

Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS)

September 2023 – Requests for Information

RECRUITMENT INITIATIVES TO INCREASE WOMEN’S PROPENSITY TO SERVE

In accordance with DACOWITS’ Terms of Reference, the Recruitment and Retention (R&R) Subcommittee will assess the scale and effectiveness of the Military Services’ recruitment programs with the goal of providing actionable recommendations on how to best increase adolescent women’s propensity to serve. In addition, the R&R Subcommittee will examine existing policies and procedures to determine whether current practices inhibit the recruitment of women, specifically assessing the inclusivity of existing marketing strategies; current recruitment goals for women; improvements in the representation of female recruiters; virtual recruiting capabilities; and potential innovative best practices gleaned from the establishment of the Space Force.

1 The Committee remains concerned about the inability of the Military Services to meet their annual recruiting goals. In [March 2023](#), via RFI 4, the Committee received a briefing from the Army on its innovative [Future Soldier Preparatory Course \(FSPC\)](#). Since the time of that Army briefing, the Navy has created a similar [Future Sailor Preparatory Course](#).

The Committee requests a **written response** from the **Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and the Department of the Air Force** on the following:

- a. **Army:** For the Academic Skills Development Program, provide the number of participants, graduation rates, discharge rates, and average Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) increase rate by gender.
- b. **Army & Navy:** For the fitness and nutrition course, provide the number of participants, graduation rates, and average weekly body fat loss (e.g., percentage) by gender.
- c. **Navy:** What caused women to join later iterations of the program vice beginning the preparatory course alongside their male peers?
- d. **Army & Navy:** Identify any other challenges or successes with implementation of these programs, which have not already been provided.
- e. **Army & Navy:** Provide information on how graduates are performing in Basic Training post-preparatory course by gender.
- f. **Marine Corps & Air Force:** Does your Service plan to implement a similar preparatory course? If so, which portions and when?

RETENTION INITIATIVES FOR SERVICEWOMEN

In accordance with DACOWITS’ Terms of Reference, the R&R Subcommittee will identify barriers to female retention and present findings and actionable recommendations to improve the overall retention of women. In addition, the R&R Subcommittee will utilize the Military Services’ retention and exit survey data to identify barriers and/or lessons learned to identify ways to improve servicewomen’s retention.

2 In [June 2022](#), the Committee received a briefing from the Department of the Air Force (DAF) Women’s Initiatives Team (WIT). In [September 2022](#), via RFI 5, the Committee asked the Military Services to provide a status update on their potential Women’s Initiatives Team or working group like the DAF WIT. At the time, the Army was in the process of establishing a WIT and the Navy was in the process of developing one.

The Committee requests a **written response** update from the **Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and National Guard** on whether your Service has implemented a WIT focused on identifying and resolving barriers that impact the retention of servicewomen? If so, provide additional details about your Service’s WIT (e.g., policies, directives, charter, oversight authority, streamlined access to senior level decision-makers, etc.). If not, explain why a WIT has not or will not be founded.

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GENDER INTEGRATION

In accordance with DACOWITS' Terms of Reference, the Employment and Integration (E&I) Subcommittee will examine current efforts to fully integrate women into previously closed combat positions, determine whether barriers are inhibiting full integration, and identify actionable solutions. In addition, the E&I Subcommittee examined recent modifications to women's uniforms, as well as combat gear and equipment, to identify solutions, as required.

3 In December 2015, the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) opened all remaining occupations and positions to women with no exceptions. As a result, the Defense Department opened approximately 213,600 closed positions and 52 closed military occupational specialties to women for the first time. Afterwards, the SecDef directed the Secretaries of the Military Departments and Chiefs of the Military Services to provide their final, detailed Gender Integration Implementation Plans no later than January 1, 2016. Once approved, the Military Services were tasked with executing their plans by April 1, 2016. In [September 2022](#), via RFIs 6-7, the Military Services provided the Committee an update on adjustments made to the original 2016 Gender Integration Implementation Plans, current or future initiatives being undertaken to increase women in Special Operations Forces (SOF), and the data on women in SOF. In December 2022, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) published a report titled, "*Women in Special Operations*" ([GAO-23-105168](#)), which outlined improvements to policy, data, and assessments needed to understand and address career barriers for women in SOF. GAO made a total of 8 recommendations, of which DoD concurred, however, to date none have been implemented.

