

# DACOWITS

Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services

65<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY (1951-2016)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



"Our force of the future must continue to benefit from the best people America has to offer. In the 21st century, that requires drawing strength from the broadest possible pool of talent. **This includes women.**"

- Secretary of Defense, Ash Carter  
Remarks on the Women-in-Service Review, Dec. 3, 2015

**Cover photograph captions**

First Female Marine Blue Angels Pilot, Captain Katie Higgins, USMC

One of the Twelve Outstanding Airmen of the Year 2016, Staff Sergeant Raquel Caramanno, USAF

First Female Enlisted Sailor Submariner, Chief Dominique Saavedra, USN

One of the First Women to Graduate From the Army's Elite Ranger Training Course, Captain Kristen Griest, USA

First Female African-American Helicopter Pilot in the U.S. Coast Guard, Lieutenant Junior Grade Lashanda Holmes, USCG

The estimated cost of this report or study for the Department of Defense is approximately \$1,024,000 in Fiscal Years 2016 - 2017. This includes \$365,000 in expenses and \$659,000 in DoD labor. Generated on 2016Nov17 RefID: 3-7F10CB6

# Executive Summary

The Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) (hereafter referred to as the “Committee” or “DACOWITS”) was established in 1951 with a mandate to provide the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) with independent advice and recommendations on matters and policies relating to servicewomen in the Armed Forces of the United States. The Committee is comprised of no more than 20 members who are appointed by the SECDEF and serve in a voluntary capacity for 1- to 4-year terms.

Each December, the Committee selects several study topics to examine during the following year. For 2016, DACOWITS studied 14 topics. The Committee gathered information from multiple sources in examining these topics; for example, briefings and written responses from DoD, Service-level military representatives, and subject matter experts; data collected from focus groups and interactions with Service members during installation visits; and peer-reviewed literature.

Based upon the data collected and analyzed, DACOWITS offers 14 recommendations and four continuing concerns, which follow.

## DACOWITS 2016 Recommendations and Continuing Concerns

### Recruitment and Retention

#### *Mentorship*

- The Secretary of Defense should require the Military Services to include training on mentorship as an essential part of leadership training, including discussion of the role and the meaning of mentorship, and of the mentoring of women by both women and men. The Committee does not recommend formal, mandatory mentorship programs.

#### *Single-Parent Waivers*

- 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.

#### *Continuing Concern*

- Accessions and Marketing

### Employment and Integration

#### *Chaplain Corps*

- The Secretary of Defense should examine the unchanged percentage of women since 2006 in the Chaplain Corps.
- The Secretary of Defense should establish clear oversight of the Services' Chaplain Corps and set guidelines for increasing the diversity of the Chaplain Corps in alignment with the Force of the Future.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Gender Integration*

- The Secretary of Defense should require detailed information from the Marine Corps that will delineate its comprehensive plan to fully integrate women into all military occupational specialties.
- The Secretary of Defense should require the Marine Corps and the Army to collaborate on Infantry training to share best practices on gender integration.

#### *Continuing Concern*

- Combat Gear and Equipment

<sup>1</sup> The Force of the Future, announced by SECDEF Ash Carter on November 19, 2015, is a set of initiatives designed to maintain DoD's competitive edge in recruiting top talent to serve the Nation.

## Well-Being and Treatment

### ***Consolidated Service-Wide Pregnancy and Parenthood Instruction***

- The Secretary of Defense should direct each of the Services to create a consolidated pregnancy and parenthood instruction to provide an all-inclusive, thorough resource for both Service members and their commands.

### ***Marine Corps Performance Evaluation System***

- The Secretary of Defense should have the Office of General Counsel review the Marine Corps Performance Evaluation System (PES), which currently differentiates between women's and men's temporary medical conditions by annotating pregnancy on the PES form.

### ***Obstetrics Multidisciplinary Interdisciplinary Discharge Summary***

- The Secretary of Defense should issue a policy regarding the proper use and distribution of the computer-generated OB MultiID<sup>ii</sup> discharge summaries and make every effort to restrict the release of Protected Health Information (PHI).

### ***Physical Standards***

- The Secretary of Defense should require a complete review and update of the 2002 DoD Physical Fitness and Body Fat Programs Procedures (DoDI 1308.3) with the recent opening of more than 200,000 positions to servicewomen.
- The Secretary of Defense should consider Service-wide adoption of the Air Force methodology and medical research data regarding body fat determined via abdominal circumference measurement to eliminate gender variance.

