

# DACOWITS



Defense Advisory  
Committee on Women  
in the Services

## 2019 Executive Summary



## Cover photos

### First, right

*Navy Seaman Ashlyn Holt and other sailors man the rails as the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln departs from Naval Station Norfolk, Va., for a deployment, April 1, 2019.*

### Second, right

*Sgt. Brittany Sylvester-Rivera, 3d U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard) graduates as part of 'Super Squad' during her graduation on March 17, 2017 at Fort Benning, G.A. Sylvester-Rivera is the first infantry female noncommissioned officer to successfully reclass into all bravo combat military occupational specialty (MOS).*

### Third, right

*Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Chewanda Roberts instructs recruits on proper drill movements during their evening routine at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C., June 27, 2019.*

### First, left

*Senior Airman Andrea Gamboa and members of the rifle team wait to begin the Team Eglin Honor Guard graduation ceremony at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., Sept. 6, 2019.*

### Second, left

*A crew member aboard the Coast Guard cutter Healy handles a line to get underway from a pier in Seattle, July 22, 2019.*

*The estimated cost of this report or study for the Department of Defense is approximately \$1,202,000 in Fiscal Years 2019 - 2020. This includes \$432,000 in expenses and \$770,000 in DoD labor. Generated on 2019Nov13 RefID: 1-FA89AD6.*

# List of DACOWITS Members

General Janet C. Wolfenbarger, USAF, Retired (Chair)  
Command Sergeant Major Michele S. Jones, USA, Retired (Vice Chair)  
Captain Kenneth J. Barrett, USN, Retired (appointed June 2019)  
Colonel John T. Boggs, USMC, Retired  
Major General Sharon K. G. Dunbar, USAF, Retired (through March 2019)  
Lieutenant General Judith A. Fedder, USAF, Retired  
Sergeant Major Norma J. Helsham, USA, Retired (through September 2019)  
Ms. Therese A. Hughes  
Dr. Kyleanne M. Hunter, USMC Veteran  
Ms. LeeAnne B. Linderman (appointed June 2019 through December 2019)  
Major Priscilla W. Locke, USA, Retired  
Lieutenant General Kevin W. Mangum, USA, Retired (appointed June 2019)  
Ms. Janie L. Mines, USN Veteran  
Fleet Master Chief JoAnn M. Ortloff, USN, Retired  
Brigadier General Jarrisse J. Sanborn, USAF, Retired (appointed June 2019)  
Brigadier General Allyson R. Solomon, ANG, Retired (appointed June 2019)  
Rear Admiral Cari B. Thomas, USCG, Retired

## Report Contributors

### DACOWITS Staff

Colonel Toya J. Davis, USA, Military Director  
Colonel R. Elaine Freeman, USA, Incoming Military Director  
Ms. Jessica C. Myers, Program Support Strategic Advisor  
Mr. Robert D. Bowling II, Operations Officer

### Insight Policy Research

Ms. Rachel J. Gaddes  
Ms. Zoe R. Jacobson  
Dr. Sidra J. Montgomery  
Mr. Jordan W. Stangle  
Ms. Ayanna K. Williams



*Air Force Airman 1st Class Jasmin Martinez helps reconfigure munitions on an A-10C Thunderbolt II aircraft during an exercise at Moody Air Force Base, Ga., April 19, 2019.*

# Executive Summary

# 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 the recruitment of servicewomen in the Armed Forces of the United States. Since its inception the Committee’s charter has expanded to include a focus on recruitment and retention, employment and integration, and the well-being and treatment of U.S. servicewomen. The Committee is now

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.

Each year, the SecDef, via the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, provides the Committee study topics to examine during the following year. For 2019, DACOWITS studied 8 topics. The Committee gathered information from multiple sources in examining these topics; for example, briefings and written responses from 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 16 recommendations and 2 continuing concerns. Each recommendation and continuing concern, along with a brief synopsis of the supporting reasoning for each, follows. A detailed reasoning supporting each recommendation and a discussion of each continuing concern is provided in the full annual report for 2019, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).



*A Coast Guard crew member reunites with her dogs as she returns home to Naval Station Mayport, Fla., Jan. 29, 2019.*

# DACOWITS 2019 Recommendations and Continuing Concerns

## Recruitment and Retention

### Conscious and Unconscious Gender Bias

#### *Recommendation*

*The Secretary of Defense should establish a DoD policy that defines and provides guidance to eliminate conscious and unconscious gender bias.*

