

RFI Category and Number: Pregnancy in the Military – RFI 14

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

RFI Question:

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 primary career specialty? Who within the command has decision authority for such reassignments?
- b. What is your Service's pregnancy and postpartum physical fitness testing requirements?
- c. What is your Service's postpartum operational deferment period?
- d. How does your Service document the above actions? Are safeguards put in place to prevent adverse career impacts to servicewomen?

RFI Response 14a:

PERS-454 receives notification of pregnancy from operational commands via availability request. Every effort is made to place pregnant Sailors in a shore activity with a valid available billet for their rating based upon MyNavy Assignments. In the event that no command in the immediate geographical area meets this criteria, the Sailor is placed at a command to work outside her specific rating. The operational command may request a specific gaining command to place the Sailor, if there is no PCS required. Each servicewoman may request via her chain of command for the opportunity to remain at her current command. Each waiver request is reviewed by the Sailor's detailer and PERS-454. PERS-454 follows COMUSFLTFORCOM/COMAVPERSCOMINST 1300.1 when making reassignments due to pregnancy.

Even though Sailors are reassigned for a pregnancy assignment, they will normally have the opportunity to work within their rating and enhance their skills. In some cases, Sailors have assignment limitations that reduce their ability to work within their particular skillset, which may industrial environments that may have mechanical or hazardous material risks.

Most Sailors have the ability to work within their skillset, but those that cannot are usually due to the working environment.

PERS-454 manages the pregnancy assignment process and they execute the reassignments based on overall manning at the gaining command.

RFI Response 14b:

The Navy defines pregnancy status from the time a pregnancy is confirmed by a military Health Care Provider (HCP) or civilian HCP, until the end of the 12-months following a qualifying birth event (QBE). The member is assigned a “pregnant” participation status and are not required to participate for both the BCA and PRT for the current PFA cycle.

Postpartum Sailors are exempt from physical fitness testing requirements until the end of the 12-months period following a QBE.

Additionally:

- Sailors who miscarry or have an abortion must seek evaluation by their HCP to determine the appropriate convalescent leave period. A member who suffers a miscarriage or abortion may receive a “pregnant” status based on the recommendation from their HCP.
- Stillborn Birth. Sailors who give birth to a stillborn child(ren) are exempt from participating in a PFA for 12-months following the birth event.
- In-vitro Fertilization (IVF). During the actual IVF cycles, CO/OICs are authorized to approve a “medical waiver” to exempt Sailors from participating in the PFA to better ensure IVF success. If the IVF treatment results in a successful pregnancy, the provisions of the pregnancy policy will pertain. If the IVF treatment is unsuccessful, the Sailor must participate in the PFA (current cycle), if cleared by their HCP.

RFI Response 14c:

The period of time from official notification and placement of pregnant Service members from an operational command to a non-operational command. A Service member who gives birth will be deferred from all transfers (e.g., PCS, temporary additional duty, etc.) to operational assignments for the duration of pregnancy, delivery, and 12 month period following delivery or 6 month period following stillbirth or neonatal demise (infant death 0-28 days following birth).

At any point following completion of maternity leave, Service members may request to terminate their 12-month postpartum operational deferment in order to return to an operational command. Requests must be initiated by the service members in accordance with OPNAVINST 6000.1 (Series) utilizing NAVPERS 1306/1 or 1306/7 submitted to the cognizant detailer. Requests will be granted on a case-by-case basis by the cognizant detailer.

RFI Response 14d:

All pregnancy assignment actions are executed within MyNavy Assignment (MNA), which where all Enlisted assignments are managed and executed.

Enlisted pregnancy assignments are considered a “neutral assignment” and should not negatively impact an Enlisted Sailor’s career progression opportunity.