### ***Strategic Communication***

- The Secretary of Defense should require that strategic wording and imaging across all communication platforms positively shape perceptions regarding the ability of servicewomen to perform to the highest standards of combat readiness.
- The Secretary of Defense should aggressively educate the public and military personnel on the differences between occupational standards and physical fitness standards.

### ***Transition Services***

- The Secretary of Defense should review and enhance the content of current transition assistance programs to better meet the unique needs of transitioning servicewomen.

### ***Continuing Concerns***

- Maternity Uniforms
- Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault Training

A one-page synopsis for each recommendation or continuing concern and the reasoning follows. Detailed reasoning supporting each of these recommendations is provided in the full annual report for 2016, which is available on the DACOWITS Website (<http://dacowits.defense.gov/>).

<sup>ii</sup> Obstetrics Multidisciplinary Interdisciplinary

## Mentorship

DACOWITS continues to be interested in the retention, talent management, and career progression of servicewomen, and the Committee believes mentorship is a contributing factor to success in these areas. DACOWITS has heard focus group participants during the past several years assert that there is a need for mentorship in the Armed Forces, particularly for women. This year, DACOWITS examined the topic of mentorship in greater detail, with a focus on comparing how Service members define mentorship and the types of mentorship efforts they expect from the Services to what the Services are doing to encourage and address mentorship. To inform its recommendation on this topic, DACOWITS identified and reviewed several data sources, all of which are listed in the references for the 2016 DACOWITS annual report, which are provided at the end of this document.

### Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should require the Military Services to include training on mentorship as an essential part of leadership training, including discussion of the role and meaning of mentorship, and of the mentoring of women by both women and men. The Committee does not recommend formal, mandatory mentorship programs.

## Reasoning Summary

Concerns surrounding mentorship or the lack thereof have been voiced by participants in DACOWITS focus groups every year since 2011. Based on these past findings, the Committee chose to examine mentorship in its 2016 focus groups. During this more concerted study, the Committee perceived a clear theme: Mentorship is important to Service members, but there is a near-universal preference for informal mentorship. In the context of this discussion, most participants defined a formal mentorship program as one in which mentors and protégés are matched in some systematic fashion, such as by matching junior and senior Service members within the same unit, rather than allowing mentoring relationships to develop organically through self-selection. Many participants felt that formal mentorship programs added little value, and literature on mentorship has supported this view.

Though participants felt mentors should have more knowledge and experience than protégés, they also said mentors could vary in pay grade and age, come from the same or different career field, and—for most situations—be of another gender. However, same-gender mentors were preferred for personal advice, and female mentors were preferred by women for career guidance. As in past years, the Committee also heard about the challenges servicewomen have faced in finding a mentor. Many servicewomen work with few other women, so identifying a female mentor can be difficult. Moreover, some Service members stated that men are sometimes reluctant to mentor women because they fear being accused of fraternization. DACOWITS believes this fear is hindering the ability of servicewomen to find and benefit from mentorship in the military.

Despite being opposed to formal mentorship programs, some participants recognized the benefit of institutionalizing certain aspects that could lead to the organic formation of successful mentoring relationships. Accordingly, the Committee recommends that the Military Services consider instruction on mentorship as an essential part of leadership training, including discussion of the role and meaning of mentorship, and guidance for both men and women on how to mentor servicewomen. The Committee does not recommend formal, mandatory mentorship programs.

## Single-Parent Waivers

As part of its ongoing examination of the recruitment and accessions of women into the Armed Forces, DACOWITS examined DoD and the Services' policies related to the accessions of single parents. As the Nation's demographics shift and the need to recruit more women persists, the Committee wondered if the Services might be unnecessarily narrowing their potential pool of applicants by not allowing single parents to join the military. To inform its recommendation on this topic, DACOWITS identified and reviewed several data sources, all of which are listed in the references for the 2016 DACOWITS annual report, which are provided at the end of this document.

### 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.

### Reasoning Summary

As the demographics of the Nation and the military shift, and as the need to recruit women into the military persists, DACOWITS believes there may be a meaningful recruiting pool in single parents, particularly women. Presently, all Services have policies or waiver criteria that allow some single parents to join; however, the policies differ across Services, and some are more restrictive than others. Some Services ban or restrict the accessions of single-parent enlisted recruits. Others allow for waivers, such as in cases where prospective members can demonstrate viable family care plans that would ensure care for their children and thus allow them to serve. The Committee believes each of the Military Services should have the ability to grant waivers to allow single parents to serve without giving up custody of their children, when it would be useful and beneficial to the Service.

