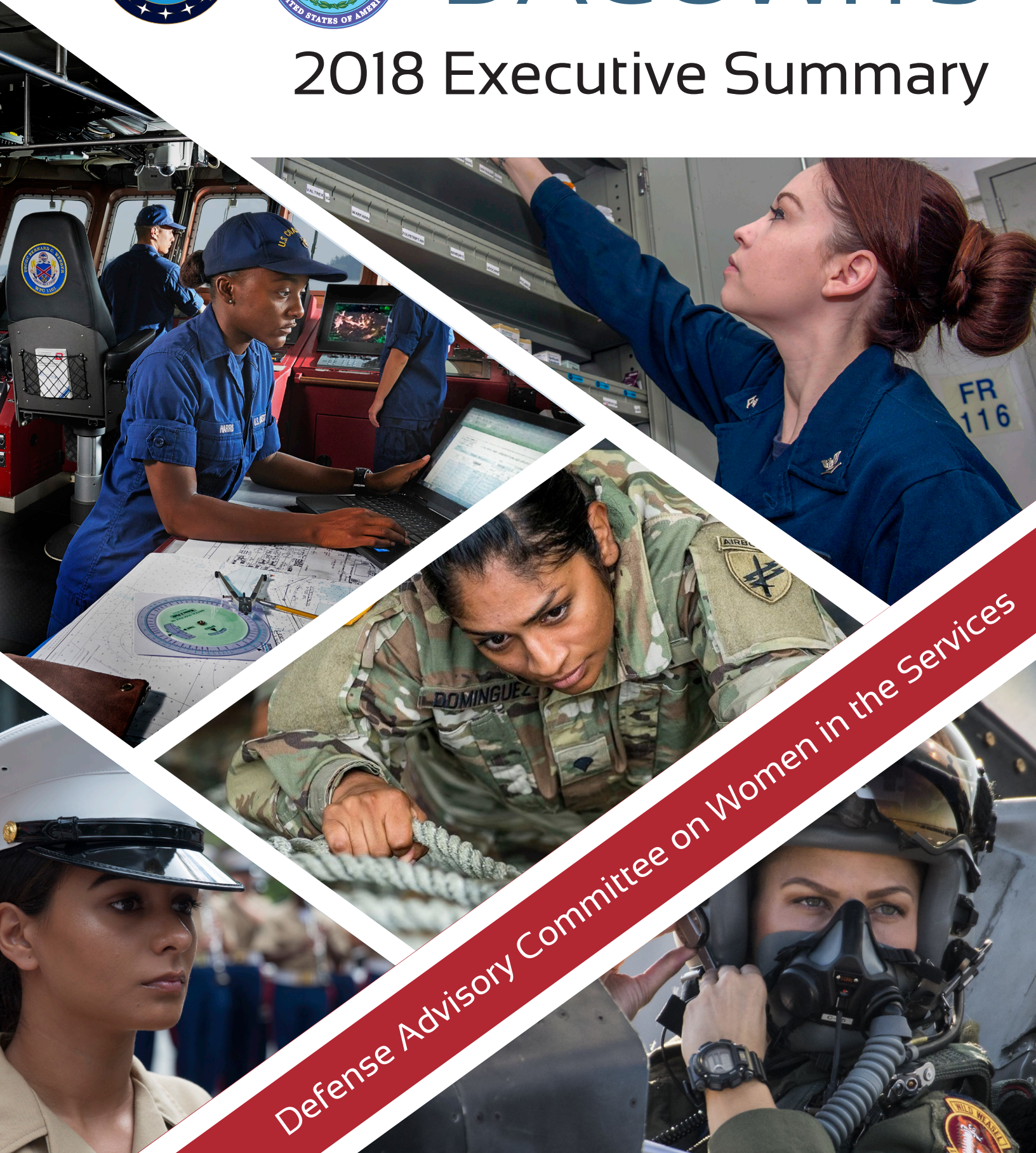




# DACOWITS

## 2018 Executive Summary



Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services

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# Executive Summary

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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 the recruitment of servicewomen in the Armed Forces of the United States. The Committee is composed of no more than 20 members who are appointed by the SecDef and serve in a voluntary capacity for 1- to 4-year terms.