The Committee requests an updated **written response** from the **Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Special Operations Command (SOCOM)**, in coordination with the **Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict (ASD(SO/LIC))**, to address the integration of women into the previously closed military occupational specialties within the associated-Service SOF (outlined in the "Positions to be Opened" fact sheet). Provide the following data for officer and enlisted career fields opened in 2016, utilizing the fact sheet provided:

- a. Number of women that entered the training pipeline (by fiscal year (FY) beginning in 2016 through current 2023 (e.g., 8 years)).
- b. Number of women that were removed from the training pipeline for failure to meet standards, along with denominator of total women who entered (should match bullet a above) (by FY beginning in 2016 through current 2023; 8 years).
- c. Number of women who voluntarily left the training pipeline (self-induced elimination (SIE)), along with denominator of total women who entered (should match bullet a above) (by FY beginning in 2016 through current 2023; 8 years).
- d. Number of women currently serving in each of these career fields since graduating from the initial training course (by FY beginning in 2016 through current 2023; 8 years). Ensure data is separated by officer, enlisted, and rank (e.g., O1, E5, etc.).

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PREGNANCY IN THE MILITARY

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.

- 4** The Committee is concerned about provision of medical convalescent leave (CONLV) for birth events considering new guidance in statute and SecDef policy, which suggests CONLV may not necessarily be authorized solely for a birth event without the requirement for a separate “medical condition.” SecDef guidance indicates CONLV “may” be authorized for the recovery of the birth parent, from giving birth, if such leave is specifically recommended, in writing, by the health care provider of the birth parent “to address a diagnosed medical condition” and is approved by the unit commander.” Of note, a congressional [letter](#) addressed to the USD(P&R), also recently expressed concern over this matter.
- The Committee requests a **briefing** from the **Manpower & Reserve Affairs (M&RA), Military Personnel Policy (MPP), Military Compensation (COMP), Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs (OASD HA), and the Military Services (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Department of the Air Force, and Coast Guard)** regarding current guidance regarding medical recommendations and command authorizations for CONLV for birth events. Provide the following:
- a. **M&RA/MPP/COMP:** Has any guidance been issued to the Military Services regarding CONLV or birth events considering the new legislation? If so, provide copies of the guidance and/or directives issued.
 - b. **OASD(HA):** Is CONLV recommended/directed for birth events? If so, what are the recommendations for duration? Please provide an overview of health provider considerations in making CONLV recommendations after a birth event.
 - c. **OASD(HA):** Is there any medical guidance suggesting CONLV is not necessary or recommended for birth events? Is a birth event considered a “medical condition” eligible for CONLV without the need for some other medical condition?
 - d. **M&RA/MPP/COMP/Military Services:** Have guidelines been provided addressing when commanders may disapprove CONLV, since such leave requires a commander’s approval? If so, provide copies of such guidance.
 - e. **Military Services:** Are there differences in command consideration of CONLV recommendations made by network providers in the private sector versus those made by MTF providers?
 - f. **Military Services:** What Service guidance has been published clarifying the provision of CONLV for birth events? Provide copies thereof.
 - g. **Military Services:** Have the Services provided guidance regarding command authority to disapprove a medical provider’s recommendation for CONLV for birth events? What is that guidance and provide copies thereof.
 - h. **Military Services:** Must commanders document their reasons for denying convalescent care following a birth event?
 - i. **Military Services:** If a commander disapproves CONLV for a birth event, is there an appeal mechanism for the affected servicewoman? Is there an automatic escalation to higher command authority? How are servicewomen protected from retaliation if they elect to challenge/appeal a disapproval?

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5 In 2020, Congress passed the “[Rent the Camo: Access to Maternity Wear Act](#)” Bill (H.R. 7289), which directed the “*Department of Defense to carry out a pilot program to establish an office for issuing maternity-related uniform items to pregnant members of the Armed Forces, on a temporary basis through FY26 and at no cost to such members.*” In [January 2022](#), the Navy launched a maternity uniform pilot program, which is open to officer and enlisted personnel assigned CONUS and OCONUS. In [March 2022](#), the Marine Corps launched a maternity uniform pilot program, which is restricted to female officers located within 100 miles of MCB Quantico. In [June 2022](#), the Department of the Air Force launched a maternity uniform pilot program, which is open to officer and enlisted Airman/Guardians, assigned to 10 specific bases. In [December 2022](#), via RFI 5d.i, the Military Services provided updates to their maternity uniforms. During this meeting, the Department of the Air Force showcased their redesigned maternity dress and aviation uniforms.