Family structure is changing across the Nation. There are more single parents in the United States now than ever before. At present, the Armed Forces face a unique dilemma: The population of eligible enlistees is declining while the number of jobs open to women in the Services is increasing. With the opening of all combat positions to women, DACOWITS believes it would be prudent for the Services to review these positions, assignments, and individual circumstances to expand the pool of eligible applicants to include single parents with strong family care plans (e.g., single parents with grandparents living in the same domicile, custody arrangements, other committed adults).

DACOWITS recognizes the challenges, expenses, and risks of accessions of single parents into the Military Services and that each Service has different needs, assignment policies, and basing conditions. Furthermore, each of the Services differs in how it assigns personnel, manages replacements, and deploys Service members in conjunction with contingency operations. In many cases, those downsides may outweigh the benefits of recruiting single parents, but in other cases, they may not. Accordingly, the Committee recommends that each of the Services consider revising its single-parent policy to allow for the option of a waiver to authorize single parents to serve in the military without giving up custody of their children, but only in cases when the facts, circumstances, and occupational requirements would permit, and when the Services would benefit. The Services would maintain the ability to develop their own criteria for when such waivers would be permitted, and each Service would retain the right to be as strict or lenient as needed in granting such waivers to meet the needs of the Service.

## Continuing Concern: Accessions and Marketing

This year, DACOWITS continued its ongoing examination of the accessions of and marketing toward highly qualified female applicants. The Committee was particularly interested in understanding how the Services' marketing had changed with the opening of all positions to servicewomen and the implementation of changes to parental leave policies. DACOWITS identified and reviewed several data sources on this topic, all of which are listed in the references for the 2016 DACOWITS annual report, which are provided at the end of this document.

### Reasoning

DACOWITS continues to believe that the accessions of increasing numbers of women into the Military Services will help create a stronger, more capable force. Some of the Services have instituted credible, meaningful accession goals for women. DACOWITS believes that this is an encouraging trend and applauds those Military Services that have demonstrated a commitment to accelerating the accessions of women through higher recruitment goals.

The Committee has continued to closely follow the accessions of women into the Services. The last few years have seen changes with respect to both parental leave policies and the opening of all positions to women. These changes, in the Committee's view, should support the Services' efforts to continue to increase recruitment of women.



## Chaplain Corps

The proportion of female military chaplains has remained static at approximately 5 percent during the past 10 years despite increases in the overall percentage of women in the Services and the opening of all occupational specialties to women. Following up on its study of the Chaplain Corps in 2006, the Committee focused on the progress the Services have made toward increasing the number of female chaplains in the Armed Forces. To inform its recommendations on this topic, DACOWITS identified and reviewed several data sources, all of which are listed in the references for the 2016 DACOWITS annual report, which are provided at the end of this document.

### Recommendation 1

The Secretary of Defense should examine the unchanged percentage of women since 2006 in the Chaplain Corps.

### Reasoning Summary

The Committee recommended in 2006 that the Chaplain Corps should increase its proportion of female chaplains. Since then, there has been no change in the percentage of women in the Chaplain Corps despite steady progress in increasing the numbers of women in all other branches and job positions in the Services. The focus of this recommendation is to examine the proportional opportunities of female chaplains as a minority group.

When asked about the role of a chaplain, participants in the 2016 DACOWITS focus groups noted that chaplains serve as the link between the Service member and the command and as a resource for commanders. When asked about their perceptions of female chaplains, female chaplains were generally viewed the same as male chaplains. Many participants felt indifferent about chaplain gender. A few of these participants indicated that they perceived the personality of the chaplain as more important than the gender. When asked to identify situations in which a Service member might prefer to consult a chaplain of a particular gender, some Service members identified circumstances under which a female chaplain could be preferred (e.g., marital problems, sexual harassment, sexual assault, gender discrimination). Given the focus group findings and the proportion of women chaplains, the Committee believes the SECDEF should examine why the proportion of women in the Chaplain Corps has not changed since 2006.

### Recommendation 2

The Secretary of Defense should establish clear oversight of the Services' Chaplain Corps and set guidelines for increasing the diversity of the Chaplain Corps in alignment with the Force of the Future.

