



PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

JAN 16 2025

MEMORANDUM FOR CHAIR, DEFENSE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON WOMEN IN THE SERVICES

SUBJECT: Terms of Reference – Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services

As the Sponsor of the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS), I direct DACOWITS to study six topics in 2025, which are outlined in the attached Terms of Reference. Each study topic is assigned to one of the three previously established subcommittees. These study topics are in line with the committee's charter to provide advice and recommendations on matters and policies relating to recruitment, retention, employment, integration, well-being, and treatment of women in the Armed Forces.

The committee and subcommittees' work will be subject to 10 U.S.C., Chapter 10 (commonly known as "the Federal Advisory Committee Act"). All advice and recommendations developed from examining these study topics will be provided to the entire DACOWITS for its thorough discussion and deliberation at a properly noticed and open meeting, unless the meeting can be closed in accordance with one or more of the exemptions found in 5 U.S.C. § 552b(c). The DACOWITS' Designated Federal Officer will ensure compliance with applicable Federal statutes, regulations, and Department of Defense policy and procedures.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ashish S. Vazirani".

Ashish S. Vazirani
Performing the Duties of the Under Secretary of
Defense for Personnel and Readiness

Attachments:

As stated

cc:

Advisory Committee Management Officer
for the Department of Defense

Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services Recruitment and Retention Subcommittee

This Terms of Reference (ToR) establishes the 2025 study topics for the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS), working through its Recruitment and Retention Subcommittee (“the Subcommittee”).

Mission Statement: The DACOWITS, working through the Subcommittee, will ensure that the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) and the Deputy Secretary of Defense, through the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R)) as the Sponsor, receive independent advice on opportunities for improvements in the recruitment and retention of women into the Armed Forces.

The Subcommittee will conduct research, develop conclusions, and make proposals to the full DACOWITS for its thorough discussion and deliberation at a properly noticed and public meeting, unless the meeting must be closed in accordance with one or more of the exemptions found in 5 U.S.C. § 552b(c). Any Subcommittee work adopted by DACOWITS after thorough discussion and deliberation will become the independent advice and recommendations of DACOWITS for it to provide to the SecDef through the USD(P&R).

Issue Statement: In accordance with the ToR that established the Recruitment and Retention Subcommittee, this Subcommittee will examine current military recruitment and retention programs to determine whether existing policies and procedures inhibit the recruitment and retention of servicewomen. In addition, the Subcommittee will identify innovative and actionable solutions to increase women’s propensity to serve and further expand opportunities for women to continue serving.

Objectives and Scope: The Subcommittee shall analyze DoD and the Military Departments’ and their Military Services’ policies and procedures pertaining to the recruitment and retention of servicewomen to assess the impact on the readiness of the Total Force. Below are two specific areas of study, on which DACOWITS should submit written advice and recommendations for my consideration by the end of January 2026.

1. **Gender Role-Focused Self-Efficacy Approach to Increasing Women’s Propensity to Serve:** Study the connection between recruitment, self-efficacy, and propensity to serve to further examine a gender role-focused self-efficacy approach to increasing women’s propensity. This will be an extension of the previous DACOWITS’ research and recommendations conducted over the past decade regarding marketing and propensity.
2. **Permeability (On/Off Ramp Between the Active and Reserve Components):** Explore the number of women who decide to transition from active duty into the Reserves and whether there is a desire for increased flexibility and permeability to transition between Active and Reserve Components. In addition, identify potential barriers to implementing permeability policies and present findings with actionable recommendations to improve the overall retention of servicewomen.

In support of this ToR and the work conducted in response to it, the Subcommittee and DACOWITS have my full support to meet with Department leaders. The DACOWITS staff, on behalf of DACOWITS and the Subcommittee, may request the Office of the Secretary of Defense and DoD Component heads to timely furnish any requested information, assistance, or access to personnel to DACOWITS or the Subcommittee. All requests shall be consistent with applicable laws; applicable security classifications; Department of Defense Instruction 5105.04, "Department of Defense Federal Advisory Committee Management Program;" and this ToR. As Special Government Employees of a DoD Federal advisory committee, members of the DACOWITS and the Subcommittee will not be given any access to DoD networks, to include DoD email systems.