#### *Synopsis*

DACOWITS continued its 2018 efforts to study gender discrimination in the Military Services in 2019 by examining the prevalence and impact of conscious and unconscious gender bias on various aspects of Service members' careers, which included recruitment, selection of occupational specialties, and performance evaluations. The Committee believes the Military Services are at varying levels of advancement in addressing gender bias in these areas and others. The Military Services lack consistency in defining, addressing, and eliminating both conscious and unconscious gender bias, especially in occupational specialties that were recently opened to women. The Committee believes this inconsistency will continue to create an environment in which servicewomen

experience the negative impacts of gender bias affecting unit cohesion, readiness, and retention. To address these concerns, the Committee recommends DoD establish a policy that defines conscious and unconscious gender bias, provides guidance to the Military Services on strategies for eliminating such bias, and directs the Services to establish Service-specific policies and regulations.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 2 of the full annual report for 2019, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

## Improving Female Retention

#### *Recommendation*

*The Secretary of Defense should direct the Military Services to review the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Improving Gender Diversity in the U.S. Coast Guard: Identifying Barriers to Female Retention study and implement the relevant findings for improving female retention in their respective Services.*

#### *Synopsis*

Military personnel trends have revealed all the Military Services face challenges with the retention of servicewomen, particularly at the mid-grade levels. Given these challenges and the lack of recent or comprehensive reviews of barriers to the retention of

servicewomen in each Service, the SecDef should direct the Military Services to review the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) 2019 *Improving Gender Diversity in the U.S. Coast Guard: Identifying Barriers to Female Retention* study and implement the relevant findings for improving the retention of servicewomen.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 2 of the full annual report for 2019, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>)

## **Variance in Women's Retention at Senior Levels, With Emphasis on Race/Ethnicity**

### *Recommendation*

*The Secretary of Defense should direct the Military Services to develop and implement initiatives to increase senior female representation as a part of the Total Force, at the E-9 and O-7 and above grade levels, to include emphasis on increasing racial and ethnic diversity at these levels.*

### **Synopsis**

The Committee continues to observe low representation of women at all levels of the military, including the most senior ranks, and even less representation of servicewomen who are racial or ethnic minorities at the E-9 and O-7 and above ranks. Research has identified a range of factors that affect the retention of women and contribute to the small pool of promotable women. Although the Military Services have made

progress in increasing racial and ethnic diversity among servicewomen, there are many areas for improvement. Increasing the number of female role models and mentors could be one way to increase overall diversity. The Committee believes additional research is needed to identify and test strategies and initiatives to expand opportunities and remove obstacles that impede servicewomen of all backgrounds from promoting to top leadership positions in the military.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 2 of the full annual report for 2019, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

## **Employment and Integration**

### **Physical Fitness Tests**

#### *Recommendation*

*The Secretary of Defense should conduct a comprehensive, scientific review of height and weight standards as well as body fat measurement techniques and use the findings as a baseline for setting a Department-wide standard for measurement and acceptable levels.*

#### **Synopsis**

Current body fat guidelines are based on outdated science and result in some female Service members being unfairly evaluated. These unfair standards can have a range of implications, including contributing to bias; unattainable measures for women,

especially women of color; and beliefs that women are held to stricter standards than men. Given the breadth of new research, DoD should revisit and reevaluate its current height and weight standards and body fat measures to align them with the current state of the science. Adopting a height and weight standard and body fat measurement technique that is scientifically based on physiological gender differences will more accurately assess the overall health of Service members and further help to address bias in the Military Services because women will be evaluated by a physiologically accurate standard.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 3 of the full annual report for 2019, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

### **Recommendation**

*The Secretary of Defense should direct the Military Services to implement a holistic, preventative health screening, conducted by medical professionals, as part of the overall physical fitness assessment and provide access to uniform and consistent health and nutritional counseling as part of their physical fitness programs.*

### **Synopsis**

Current physical fitness assessments (PFAs) are not uniform or standardized in assessing the holistic health and wellness of Servicemembers and do not include consistent access to nutritional resources.

Preventative health screenings will allow the Military Services to facilitate the long-term health of all Service members, therefore enhancing unit readiness. Participants in DACOWITS 2019 focus groups perceived that the current PFAs were inadequate at assessing overall health. There is an opportunity to enhance the overall health, wellness, and readiness of the force by introducing a more comprehensive approach to assessing physical fitness and health that includes preventative health screenings and increased access to nutritional resources.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 3 of the full annual report for 2019, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

### **Recommendation**

*The Secretary of Defense should publish and disseminate a standard statement to clarify the difference between the purpose and uses of the general physical fitness test (overall fitness) and the purpose and uses of the occupational physical testing (fitness for a particular career field).*

### **Synopsis**

DoD guidelines dictate that the purpose of the PFA is to test for overall Service member health. The purpose of the occupational standards assessment, however, is to test an individual's ability to physically perform the duties of his or her job. Service member misperceptions about the purpose of the