### Reasoning Summary

In September 2016, the Committee requested a written response from DoD to determine who has oversight of the Services' Chaplain Corps and who is working to address the lack of progression, the extremely limited number of promotions, and the minimal increase in the number of women in the Chaplain Corps. DoD provided the following response: "The Chiefs of Chaplains of the Military Departments, as special staff officers to their respective Service Chiefs, exercise oversight of the Services' Chaplain Corps. The Armed Forces Chaplains Board, comprised of the Chief and Active Duty Deputy Chief of Chaplains of each of the three Military Departments, makes policy recommendations to the Secretary of Defense and the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness on religious, ethical and moral matters for the Military Services, but has no oversight authority regarding the Military Departments Chaplain Corps." The majority of the Committee believes that the SECDEF should establish clear oversight of the Chaplain Corps and set guidelines for improving the diversity within the Corps.



## Gender Integration

Following the December 3, 2015, decision by the SECDEF to open all previously closed units and positions to women, DACOWITS has been closely monitoring the Services' efforts to develop and implement plans to fully integrate women into all occupational specialties. The Committee was interested in the Services' implementation plans, their respective rates of progression on implementing those plans, any facilitators and barriers to progress in this area, and the number of women in each of the following status categories for the newly opened positions: applied, accepted, in progress, failed, and graduated. To inform its recommendations on this topic, DACOWITS identified and reviewed several data sources, all of which are listed in the references for the 2016 DACOWITS annual report, which are provided at the end of this document.

### Recommendation 1

The Secretary of Defense should require detailed information from the Marine Corps that will delineate its comprehensive plan to fully integrate women into all military occupational specialties.

### Reasoning Summary

Full integration of women into all specialties begins with training; those who successfully complete the training for an occupational specialty are then assigned to operational units. Most of the Services and the United States Special Operations Command have created clear training tracks with established, progressive timelines and dashboards outlining their plans for successful gender integration.

The Marine Corps presented its integration plan in both fishbone and scorecard formats, neither of which included a specific timeline. DACOWITS believes the SECDEF should require such a timeline.

### Recommendation 2

The Secretary of Defense should require the Marine Corps and the Army to collaborate on Infantry training to share best practices on gender integration.

### Reasoning Summary

The Army has a history of gender-integrated training, whereas the Marine Corps still carries out some of its training separately for male and female marines. The Marine Corps utilizes Army schools for most of its initial training in Ground Combat Arms specialties. For example, Marine Corps Armor training is conducted at Fort Knox, KY; Artillery training is conducted at Fort Sill, OK; and Combat Engineer training and Military Police training are conducted at Fort Leonard Wood, MO. This cross-Service use of resources is not only cost effective but also strengthens both Services.

Given the Army's history of gender integration, its study of gender integration, and the Army's timeline-based plan for integrating Infantry training, it would be worthwhile for the Army and Marine Corps to collaborate and share ideas on training. This approach could further reduce training-related costs for DoD and allow the two Services to leverage and complement each other's gender integration efforts. DACOWITS believes this collaboration between the two Services should be required by the SECDEF.

## Continuing Concern: Combat Gear and Equipment

Providing servicewomen with properly designed and fitted combat equipment is essential to their safety and well-being, unimpeded performance of military duties, and overall military readiness. This year, DACOWITS continued to monitor the Services' responses to its 2012–2014 recommendations that the Services work collaboratively to provide women with properly designed and fitted combat equipment as soon as possible. DACOWITS identified and reviewed several data sources on this topic, all of which are listed in the references for the 2016 DACOWITS annual report, which are provided at the end of this document.

### Reasoning

This continuing concern is similar to ones expressed by DACOWITS in 2014 and 2015. As all combat assignments are now open to women, a continued focus by and collaboration among the Services—especially the Army and the Marine Corps—on product development, testing, and procurement of properly fitting combat equipment for servicewomen will decrease the potential of injury and further improve combat readiness.

Historically, the Army's approach has been to procure and field combat gear sized for the female body. This is an ongoing priority for the Army, which added several new equipment designs and features in 2016. The Marine Corps recently recognized that it needed to modify its inventory to better accommodate the female population. In July 2016, it expanded its equipment sizing range to cover a wider spectrum of body sizes: from the 2nd percentile for women up to the 98th percentile for men. All of the Services collaborate to develop and procure combat equipment through the Cross Service Warfighter Equipment Board (CS-WEB), which is convened quarterly. The board's focus is to develop common solutions for organizational clothing and individual equipment, including uniforms and personal protective equipment.



The Committee applauds the progress of all of the Services, and especially the Army and the Marine Corps, in refining and accelerating the development, the procurement, and the distribution of properly fitting combat equipment. With an emphasis on the new combat assignments now open to women, the Committee will continue to request updates from the Army and the Marine Corps regarding progress in these areas, as well as collaboration efforts through the CS-WEB. The Committee believes that such updates should be included as part of the SecDef Annual Assessment Requirements, which were recently established to track the gender integration progress of combat units.