Material provided to DACOWITS and the Subcommittee, becomes a permanent part of DACOWITS' records. All data/information provided is subject to public inspection unless the originating Component office properly marks the data/information with the appropriate classification and Freedom of Information Act exemption categories (5 U.S.C. § 552) before the data/information is released to DACOWITS or its Subcommittee. DACOWITS has physical storage capability and electronic storage and communications capability on unclassified networks and cannot support receipt of classified material.

DACOWITS and the Subcommittee will operate in conformity with and pursuant to DACOWITS' charter; 5 U.S.C., Chapter 10 (commonly known as "the Federal Advisory Committee Act"); 5 U.S.C. §552b(c); and other applicable Federal statutes, regulations, and policy. Individual members of DACOWITS and the Subcommittee, as well as the Subcommittee as a whole, do not have the authority to make decisions or provide recommendations on behalf of DACOWITS nor report directly to any Federal representative. The members of the Subcommittee and DACOWITS are subject to certain Federal ethics laws, including 18 U.S.C. § 208, governing conflicts of interest, and the Standards of Ethical Conduct regulations in 5 CFR Part 2635.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and support of this critical undertaking to inform subsequent decisions on how DoD addresses the recruitment and retention of women in the Armed Forces.

Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services Employment and Integration Subcommittee

This Terms of Reference (ToR) establishes the 2025 study topics for the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS), working through its Employment and Integration Subcommittee (“the Subcommittee”).

Mission Statement: The DACOWITS, working through the Subcommittee will ensure that the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) and the Deputy Secretary of Defense, through the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R)) as the Sponsor, receive independent advice on opportunities for improvements in the employment and integration of women in the Armed Forces.

The Subcommittee will conduct research, develop conclusions, and make proposals to the full DACOWITS for its thorough discussion and deliberation at a properly noticed and public meeting, unless the meeting must be closed in accordance with one or more of the exemptions found in 5 U.S.C. § 552b(c). Any Subcommittee work adopted by DACOWITS after thorough discussion and deliberation will become the independent advice and recommendations of DACOWITS for it to provide to the SecDef through the USD(P&R).

Issue Statement: In accordance with the ToR that established the Employment and Integration Subcommittee, this Subcommittee will examine the Military Departments’ and their Military Services’ gender integration efforts to determine whether existing policies and programs inhibit the full integration of servicewomen into all military career fields and identify innovative and actionable solutions as necessary. In addition, the Subcommittee will review policies and programs that may limit servicewomen’s career progression.

Objectives and Scope: The Subcommittee shall analyze DoD and the Military Departments and their Military Services’ policies and procedures pertaining to the employment and integration of servicewomen to assess the impact on the readiness of the Total Force. Below are two specific areas of study, on which DACOWITS should submit written advice and recommendations for my consideration by the end of January 2026.

1. Women in Submarines: Examine the status of current gender integration efforts, as well as the climate and culture, within the U.S. Navy Submarine Force.
2. Physical Fitness Standards and Eating Disorders: Over the past decade, the Committee has examined physical fitness standards to include body fat composition. Conduct additional research on the prevalence of eating disorders among military women, which will be an extension of previous research and recommendations.

In support of this ToR and the work conducted in response to it, the Subcommittee and DACOWITS have my full support to meet with Department leaders. The DACOWITS staff, on behalf of DACOWITS and the Subcommittee, may request the Office of the Secretary of Defense and DoD Component heads to timely furnish any requested information, assistance, or access to personnel to DACOWITS or the Subcommittee. All requests shall be consistent with

applicable laws; applicable security classifications; Department of Defense Instruction 5105.04, “Department of Defense Federal Advisory Committee Management Program;” and this ToR. As Special Government Employees of a DoD Federal advisory committee, members of the DACOWITS and the Subcommittee will not be given any access to DoD networks, to include DoD email systems.

Material provided to DACOWITS and the Subcommittee becomes a permanent part of DACOWITS’ records. All data/information provided is subject to public inspection unless the originating Component office properly marks the data/information with the appropriate classification and Freedom of Information Act exemption categories (5 U.S.C. § 552) before the data/information is released to DACOWITS or its Subcommittee. DACOWITS has physical storage capability and electronic storage and communications capability on unclassified networks and cannot support receipt of classified material.