The SecDef, via the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, provides the Committee study topics to examine each year. For 2018, DACOWITS studied 15 topics. The Committee gathered information from multiple sources in examining these topics; for example, briefings and written responses from Department of Defense (DoD) and Service-level military representatives; 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 nine recommendations and one continuing concern. Each recommendation and continuing concern, along with a brief synopsis of the supporting reasoning for each, follows. A detailed reasoning supporting each recommendation and continuing concern is provided in the full annual report for 2018, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

## DACOWITS 2018 Recommendations and Continuing Concern

### Recruitment and Retention

#### Marketing Strategies

##### **Recommendation**

*The Secretary of Defense should require all Military Services to tailor their marketing to inspire more women to serve by addressing misconceptions, highlighting motivating opportunities, and providing more emphasis on realistic portrayals of women who serve.*

##### **Synopsis**

DACOWITS believes the recruitment of high-quality servicewomen is critical to

maintaining a mission-ready force. To this end, the Committee began investigating the topic of gender-specific marketing more than 25 years ago. When compared with the population of women who are eligible to serve, female Service members are underrepresented across all the Military Services. Despite some evidence of recent progress, research conducted by the Committee continues to highlight specific challenges the Services' marketing efforts face in inspiring young women to serve. First, there is evidence to suggest women's concerns about leaving friends and family and a fear they will not succeed deter them from joining the military. Research also suggests young women are not likely to be aware the military offers the types of opportunities that typically motivate them to join, such as opportunities for education, travel, and helping others. Finally, research indicates junior Service members do not feel current advertising efforts realistically depict servicewomen's lives and see this disconnect as counterproductive. Therefore, the Committee believes the Military Services could successfully inspire more women to serve by emphasizing marketing approaches designed to address common misperceptions about military service; highlighting motivating opportunities afforded by military service; and more realistically portraying women who serve.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 2 of the full annual report for 2018, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

## Employment and Integration

### Gender Integration

#### **Recommendation**

*The Secretary of Defense should endorse the 2017 DACOWITS recommendation on gender integration directing the Military Services to share lessons learned and best practices on the progress of their implementation plans and to communicate that progress more effectively with Service members as well as the general public.*

#### **Synopsis**

Since its establishment, one of DACOWITS' principle concerns has been the integration of women into the Armed Forces. In December of 2015, the SecDef approved the opening of all previously closed units, occupational specialties, positions, and training to women. The Military Services' integration implementation plans were subsequently approved in 2016. In conjunction with the recent gender integration progress that has been made by the Services, one of the challenges has been the lack of a strategic communication plan regarding the integration of women into the Armed Forces. DACOWITS believes there has been an insufficient level of collaboration and communication occurring within and among the Military Services. DACOWITS is also concerned about misperceptions shared by some DACOWITS focus group participants regarding the status of gender integration (e.g., the belief that physical

standards had been lowered for women entering previously closed occupations). Establishing a formal process by which Services communicate about gender integration could better address these misconceptions.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 3 of the full annual report for 2018, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

### Marine Corps Recruit Training

#### **Continuing Concern**

##### *Marine Corps Recruit Training*

#### **Synopsis**

DACOWITS has renewed its study on gender integration within recruit training. The Committee first studied female recruit training in 1988; its research on that issue now focuses on ensuring women are provided the same training opportunities as men. Full gender integration across military occupations and positions relies on integration at all levels of training. DACOWITS believes that initial training is foundational to Service members' readiness. However, the Marine Corps is currently the only Service that does not endorse full gender integration during recruit training, highlighted by women not being incorporated into each recruit training battalion. Although the Committee is encouraged by the Marine Corps' movement toward integration, it continues

to encourage and will monitor further efforts to integrate recruit training.