## Consolidated Service-Wide Pregnancy and Parenthood Instruction

Continuing its work from 2015, DACOWITS examined pregnancy and parenthood instructions offered by each Service branch to its members. The Committee wanted to understand each policy and determine how best to combine pregnancy, postpartum, and parenthood instructions and policies into one instruction per Service. To inform its recommendation on this topic, DACOWITS identified and reviewed several data sources, all of which are listed in the references for the 2016 DACOWITS annual report, which are provided at the end of this document.

### Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct each of the Services to create a consolidated pregnancy and parenthood instruction to provide an all-inclusive, thorough resource for both Service members and their commands.

### Reasoning

A clear understanding of decisions, actions, and requirements surrounding pregnancy, the postpartum period, and parenthood is vital to ensure the safety, health, and well-being of families as they experience these life events, which are both rewarding and challenging. It is imperative that the Services recognize that having children is not incompatible with military service. Commanding officers and supervisors can play significant roles in helping Service members successfully continue their careers while experiencing and enjoying these events. At the same time, Service members need to understand and fulfill their roles and duties to their Services while starting and raising their families.

For each Service, there are many instructions and policies addressing pregnancy, the postpartum period, and parenthood. In 2015, the Committee made a recommendation to consolidate all of these guidelines into one instruction per Service, thus providing a single resource to assist Service members and their commands.<sup>iii</sup> The Navy and the Marine Corps, for example, each have consolidated and outlined all administrative issues, regulations, and policies pertaining to starting and/or expanding families into one instruction. The Navy has also developed an official Navy Pregnancy and Parenthood Mobile Application that provides guidance for both Service members and command leadership. The application includes discussions on family planning, pregnancy, health care, breastfeeding, adoption, assignments, separation from the military, retention by the military, and other related topics.

The Committee believes the other Services should emulate the Navy's best practices and develop similar resources—including mobile applications—to help Service members and their commands navigate through these complex issues with the least amount of disruption and frustration.

<sup>iii</sup>In 2015, DACOWITS made the following recommendation: The Department of Defense should require that all of the Services create a consolidated pregnancy and parenthood instruction.

## Marine Corps Performance Evaluation System

Continuing its work from 2015, DACOWITS examined the issue of annotating pregnancy on the Marine Corps Performance Evaluation System (PES) form. To inform its recommendation on this topic, DACOWITS identified and reviewed several data sources, all of which are listed in the references for the 2016 DACOWITS annual report, which are provided at the end of this document.

### Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should have the Office of General Counsel review the Marine Corps Performance Evaluation System (PES), which currently differentiates between women's and men's temporary medical conditions by annotating pregnancy on the PES form.

### Reasoning Summary

This recommendation follows up on one the Committee made in 2015.<sup>iv</sup> Throughout a marine's career, all current and prior fitness reports are routinely reviewed by selection boards to evaluate career performance and select marines for augmentation, advancement, schooling, and command. The PES states that it is inappropriate to provide "comments pertaining to medical issues (physical and/or psychological) that do not affect the MRO's [marine reported on] performance of duties or diminish his or her effectiveness as a leader," yet pregnancy is the only medical condition required to be documented on a fitness report. The Marine Corps is the only Service that annotates pregnancy on a fitness report. The respective written guidances from DoD and the Marine Corps on whether/how to record pregnancy in a marine's fitness report do not align. Department of Defense Directive (DoDD) 1308.1, detailing the DoD Physical Fitness and Body Fat Program, states, "Pregnant Service members shall not be held to the standards of fitness and body fat testing until at least 6 months after pregnancy termination." Moreover, Marine Corps Order (MCO) 5000.12E, the Marine Corps Policy Concerning Pregnancy and Parenthood, requires procedures that "ensure that pregnant servicewomen are not adversely evaluated or receive adverse fitness reports or evaluations as a consequence of pregnancy. Pregnancy shall not be mentioned in the comments section. Weight standards exceeded during pregnancy are not cause for adverse fitness reports or evaluations."

