



Command Notification of Pregnancy

Overview

On October 20, 2022, the Secretary of Defense released a memorandum, “Ensuring Access to Reproductive Health Care,” directing the Department to take a series of actions to ensure Service members and their families can access reproductive health care, and to establish uniform policies to protect the privacy of reproductive health information.

Secretary Austin has made it clear that the health and well-being of our Service members and their family members is a top priority. The policy on command notification of pregnancy provides Service members the time and flexibility to make private health care decisions in a manner consistent with the responsibility of commanders to meet operational requirements and protect the health and safety of those in their care.

This policy...

- Clarifies when a Service member’s pregnancy status is shared with commanders.
- Standardizes and extends the timeframe for Service members to inform their commanders about a pregnancy.
- Reinforces that commanders must always exercise objectivity and discretion when handling reproductive health care issues.

Policy Summary

- There may be some circumstances where, upon learning of a pregnancy, a Service member chooses to delay command notification of it. In these circumstances, a DoD health care provider will place the pregnant Service member in a medical temporary non-deployable status and limited duty or light duty status without reference to the Service member’s pregnancy status.
- No later than 20 weeks gestation, the Service member will notify their command, and will be placed, as appropriate, in a status with limitations specific for pregnancy.
- There may be circumstances related to military duties, occupational health hazards, medical conditions, or other special circumstances where the proper execution of the mission outweighs the interests served by delaying commander notification. In these circumstances, following a health care provider’s notice to the Service member, the commander may be notified of the pregnancy earlier.

POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

Service members who believe they are pregnant should confirm the pregnancy and receive prenatal care as soon as possible, but no later than 12 weeks gestation.

This policy extends the timeline for pregnancy notification, allowing Service members to delay notification to their commander to no later than 20 weeks gestation.

Commanders will protect the privacy of protected health information, and such information shall be restricted to personnel with a specific need to know.