PFA persist, and there are opportunities for DoD and the Military Services to improve communications to address these misunderstandings. The Committee believes the SecDef should clarify the purpose and utility for the PFA compared to occupational physical tests to help ensure Service members accurately understand the differences between these standards.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 3 of the full annual report for 2019, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

## ***Gender Integration***

### **Women in Ships**

#### ***Recommendation***

*The Secretary of Defense should establish strategic-level oversight within the Navy and Marine Corps to maximize opportunities for women to serve on ships while meeting strategic Service needs.*

#### ***Synopsis***

The demographics of the Navy and Marine Corps are changing as the number of women joining the Military Services increases. Despite improvements, the Committee is still concerned about the way berthing is assigned and whether female Service members have equal access to sea-bound positions. A substantial number of female Service members are denied sea duty assignments because of limited

rack availability. This factor can negatively affect these individuals' career progression. The Navy has asserted all ships will be "gender neutral" by 2025. The Committee is encouraged by this and believes it is crucial to ensure that there is appropriate oversight and that berthing arrangements meet the needs of the changing force.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 3 of the full annual report for 2019, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

## **Marine Corps Recruit Training**

### **Continuing Concern**

#### ***Synopsis***

In 2019 DACOWITS has continued its study on gender integration within recruit training and is repeating its 2018 continuing concern regarding Marine Corps recruit training. Full gender integration across military occupations and positions relies on integration at all levels of training. DACOWITS believes initial training is foundational to Service members' readiness. However, the Marine Corps is currently the only Service that does not implement full gender integration during recruit training; women are not 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.

A discussion supporting this continuing concern is provided in Chapter 3 of the full annual report for 2019, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

## Well-Being and Treatment

### Child Care Resources

#### *Recommendation*

*The Secretary of Defense should allocate increased funding to address the lack of adequate child care capacity and on- and off-installation child care resources, to include construction/expansion of child care facilities and initiatives to ensure sufficient child development center staffing and family child care home providers.*

#### *Recommendation*

*The Secretary of Defense should review and revise the eligibility priority system for Child Development Centers detailed in DoDI 6060.02 (Child Development Programs) to ensure increased priority is afforded eligible Service members to improve availability and reduce waitlist time.*

#### *Synopsis*

For more than three decades the Committee has made recommendations

regarding the critical need for adequate child care support for Service members. Although much progress has been made, there continue to be significant challenges related to availability in the DoD child care system. Child care is critical to military readiness, Service member morale, and the institution's ability to retain the most highly qualified personnel. The Committee finds ongoing issues related to the availability of military child care, staffing shortages at Child Development Centers (CDCs), a decline in Family Child Care (FCC) providers, and insufficient Service member prioritization given the significant backlog of military families waiting for care. DACOWITS, therefore, recommends the allocation of increased funding for new and ongoing initiatives in the child care system and a revision of the priority system to ensure appropriate prioritization of Service members to help reduce current waitlist times. The need for adequate and reliable child care resources remains a matter of significant priority that directly affects Service member readiness and retention.

A detailed reasoning supporting these recommendations is provided in Chapter 4 of the full annual report for 2019, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

## Domestic Abuse Affecting Servicewomen

### *Recommendation*

*The Secretary of Defense should expand DoDI 6400.06 (Domestic Abuse Involving DoD Military and Certain Affiliated Personnel) to include dating partners in the collection of domestic abuse data affecting Service members.*

### *Synopsis*

DACOWITS continues to remain concerned about the safety and well-being of servicewomen as it relates to incidents of domestic abuse. In 1996 the Committee recommended DoD expand its data collection on spousal abuse and violence against women. With a renewed study of domestic violence, DACOWITS once again finds an expansion of data collection is warranted. The current DoD definition of domestic abuse does not include dating partners. Dating partners are current or former intimate partners who have not been married, do not have a child/children together, and who have never shared a common domicile. Domestic abuse is already an underreported issue, and the current limitation of DoD policy on domestic abuse fails to capture information about a type of intimate relationship in which domestic abuse can occur.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter

4 of the full annual report for 2019, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

### *Recommendation*

*The Secretary of Defense should implement a means for Service members suffering from domestic abuse to establish immediate and convenient access to resources and assistance, similar to the DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program and “Safe Helpline” offered to military sexual assault victims.*

### *Synopsis*

DACOWITS wants to ensure Service members experiencing domestic abuse feel safe reporting incidents of abuse and have resources to help them when they do report. The Committee is concerned that the ease of access to help for servicewomen and other victims of domestic abuse in the military does not meet the level of support for those affected by sexual assault. The success of the Safe Helpline in sexual assault reporting is a model that can be adapted to help those experiencing domestic abuse.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 4 of the full annual report for 2019, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