The annotation of pregnancy on the servicewoman's performance evaluation/fitness report creates the potential for bias when the member is assessed for promotion. DACOWITS is concerned as to what insights the Marine Corps may seek to gain by documenting a marine's pregnancy on her fitness report and questions the relevance of such a notation to an evaluation of performance and potential for advancement in duty or pay grade. Importantly, no other Service includes pregnancy-related comments on personnel evaluations. Marine Corps servicewomen should be afforded the same treatment on fitness reports as their male counterparts and women in other Services. The SECDEF should ensure the Marine Corps follows DoDD 1308.1 and MCO 5000.12E. All references to pregnancy and postpartum convalescent periods should be removed from fitness reports; doing so will better protect Marines' medical privacy and eliminate information that potentially jeopardizes fair and equitable treatment in future records reviews associated with promotions and assignments.

<sup>iv</sup>In 2015, DACOWITS made the following recommendation: The Marine Corps Performance Evaluation System should not differentiate between women's and men's temporary medical conditions and all references to pregnancy and postpartum convalescent periods should be removed from fitness reports to ensure fairness and the individual's medical privacy.

## Obstetrics Multidisciplinary Interdisciplinary Discharge Summary

DACOWITS continued its study from 2015 on the use and distribution of the Obstetrics Multidisciplinary Interdisciplinary (OB MultiID) discharge summary. Upon a servicewoman's release from a hospital setting, the hospital provides her with the summary, which includes details on her obstetric history, her hospital stay, and post-discharge care instructions. The Committee wanted to better understand what measures are taken to restrict the improper release of OB MultiID discharge summary information, and how the information is used. To inform its recommendation on this topic, DACOWITS identified and reviewed several data sources, all of which are listed in the references for the 2016 DACOWITS annual report, which are provided at the end of this document.

### Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should issue a policy regarding the proper use and distribution of the computer-generated OB MultiID discharge summaries and make every effort to restrict the release of Protected Health Information (PHI).

### Reasoning Summary

DACOWITS repeats this recommendation from 2015.<sup>v</sup> DACOWITS continues to be concerned about the improper release and/or use of PHI. When a servicewoman receives care from a military obstetrician/gynecologist, she is required to complete a form detailing her obstetric history. The provider then assimilates the information from the form into the servicewoman's comprehensive obstetric medical record. After treatment in and release from a hospital setting, this information is used to generate the OB MultiID discharge summary. Based on written responses from the Services to a DACOWITS RFI in September 2016, there are still many challenges and a lack of specificity regarding dissemination of this document and/or the information it contains.

The purpose of the discharge summary is to outline the details of a patient's hospital stay and provide recommendations for care following discharge from the hospital. This is PHI and belongs to the patient. A discharge summary should be treated as a personal medical record and protected as such and should never be used as a leave request for a commanding officer.

There is no policy outlining the requirement for a servicewoman to share OB MultiID discharge summary information with her chain of command to justify an inability to perform particular job functions and/or request convalescent leave. This lack of guidance creates confusion and instances in which servicewomen share PHI needlessly.

A Service member's chain of command needs to know only whether there are limitations in the member's ability to perform duties, information that can be obtained through communication with medical providers treating the member. Leaders also need to know the expected length of convalescent leave; however, specific etiology is generally not necessary. In cases of other illnesses and/or injuries, specific diagnoses usually are not shared with leaders because it is generally not necessary for the chain of command to know specifically why a medical limitation is in place. Therefore, DACOWITS believes the SECDEF should issue a policy on how such personal medical information is used and distributed.

<sup>v</sup>In 2015, DACOWITS made the following recommendation: The Department of Defense should issue a policy regarding the proper use and distribution of the computer-generated OB MultiID Discharge Summaries and make every effort to eliminate the release of this protected health information.

## Physical Standards

DACOWITS continues to be interested in policies that directly affect the retention and promotion of service-women in the Armed Forces – specifically, policies related to physical standards. The Committee is interested in understanding how these policies are perceived by Service members and the rationale behind each policy, especially with the recent opening of more than 200,000 positions to servicewomen. To inform its recommendations on this topic, DACOWITS identified and reviewed several data sources, all of which are listed in the references for the 2016 DACOWITS annual report, which are provided at the end of this document.

### Recommendation 1

The Secretary of Defense should require a complete review and update of the 2002 DoD Physical Fitness and Body Fat Programs Procedures (DoDI [Department of Defense Instruction] 1308.3) with the recent opening of more than 200,000 positions to servicewomen.

### Recommendation 2

The Secretary of Defense should consider Service-wide adoption of the Air Force methodology and medical research data regarding body fat determined via abdominal circumference measurement to eliminate gender variance.