DACOWITS and the Subcommittee will operate in conformity with and pursuant to DACOWITS’ charter; 5 U.S.C., Chapter 10 (commonly known as “the Federal Advisory Committee Act); 5 U.S.C. § 552b(c); and other applicable Federal statutes, regulations, and policy. Individual members of DACOWITS and the Subcommittee, as well as the Subcommittee as a whole, do not have the authority to make decisions or provide recommendations on behalf of DACOWITS nor report directly to any Federal representative. The members of the Subcommittee and DACOWITS are subject to certain Federal ethics laws, including 18 U.S.C. § 198, governing conflicts of interest, and the Standards of Ethical Conduct regulations in 5 CFR Part 2635.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and support of this critical undertaking to inform subsequent decisions on how DoD addresses the employment and integration of women in the Armed Forces.

Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services Well-Being and Treatment Subcommittee

This Terms of Reference (ToR) establishes the 2025 study topics for the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS), working through its Well-Being and Treatment Subcommittee (“the Subcommittee”).

Mission Statement: The DACOWITS, working through the Subcommittee, will ensure that the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) and the Deputy Secretary of Defense, through the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R)) as the Sponsor, receive independent advice on opportunities for improvements in the well-being and treatment of women serving in the Armed Forces.

The Subcommittee will conduct research, develop conclusions, and make proposals to the full DACOWITS for its thorough discussion and deliberation at a properly noticed and public meeting, unless the meeting must be closed in accordance with one or more of the exemptions found in 5 U.S.C. § 552b(c). Any Subcommittee work adopted by DACOWITS after thorough discussion and deliberation will become the independent advice and recommendations of DACOWITS for it to provide to the SecDef through the USD(P&R).

Issue Statement: In accordance with the ToR that established the Well-Being and Treatment Subcommittee, this Subcommittee will examine whether existing DoD and Military Departments’ and their Military Services’ institutional policies and procedures safeguard the well-being and treatment of servicewomen and provide recommended and actionable policy changes as gaps are identified.

Objectives and Scope: The Subcommittee shall analyze DoD and the Military Department’s and their Military Services’ policies and procedures pertaining to the well-being and treatment of servicewomen to assess the impact on the readiness of the Total Force. Below are two specific areas of study, on which DACOWITS should submit written advice and recommendations for my consideration by the end of January 2026.

1. **Perimenopause, Menopause, and Hormonal Imbalance Issues:** Examine ways in which servicewomen are navigating these unique health challenges, current resources available to them, and whether additional resources are warranted.
2. **Impact on Military Mothers Reintegrating into Family/Home Life After Deployment:** Renew the 2019 DACOWITS’ study which examined the impact of deployments on military mothers who reintegrate into family/home life after deployment. Determine whether policy is still required or if DoD and the Military Departments’ and their Military Services have sufficiently addressed concerns.

In support of this ToR and the work conducted in response to it, the Subcommittee and DACOWITS have my full support to meet with Department leaders. The DACOWITS staff, on behalf of DACOWITS and the Subcommittee, may request the Office of the Secretary of Defense and DoD Component heads to timely furnish any requested information, assistance, or

access to personnel to DACOWITS or the Subcommittee. All requests shall be consistent with applicable laws; applicable security classifications; Department of Defense Instruction 5105.04, “Department of Defense Federal Advisory Committee Management Program;” and this ToR. As Special Government Employees of a DoD Federal advisory committee, members of the DACOWITS and the Subcommittee will not be given any access to DoD networks, to include DoD email systems.

Material provided to DACOWITS and the Subcommittee becomes a permanent part of DACOWITS’ records. All data/information provided is subject to public inspection unless the originating Component office properly marks the data/information with the appropriate classification and Freedom of Information Act exemption categories (5 U.S.C. § 552) before the data/information is released to DACOWITS or its Subcommittee. DACOWITS has physical storage capability and electronic storage and communications capability on unclassified networks and cannot support receipt of classified material.

DACOWITS and the Subcommittee will operate in conformity with and pursuant to DACOWITS’ charter; 5 U.S.C., Chapter 10 (commonly known as “the Federal Advisory Committee Act”); 5 U.S.C. § 552b(c); and other applicable Federal statutes, regulations, and policy. Individual members of DACOWITS and the Subcommittee, as well as the Subcommittee as a whole, do not have the authority to make decisions or provide recommendations on behalf of DACOWITS nor report directly to any Federal representative. The members of the Subcommittee and DACOWITS are subject to certain Federal ethics laws, including 18 U.S.C. § 208, governing conflicts of interest, and the Standards of Ethical Conduct regulations in 5 CFR Part 2635.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and support of this critical undertaking to inform subsequent decisions on how DoD addresses the well-being and treatment of women in the Armed Forces.