Reasoning supporting this continuing concern is provided in Chapter 3 of the full annual report for 2018, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

### Personal Protective Equipment

#### **Recommendation**

*The Secretary of Defense should require all Military Services, including the Reserve/Guard, to provide servicewomen with gender appropriate and properly fitting personal protective equipment and gear for both training and operational use.*

#### **Synopsis**

Although DACOWITS is encouraged by the scientific and technological advances the Services are employing to accommodate the variety of body types present across the Armed Forces, including the Reserve and Guard, servicewomen continue to lack accessibility to this new equipment for both training and deployment. The Committee first addressed servicewomen's gear in 1978. Now that all military occupations have been opened to women, there is an increased need for female-appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and combat gear. Properly fitting equipment is essential to the success of individual Service members as well as the military as a whole. Moreover, Service members need



to be familiarized with their combat gear to be fully prepared in the field. This requires that all Service members are provided correctly fitting PPE and gear during predeployment training. The Services have noted deploying troops receive priority for available equipment and gear, yet research has shown that poorly fitting equipment is a leading cause of injury for all Service members—deployed and in training. The Committee believes that ensuring access to properly fitting PPE and gear for training and deployment will assist in the gender integration process as well as improve overall combat effectiveness.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 3 of the full annual report for 2018, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

## Well-Being and Treatment

### Healthy Unit Climate

#### **Recommendation**

*The Secretary of Defense should conduct a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of the Military Services' policies, standards, training, and enforcement to eliminate gender discrimination and sexual harassment.*

#### **Synopsis**

The presence of sexual harassment and gender discrimination degrades healthy unit climates for all Service members,

in turn negatively affecting military readiness. Although DoD has increased efforts to reduce sexual harassment and mistreatment in the Armed Forces, the “#MeToo” movement has highlighted areas that require continued attention. DACOWITS has been examining issues related to sexual harassment and gender discrimination for nearly 40 years. In 1980, the Committee made its first recommendation on sexual harassment, an issue that strongly influences servicewomen’s well-being. The Military Services have addressed inappropriate behavior with leadership and training initiatives intended to foster a unit culture and climate that eliminates the spectrum of behaviors that can lead to gender discrimination and sexual harassment. However, despite years of targeted efforts by DoD and the Military Services, the Committee’s research revealed that gender discrimination and sexual harassment—malignant behaviors that corrode healthy unit climates and undermine readiness—have continued to persist in the ranks. By conducting a comprehensive assessment of the Military Services’ policies, standards, training, and enforcement of efforts aimed at eliminating gender discrimination and sexual harassment, DoD can better direct efforts to address these behaviors and ultimately increase unit cohesion and readiness.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 4 of the full annual report for 2018, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

### Parental Leave Policies

#### **Recommendation**

*The Secretary of Defense should consider proposing legislation to allow the Military Services to permit flexible (noncontinuous) use of primary and secondary caregiver leave, if requested by the caregiver.*

#### **Synopsis**

The Committee continues to be interested in the enhancement of parental leave policies to help encourage workforce recruitment and retention of Service members by making military benefits more competitive with private sector benefits. Continuing its work from 2015, 2016, and 2017, DACOWITS examined issues and concerns surrounding parenthood, which included a review of recent adjustments to the Military Parental Leave Program. In 2017, DACOWITS made two recommendations concerning parental leave policies to expand eligibility and increase flexibility for military parents. Despite recent improvements to DoD parental leave policies, Service members continue to seek a balance between adequately caring for their families and serving as a respected, contributing member of the military team. Affording Service members the option to accommodate medical appointments or childcare needs via flexible leave would allow the individual to balance both roles. Flexible caregiver policies have been successfully implemented in the civilian sector, allowing caregivers to

meet the needs of their families without jeopardizing their careers. Flexible caregiver leave could also positively affect unit readiness: having the military member back in the duty section—even part time—could ensure continuity for the mission and avoid disruptions to unit preparedness. Therefore, the Committee believes a commander's option to grant noncontinuous use of primary and secondary caregiver leave would increase retention and unit readiness.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 4 of the full annual report for 2018, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

#### **Recommendation**

*The Secretary of Defense should mandate the consistent application of 21 days of leave for secondary caregivers across all Military Services to be consistent with the maximum allotment afforded in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017.*

#### **Synopsis**

The Committee continues to be interested in the enhancement of parental leave policies to help encourage the workforce recruitment and retention of Service members by making military benefits more competitive with private sector benefits. Continuing its work from 2015, 2016, and 2017, DACOWITS examined issues and concerns surrounding parenthood, which



included a review of recent adjustments to the Military Parental Leave Program. The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017, Section 521, increased the allowable leave for secondary caregivers (formerly paternity leave) from 10 to 21 days. Although the Air Force, Army, and Coast Guard increased their secondary caregiver leave to 21 days, the Marine Corps and Navy allotted only 14 days. The Committee believes this policy should be consistent across the Armed Forces, and authorizing Service members the maximum allowable 21 days of nonchargeable secondary caregiver leave will afford equitable opportunities to all military members, enabling them to best care for their families and promote retention.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 4 of the full annual report for 2018, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