## Reasoning Summary

With the recent opening of more than 200,000 positions to servicewomen, it is vital that the SECDEF require a complete review of the DoD Physical Fitness and Body Fat Programs Procedures (DoDI 1308.3). The instruction is 14 years old as of the writing of this report and is based upon a dated approach and methodology. Under DoDD 1308.1, “Service members whose duties require muscular and cardio-respiratory endurance may be hampered in performing their duties when body fat exceeds 26 percent in males and 36 percent in females.” The Marine Corps applies the most stringent body fat standard, whereas the other Military Services are slightly less strict. The opening of additional combat positions to women necessitates a need for servicewomen to be able to accumulate greater muscular strength and endurance, and thus, the need to increase overall body mass (e.g., weight).

The Committee recommends that the SECDEF update the height, weight, and body fat charts for the Military Services based on the latest medical data and health information to prevent injury and ensure Service members are fit and operationally ready. The Army, the Coast Guard, the Marine Corps, and the Navy currently calculate body fat percentages based on an individual’s height and weight; the allowable ranges differ by gender and age. To preclude gender differentiation, the Committee recommends that body fat be calculated solely by measuring abdominal circumference, an accepted method of testing one’s level of body fat, which has been adopted by the Air Force.

Under current body fat testing methodologies, women are discharged from the Military Services more frequently than their male counterparts. In a meta-analysis of eating disorder symptoms and diagnoses in the Services, researchers found that military weight standards and fitness tests contribute to eating disorder symptoms in the military. Service members (both male and female) often resort to unhealthy measures to lose weight quickly in order to pass the body composition test, but there is also a direct correlation between the historically more stringent body composition standards for female Service members and eating disorders. Under the Force of the Future initiative, DoD is emphasizing the military’s retention of women. As part of this effort, the SECDEF should require a full review of DoD’s approach to body composition requirements as well as subsequent impacts of these policies on operational readiness, family planning, and the overall health and wellness of women serving in the Armed Forces.

## Strategic Communication

As part of its review of the Services' gender integration efforts, DACOWITS examined strategic communication efforts relevant to the opening of all positions to women. The Committee was interested in better understanding Service members' perceptions of DoD and Service communications about the purpose of gender integration and its relationship to combat readiness. To inform its recommendations on this topic, DACOWITS identified and reviewed several data sources, all of which are listed in the references for the 2016 DACOWITS annual report, which are provided at the end of this document.

### Recommendation 1

The Secretary of Defense should require that strategic wording and imaging across all communication platforms positively shape perceptions regarding the ability of servicewomen to perform to the highest standards of combat readiness.

### Recommendation 2

The Secretary of Defense should aggressively educate the public and military personnel of the differences between occupational standards and physical fitness standards.

## Reasoning Summary

DACOWITS believes that female Service members will be more receptive to pursuing, and have greater success serving in, newly opened combat positions if strategic communication more effectively addresses their capabilities and contributions to the combat readiness of the Services. The Committee believes the mission for marketing communication, both internal and external, is to shape the impressions of the target audience as it relates to a specific campaign—in this case, women serving in direct combat.

DACOWITS' 2016 focus groups generated several findings related to gender integration efforts. First, participants had mixed opinions on gender integration, with a growing number noting the value of female perspectives and capabilities while others were concerned about allegations of lower physical fitness and occupational standards for women. Second, most 2016 focus group participants said they disliked the phrase "gender neutral" and preferred the blanket term "standards." Instead of using the phrase "gender integration," which some associate with a social agenda, DACOWITS recommends that DoD use other language, such as "talent leverage," to highlight combat readiness. DACOWITS believes it is imperative that both military personnel and the public clearly understand the differences between occupational and physical fitness standards.

In October 2016, DACOWITS conducted a comprehensive review of the images used on each Service's primary Website (those with Web addresses ending in ".mil") and recruiting Website (those with Web addresses ending in ".com"). The imagery representation of servicewomen in the military was not representative of the vision provided by senior leadership. Across all of the ".mil" and ".com" sites, only a small percentage of the images of people included women (21 percent and 23 percent, respectively). There were substantial differences in the imagery representation of servicewomen by Service. Of the images that included people, only 6 percent of those on the ".mil" sites and 4 percent of those on the ".com" sites portrayed women in nontraditional roles.

DACOWITS recommends DoD use a strategic communication strategy that focuses on text and image selection to positively shape perceptions regarding the talent women contribute to combat readiness. We believe that a centralized, strategic communication plan will help minimize misconceptions about the purpose of gender integration and the differences between physical fitness and occupational standards.

