “Ensuring Access to Reproductive Health Care,” which examined the impacts of the Supreme Court ruling in <i>Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization</i> on Service members’ access to reproductive health care, as well as readiness, recruiting, and retention implications for the Force.</p> <p>The Committee requests a briefing from the Office of Military Personnel Policy and Health Affairs on the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Provide an overview on the Defense Department’s response to the Supreme Court’s ruling in <i>Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization</i>. b. Explain the policy initiatives to preserve privacy for Service members and to ensure access to non-covered reproductive health care. c. Provide information on the steps taken to protect health care providers who may be concerned about the outcome of the <i>Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization</i> decision. d. Provide steps taken to improve awareness of resources about reproductive health care. e. Provide information from the 2022 Women’s Reproductive Health Survey and how the findings influenced the Defense Department’s actions regarding non-covered reproductive health care.

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PREGNANCY IN THE MILITARY	
11	<p>In 2017, the Committee identified concerns with inappropriate and inconsistent use of Family Care Plans (FCPs) across the Military Services and recommended greater DoD oversight of Service implementation. The Committee’s inquiry on this matter led to findings that FCP policies disproportionately impacted servicewomen, often causing them to change occupational specialties or separate from the military, either voluntarily or involuntarily. The Committee is interested in obtaining an update on the use, implementation, and consistency of FCPs across the Armed Services.</p> <p>The Committee requests a briefing from the <u>Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Space Force</u> on the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Provide a list and copies of (or links to) DoD and Service policies and regulations that detail FCP requirements, to include any pending changes to policies/revisions. b. Outline when a FCP required (e.g., what event(s) trigger the FCP requirement) and what categories of Service members are affected? c. Identify the elements of the Service’s FCP (e.g., what information and arrangements must be outlined)? d. What is the timeframe within which a FCP must be submitted and how often must an FCP be submitted/updated? e. When does the Service’s FCP policy require a Service member to surrender custody or guardianship of a dependent child(ren)? f. What command level is the Service approval authority for FCPs? g. What additional documents are Service members required to submit as part of their FCP package? Which documents must be notarized? h. What is the consequence of failure to submit a FCP plan on time, or to make arrangements the Service deems acceptable? i. Identify the number, gender, and category (e.g., single parents, dual military couples, etc.) of Service members separated (voluntarily or involuntarily) in the last five years (FY-18-22) for failure to submit and/or maintain a suitable FCP?
12	<p>In 2017, 2018, and 2020, the Committee made multiple recommendations related to parental leave policies. Committee recommendations urged the Defense Department and the Military Services to implement flexible (non-continuous) parental leave options, to ensure primary and secondary caregivers have maximum flexibility in making caregiving arrangements best suited to their family and service circumstances. Similarly, in 2020, the Committee recommended that action be taken to ensure women serving in the National Guard and Reserves receive full creditable military service, similar to their Active Component counterparts, for unavoidable absences resulting from a pregnancy and/or a birth event. The Committee is interested in receiving an update on the Military Services implementation of the MOMS Leave Act, as well as the Services projected implementation of new parental leave requirements outlined by the Defense Department’s memorandum (dated Jan. 2, 2023), which expands the Military Parental Leave Program (MPLP).</p> <p>The Committee requests a written response from the <u>Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, and National Guard</u> on the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Provide a list and copies of (or links to) DoD and Service policies/regulations that detail MPLP requirements to include any pending changes to policies/revisions. If different policies are in effect for the National Guard and/or Reserve Components, please provide that information as well. b. Has your Service updated parental leave policies to authorize flexible (non-continuous) leave options for or must parental leave be taken all at once? c. Do servicewomen in the National Guard and Reserve Components receive full creditable military service (e.g., pay and retirement points) for absences related to pregnancy or birth events, and for follow-on caregiver leave absences (e.g., postpartum)? Are servicewomen afforded the same amount of parental leave time as their Active-Duty counterparts? Are there any pending changes/revisions to these policies? If so, what is the status?

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GENDER DISCRIMINATION

In accordance with DACOWITS’ Terms of Reference, the WB&T Subcommittee will examine existing Defense Department and Military Services’ institutional policies and procedures to identify gaps that enable gender discrimination to occur unconstrained and recommended necessary policy changes.

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| 13 | <p>The Defense Department’s Office of People Analytics’ (OPA) 2021 Workplace and Gender Relations (WGR) Survey reported that 16 percent of Active-Duty servicewomen experienced gender discrimination (ranging from 12 percent in the Air Force to 22 percent in the Marine Corps), a degree that has steadily increased over the last four surveys conducted since 2014.</p> <p>The Committee requests a briefing from the Office of People Analytics (OPA) on their 2021 WGR Survey findings related to gender discrimination rates and complaints. Ensure the briefing discusses a comparison to historical rates, what types of behaviors comprise gender discrimination, and any identified reasons for the increase in reporting. In addition, the Committee requests a written response from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, and Coast Guard on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. What is your Service doing or plans to do with the data provided by the 2021 WGR Survey and/or prior year WGR Surveys, to include any additional research or studies on gender discrimination comparing or contrasting to the WGR findings?b. Have all Service regulations/policies been updated to include DoD’s most recent definition of prohibited discrimination?c. Provide an update on your Service’s position or considerations regarding the use or revision of gendered language in written materials, displays, and field use (e.g., Marine Corps’ consideration of using non-gendered identifiers for drill instructors). |
| 14 | <p>In December 2022, via RFI 9, the Committee asked the Military Services to provide varied sets of information regarding promotion trends and rates, broken down by gender. As the Committee continues to examine institutional policies and procedures to identify potential gaps that may unintentionally enable gender discrimination to occur, it will be useful to identify and analyze the reasons why servicewomen opt not to compete for promotion.</p> <p>The Committee requests a written response from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, and Coast Guard on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The number of “opt outs” (e.g., requests for withdrawal from promotion consideration), submitted by Service members for promotion to the grades of O-4 through O-6 and to the grades of E-7 through E-9, broken out by gender and the percentage of the total number of men and women being considered in their peer group.b. The top 5 reasons provided for these opt out requests, broken out by gender, if available. |