## **Recommendation**

*The Secretary of Defense should establish a DoD policy that directs the Military Services to notify civilian law enforcement immediately after a military protective order is issued for domestic abuse, and to solicit civilian law enforcement cooperation in assisting victims to obtain a civilian protective order and other related services.*

## **Synopsis**

Domestic abuse is an issue that can result in the loss of a Service member's life. The Committee continues to be concerned about the safety and welfare of all Service members who are experiencing domestic abuse. DACOWITS believes collaboration between military and civilian law enforcement can provide the best measures for protecting the safety of Service members who may be in danger. When military protective orders are issued for domestic abuse, the Military Services should be required to notify civilian law enforcement. This process should also establish the connection to civilian law enforcement resources and support, including assistance for victims who wish to obtain a civilian protection order.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 4 of the full annual report for 2019, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

## **Pregnancy and Parenthood Policies**

### **Breastfeeding and Lactation Support**

#### **Recommendation**

*The Secretary of Defense should establish a DoD policy that standardizes the requirements for lactation rooms and mandates inspection standards to ensure lactation rooms are suitable, accessible, private, and clean.*

#### **Recommendation**

*The Secretary of Defense should direct the Military Services to provide education and guidance to commanders and supervisors that ensures compliance with policies for lactating servicewomen.*

#### **Synopsis**

Following DACOWITS' 2015 recommendation that DoD require the Military Services to increase the quantity and quality of available lactation rooms, the Committee examined lactation support provided to lactating servicewomen. Although all the Military Services have adopted policies and regulations concerning lactation support, participants in the Committee's 2019 focus groups reported inconsistent and inadequate support for servicewomen. These shortfalls

included a lack of standardized lactation rooms, cleanliness, privacy, and education about the importance of lactation and the unique needs of lactating servicewomen; inconvenient locations of lactation rooms; and limited milk storage options. Given the importance of breastfeeding to healthy children and mothers, the SecDef should establish a DoD policy that standardizes the requirements for lactation rooms and mandates inspection standards to ensure the facilities are suitable, accessible, private, and clean. The SecDef should also direct the Military Services to provide education and guidance to commanders and supervisors that ensures compliance with policies for lactating servicewomen.

A detailed reasoning supporting these recommendations is provided in Chapter 4 of the full annual report for 2019, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

## **Pregnancy Policies**

### ***Recommendation***

*The Secretary of Defense should direct the Military Services to develop and implement policies that ensure a servicewoman's career is not negatively affected as a result of pregnancy.*

### ***Synopsis***

The fair and equitable treatment of pregnant servicewomen is imperative for the long-

term readiness of the Military Services and the retention of servicewomen. This issue has been particularly important for DACOWITS; the Committee has made several recommendations to improve the treatment and well-being of pregnant servicewomen. The Committee recommended in 2016 that DoD create a consolidated pregnancy and parenthood instruction to ensure all-inclusive guidance is provided to military leaders and Service members. As the Committee examined current policies and guidance on pregnancy, it noted that only the Navy and the Marine Corps had specific verbiage in their instructions and orders barring any adverse impacts on pregnant servicewomen's careers. With the continued persistence of negative attitudes toward pregnancy and pregnant servicewomen in the military, DACOWITS is concerned servicewomen who are pregnant may experience negative impacts on their career progression. The Committee recommends the SecDef require each Service to develop clear policies that ensure a servicewoman's career is not negatively affected as a result of pregnancy.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 4 of the full annual report for 2019, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

## Women's Reintegration

### *Recommendation*

*The Secretary of Defense should commission a research project to identify and assess the potentially unique impacts on military mothers who are reintegrating into the family after deployments.*

### *Synopsis*

Deployments and extended separations present unique challenges for military parents and their children. More military personnel are married than ever before, and close to half of the force has children. More military mothers, both married and single, are deploying. There is very little research on the reintegration of military mothers into the family following deployment, and the effectiveness of current postdeployment resources and programs is unknown. The Committee believes there is a need for foundational research in this area, which will help DoD better understand how to support the potentially unique challenges military mothers face when reintegrating with their families. DACOWITS hopes a study of this nature will lead to the development of meaningful and effective programs and resources to support military mothers and their families.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 4 of the full annual report for 2019, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

## Maternity Uniforms

### Continuing Concern

#### *Synopsis*

In 2019 DACOWITS renewed its study of maternity uniforms. The Committee identified maternity uniforms as a continuing concern in 2016. Although the Committee recognizes the Military Services' progress and updates to maternity uniforms, Service members have continued to express concerns about the availability, affordability, function, and professional appearance of these uniforms. DACOWITS remains committed to ensuring maternity uniforms meet the needs of today's servicewomen. The Committee will continue to monitor the Military Services' improvement of maternity uniforms.

A discussion supporting this continuing concern is provided in Chapter 4 of the full annual report for 2019, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).



Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services