## Transition Services

As part of its review of servicewomen's overall wellness, DACOWITS examined the transition services available to Service members. The Committee was interested in better understanding what services were available to servicewomen to help them transition to civilian life. The Committee also reviewed data on the wellness of servicewomen after transitioning to civilian life to understand the concerns that are most relevant for transitioning servicewomen and their prevalence. To inform its recommendation on this topic, DACOWITS identified and reviewed several sources, all of which are listed in the references for the 2016 DACOWITS annual report, which are provided at the end of this document.

### Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should review and enhance the content of current transition assistance programs to better meet the unique needs of transitioning servicewomen.

### Reasoning Summary

The current Transition Assistance Program (TAP) does not include content that addresses the unique challenges and needs of transitioning servicewomen. This content gap has been noted in a comprehensive assessment by the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) of the policies and programs serving veterans. DAV's research showed female veterans had knowledge gaps about transition services available through DoD, and many lacked

understanding of their eligibility for services provided by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Female veterans displayed unique transition circumstances: when compared with men, women were less likely to be married; more likely to be married to a fellow Service member if married; more likely to be a single parent; more likely to be divorced; and more likely to be unemployed following military service. Women veterans also tended to be younger than their male counterparts and, for reasons that are not well understood, were less likely to use VA benefits.

According to the DAV report, compared with male veterans, female veterans have found it more difficult to translate technical skills they gained in the military to jobs in the private sector. Female veterans have struggled with unemployment following the recent recession, lagging behind nonveteran women and both veteran and nonveteran men. The report also found that the rate of homelessness for female veterans in 2013 was nearly double that for nonveteran women.

The SECDEF should augment TAP content to better meet the unique needs of transitioning servicewomen. In concert with its TAP partners, DoD should conduct a needs assessment of servicewomen and develop a TAP breakout session for female military members to address those needs. DoD and the Military Services should also undertake a comprehensive review of ad hoc programs offered by various military units and external transition support programs to promote best practices in transition support and referral approaches.



## Continuing Concern: Maternity Uniforms

This year, DACOWITS reviewed maternity uniform designs, prices, and distribution policies. DACOWITS was interested in understanding servicewomen's experience with maternity uniform policies and the quality and utility of the garments available to them. DACOWITS identified and reviewed several data sources on this topic, all of which are listed in the references for the 2016 DACOWITS annual report, which are provided at the end of this document.

### Reasoning

During its 2016 focus groups, the Committee heard servicewomen's concerns about the design and appearance of maternity uniforms. To follow up, the Committee then received briefings from the Services on these issues. As was explained to the Committee in September 2016, there is a wide variety of maternity uniform designs, materials, sizes, and prices. Moreover, there are several different distribution/purchasing policies, depending on the rank/rate of the Service member and her Service. Several of the Services are working to update their maternity uniforms and policies related to the administration of these items. The Committee will follow these updates closely and review any changes.



## Continuing Concern: Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault Training

As it has for several years, DACOWITS continued to examine sexual harassment and sexual assault training provided by each Service. The Committee was interested in better understanding the best practices in this area. The Committee was also interested in how Service members felt about the effectiveness of the training, what made the training successful or unsuccessful, and any adverse or unintended factors that occurred as a result of the training. DACOWITS identified and reviewed several data sources on sexual harassment and sexual assault training, all of which are listed in the references for the 2016 DACOWITS annual report, which are provided at the end of this document.

### Reasoning

DACOWITS believes that the content, delivery, and frequency of sexual harassment and sexual assault training must be reevaluated to reemphasize the critical linkages between sexual harassment and sexual assault and the negative impact of these behaviors on force readiness and combat effectiveness. With the opening of combat positions to women, the timing is right for such a reevaluation. As in previous years, in 2016, the Committee found in focus groups that training around sexual harassment and sexual assault was influencing the gender integration process. Some participants described how this frequent training could contribute to feelings of trepidation around professional interactions between men and women.

In the Committee's 2016 focus groups, some participants offered their opinions that sexual harassment and sexual assault training was necessary and useful, but others criticized the content, the delivery, and the frequency of the training. Some of the participants perceived Microsoft PowerPoint lectures and computer-based training to be less effective than interactive skits and lectures in cultivating awareness about sexual harassment and sexual assault.

This topic continues to be of interest to the Committee. DACOWITS acknowledges two other Federal Advisory Committees that monitor sexual assault: the Judicial Proceedings Panel, and the Defense Advisory Committee on Investigation, Prosecution, and Defense of Sexual Assault in the Armed Forces.



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