The Committee requests a **written response** from the **Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Department of the Air Force, and Coast Guard** detailing maternity uniform pilot programs, maternity uniforms currently in use, as well as plans to update maternity uniforms.

- a. Provide an update on the status of your Service’s maternity uniform pilot program (e.g., utilization rate, findings, etc.).
- b. **Army:** Has a maternity uniform pilot program been implemented? If not, when is it expected to begin? Provide additional details (e.g., who can/will be able to participate (officer and/or enlisted); geographic location(s); etc.).
- c. **Marine Corps:** Provide the rationale for restricting the pilot to female officers within a 100-mile radius of MCB Quantico.
- d. In [September 2016](#), via RFI 11, the Committee asked the Military Services to provide information/data on current maternity uniforms and any future prototypes (to include those being wear tested/piloted). Update this information/data utilizing a blank Maternity Uniforms Chart for questions 1-18.
- e. Do the Services collaborate on maternity uniform design concepts? If so, how and at what level?
- f. Do the Services separately contract for maternity uniform production, and do they use a common or separate vendor?
- g. Who has the lead for the procurement of maternity uniforms?
- h. How long does the process take for selection (e.g., award to contract to delivery)?
- i. Provide a flow chart which depicts the steps from design to production to procurement to receipt. Annotate the timeline between each phase.

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6 Congress enacted [legislation](#) in the FY22 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) which directed the SecDef to prescribe regulations by December 27, 2022, to preserve the parental guardianship rights of a cadet or midshipman who becomes pregnant or fathers a child, while attending a Military Service Academies (MSAs), consistent with the individual and academic responsibilities of such cadet or midshipman. It is important to note that this legislation did not provide guidance that pertains to enlisted Service members enrolled in Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) commissioning programs.

The Committee requests a **written response** from the **Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R)), the MSAs, and Military Services (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Department of the Air Force, and Coast Guard)** to address the following questions:

- a. **USD(P&R):** Has this legislation been enacted, if so, when? If not yet enacted, what is the expected implementation date?
- b. **MSAs:** Will affected cadets and midshipmen in Service as of the Congressionally directed enactment date be grandfathered (i.e., able to avail themselves of the new rules)?
- c. **MSAs:** Provide copies of and links to the implementing DoD directives and guidance.
- d. **MSAs:** Has Service guidance been issued? If so, provide copies.
- e. **MSAs:** How many cadets and midshipmen are currently waiting for the Act to be implemented?
- f. **Military Services:** Provide the instruction(s) which delineate policy guidance for pregnant and postpartum ROTC students. In addition, provide the instruction(s) which delineate policy guidance for enlisted pregnant and postpartum Service members enrolled in ROTC commissioning programs.

7 In [December 2017](#), via RFI 4, the Committee asked about the Military Services related to pregnant/postpartum residency at development professional military education (PME) schools, to include Command and General Staff College, War College, Senior Enlisted Academies, Top Level Schools, or the Service equivalent. The Committee remains concerned about whether pregnant or postpartum servicewomen are being permitted to attend PME. In 2022, the Army published a new directive titled, “[Army Directive 2022-06 \(Parenthood, Pregnancy, and Postpartum\)](#),” which outlines that a pregnancy profile will not inhibit women from attending PME. In addition, in cases in which fitness testing is required to satisfy eligibility and/or graduation requirements, a passing physical fitness test of record dated within the last 24 months must receive a waiver from the school’s commandant.

The Committee requests an updated **written response** from the **Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, and Coast Guard** regarding current policies. Provide the following:

- a. Are there any barriers, prohibitions, or other restrictions preventing pregnant or postpartum servicewomen from attending? If so, what are they?
- b. Is completion of a fitness test or fitness assessment waived, if not an essential element of the PME?
- c. Does your Service have a similar regulation to the Army’s which delineates PME requirements for pregnant or postpartum servicewomen? If so, provide.
- d. Who has oversight of school commandant policies/regulations related to the approval/disapproval of eligibility and/or graduation requirements for pregnant or postpartum servicewomen? Who has the authority to grant fitness waivers? Is there an appeal process?