### Performance Evaluations

#### **Recommendation**

*The Secretary of Defense should direct the Marine Corps to eliminate the pregnancy references found in the Marine Corps' Performance Evaluation System, which currently identifies a female Marine's health status by using the code "PREG" in the weight section.*

#### **Synopsis**

Following up on previous recommendations, DACOWITS continued to examine the issue of annotating pregnancy on the Marine Corps Performance Evaluation System (PES) form in 2018. In 2015 and 2016, DACOWITS recommended that the Marine Corps no longer differentiate between women's and men's temporary medical conditions and remove all references to pregnancy (code "PREG") on the PES form. In May 2018, the Marine Corps issued Marine Corps Order (MCO) 1610.7A, a revision to MCO 1610.7; this modification addressed the majority of the Committee's concerns by eliminating most of the references to a servicewoman's pregnancy status. However, the Service continued to identify a female Marine's health status by using the code "PREG" in the weight section of the PES form. In September 2018, DACOWITS voted to recommend that the Marine Corps remove the remaining reference to pregnancy to prevent any unintended discriminatory reporting and policy violations. Removing any indication of a servicewoman's pregnancy would eliminate any potential for bias with regard to her promotions, augmentations, resident schooling, command, and duty assignments.

In November 2018, the Marine Corps issued Marine Administrative Message 657/18, which provides guidance regarding

the identification of pregnancy on a Marine's fitness report and the removal of the "PREG" code.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 4 of the full annual report for 2018, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

### Transition Assistance

#### **Recommendation**

*The Secretary of Defense should direct all Military Services to improve their support to active duty women transitioning to the Reserve/Guard or civilian sector by offering programs similar to the Women's Health Transition Pilot Program, a best practice implemented by the Air Force in partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs.*

#### **Synopsis**

As part of its review of servicewomen's overall wellness, DACOWITS continues to examine the assistance provided to Service members as they transition out of the military. The Committee first examined the topic of transition assistance in 2016; it recommended that the SecDef review and enhance transition assistance programs to better meet the unique needs of transitioning servicewomen. Women are the fastest growing subgroup of veterans, yet fewer female than male veterans seek services and support from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

To better support the increasing numbers of women who leave the military and enter the VA support system, the Air Force and VA partnered to offer the Women's Health Transition Pilot Program, a new, 1-day supplemental workshop offered as part of the Air Force's transition assistance program. This pilot program has been well received by women who have participated and has been identified as a best practice by the Committee because it informs participants of the resources available to servicewomen through VA. The Committee believes the expansion of the Air Force's Women's Health Transition Pilot Program or programs similar to it should be made available to all servicewomen.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 4 of the full annual report for 2018, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

#### **Recommendation**

*The Secretary of Defense should encourage the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to address the impact of the Veterans Affairs' motto/mission statement, "To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan," on servicewomen transitioning into their care.*

#### **Synopsis**

As part of its review of servicewomen's well-being as they transition out of the military, the Committee requested more

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information from VA on its motto, “To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan,” as it relates to gender inclusivity. In 2018, DACOWITS examined VA’s accessibility to transitioning servicewomen. As written, the use of gender-specific language in VA’s motto/mission statement sends a message of exclusion to servicewomen. Although the motto is drawn from President Abraham Lincoln’s 1865 inauguration speech during an era in which only men served, it was adopted in 1959, after women began to serve. DACOWITS believes that an organization’s use of gender-neutral language can affect the first impressions of both its intended

participants and the public and can promote a message of trust and inclusion. Gender-neutral pronouns have been widely adopted across the Military Services and the Military Service Academies. The continued use of this motto undermines VA efforts to provide support and resources to servicewomen transitioning out of the military because its gender-specific language sends an unwelcoming message of exclusion.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 4 of the full annual report for 2018, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>)





Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services