

BACKGROUND PAPER
ON
PREGNANCY IN THE MILITARY

PURPOSE

In accordance with DACOWITS' Terms of Reference, the Well-Being and Treatment (WB&T) Subcommittee will determine if there are gaps in institutional policies and procedures that obstruct pregnant servicewomen from progressing in their military career and recommend policy changes.

QUESTION #14

The Committee understands that there may be valid health or other reasons why servicewomen may be unable to continue work in their primary career field both during and after pregnancy. However, the Committee is concerned about the manner in which such work reassignments are determined and implemented, particularly when specialty-wide occupational reassignments are mandated. The Committee is also interested in the current policies outlining the physical fitness testing requirements applicable to pregnant or postpartum servicewomen. The Committee requests a written response from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, and National Guard addressing the following:

a. How does your Service make reassignment determinations when servicewomen must be temporarily reassigned to other duties due to pregnancy, regardless of whether for individual or occupational-wide profile reasons? Are meaningful assignments developed to ensure best utilization of servicewomen's skills? Do servicewomen have the opportunity to provide input on such reassignments? May servicewomen request waivers or the opportunity to continue working in their in their primary career specialty? Who within the command has decision authority for such reassignments?

- DAF has expanded flying opportunities during pregnancy to its female aviators. While low risk flight has previously been available to aviators during the 2nd trimester of low-risk pregnancy, recent policy changes allow for aviators to pursue waivers for flight in 1st and 3rd trimesters as well as for high-risk flight and high-risk pregnancy. The approval authority for these waivers lies at the MAJCOM level with support from AF/SG.

- Aircrew members are NOT reassigned out of flying duty based on pregnancy. Requests to fly during pregnancy are voluntary on the part of the pregnant member, based on education of measured and unmeasured identified risks of flying during pregnancy. Temporary flight restrictions may be required by the medical condition. Flight duty restrictions during pregnancy are determined based on risk of injury, aircraft mishap or mission failure in a manner consistent with any other medical condition. With respect to flying duty restrictions, local clearance for flight duty can be authorized when the pregnancy and flight duty meet criteria specified in the Medical Standards Directory. Outside of these parameters requests for flight duty are determined using a

waiver review process. Every effort is made to expedite the waiver review process given the time limited nature of pregnancy.

- Guidance to medical providers (flight surgeons) and to the field have been re-issued in Feb and May 2022 in order to ensure communication of this policy that has been in effect since Dec 2020.

- Monthly reports of waiver requests and approvals are provided to SAF/MR.

- Ongoing work continues to further develop flight surgeon and aircrew education materials and communication.

- Ongoing work continues to monitor possible health effects and safety hazards associated with flying while pregnant in order to better understand and communicate potential risks to aircrew members

b. What is your Service's pregnancy and postpartum physical fitness testing requirements?

- Physical fitness testing is waived during pregnancy and for the 12 months postpartum. Fitness testing is also waived after pregnancy loss with the duration of waiver based on the gestational age at the time of the loss.

c. What is your Service's postpartum operational deferment period?

- Operational deferment within DAF is 12 months postpartum. This may be voluntarily waived by the Airmen/Guardian.

d. How does your Service document the above actions? Are safeguards put in place to prevent adverse career impacts to servicewomen?

- Operational deferments due to medical issues are treated the same for all Airmen.