



OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

The Honorable Mike D. Rogers
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

MAY 24 2024

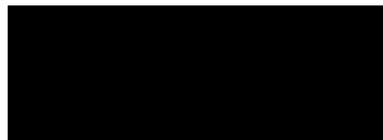
Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Department's response to House Report 118-125, page 189, accompanying H.R. 2670, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024, "Annual Health Screening Review," is enclosed.

The Periodic Health Assessment (PHA) is a standardized global health screening conducted annually for every Service member to facilitate evaluation, care, and readiness. This annual report contains information regarding the process and method by which changes are made to the PHA, the average frequency at which changes are made, and whether certain changes to the PHA have been considered. These changes include instituting annual sports physicals for all uniformed Service members, required annual blood screening, annual mental health screening, and the requirement of intermittent lab work for individuals that have consecutively taken a prescription for more than 9 months.

Thank you for your continued strong support for the health and well-being of our Service members. I am sending a similar letter to the Senate Armed Services Committee.

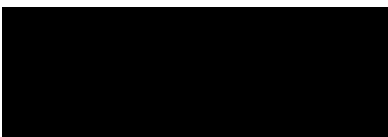
Sincerely,



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

Enclosure:
As stated

cc:
The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member





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PERSONNEL AND
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MAY 24 2024

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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The Department's response to House Report 118-125, page 189, accompanying H.R. 2670, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024, "Annual Health Screening Review," is enclosed.

The Periodic Health Assessment (PHA) is a standardized global health screening conducted annually for every Service member to facilitate evaluation, care, and readiness. This annual report contains information regarding the process and method by which changes are made to the PHA, the average frequency at which changes are made, and whether certain changes to the PHA have been considered. These changes include instituting annual sports physicals for all uniformed Service members, required annual blood screening, annual mental health screening, and the requirement of intermittent lab work for individuals that have consecutively taken a prescription for more than 9 months.

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Sincerely,

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

Enclosure:
As stated

cc:
The Honorable Roger F. Wicker
Ranking Member



Report to Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and House of Representatives



Annual Health Screening Review

May 2024

The estimated cost of this report or study for the Department of Defense (DoD) is approximately \$6,710 for the 2023-2024 Fiscal Years. This includes \$0 in expenses and \$6,710 in DoD labor.

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Introduction

This report is in response to House Report 118–125, page 189, accompanying H.R. 2670, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2024, “Annual Health Screening Review,” which requested a report on:

- (1) the process and method by which changes are made to the Periodic Health Assessment;
- (2) the average frequency by which changes are made; and
- (3) whether the following changes to the Periodic Health Assessment have been considered: (a) instituting annual sports physicals for all uniformed members of the Department of Defense; (b) requiring annual blood screening; (c) requiring intermittent lab work on individuals if they have consecutively taken a prescription for more than 9 months; (d) annual mental health screening.

Background

The Periodic Health Assessment (PHA) is a standardized global health screening conducted annually for every Service member to facilitate evaluation, care, and readiness. The PHA assesses overall health and medical readiness and is a key component of the Individual Medical Readiness Program. The PHA consists of a Service member self-assessment, a review of medical records, and an interview with a health care provider (HCP). Information is solicited on deployment, occupation, medical conditions, family medical history, behavioral health, medical readiness, and lifestyle. Additionally, the PHA provides age- and gender-specific, evidence based preventive health information and recommendations in accordance with the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF). The PHA is conducted using Department of Defense Form 3024 (DD Form 3024). The PHA forms are completed and submitted electronically to the Defense Medical Surveillance System and documented in the health record. The PHA program falls under the purview of the chartered Periodic Health Assessment Optimization Working Group (PHAO WG), with broad representation from the Military Departments, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, and the Defense Health Agency. Relevant documents include Defense Health Agency Procedural Instruction 6200.06, “Periodic Health Assessment (PHA) Program,” May 9, 2017;¹ and Department of Defense Instruction 6200.06, “Periodic Health Assessment (PHA) Program,” September 8, 2016.²

Process and Method by Which Changes Are Made to the PHA

The PHAO WG meets monthly and considers proposed modifications to the PHA based upon evidence-based medicine, topic relevance to the active duty Service member, and prioritization within the Department of Defense (DoD). Revising and re-publishing the form in its entirety is a lengthy process that involves updating multiple information technology systems and addressing interoperability and electronic data transfer issues. However, an interim process provides the mechanism to make focused changes by inserting them only into the electronic form delivery system. The PHAO WG is currently involved in the planning for incorporating DD Form 3024

¹ <https://health.mil/Reference-Center/DHA-Publications/2017/05/09/DHA-PI-6200-06>.

² <https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodi/620006p.pdf>.

into the Military Health System GENESIS electronic medical record, which will further simplify the process for making periodic changes.

Average Frequency by Which Changes Are Made to the PHA

The standardized PHA, DD Form 3024, was published in 2016. Under the direction of the PHAO WG, it was revised and re-published in its entirety in 2021 based on extensive and comprehensive input from subject matter experts, statutory requirements, and updated USPSTF guidance. Revising and re-publishing DD Form 3024 in its entirety is now on a 4-year cycle. As noted in the previous section, an interim process is utilized to make time-sensitive changes on an as-needed basis as determined by the PHAO WG. Examples include adding burn pit/airborne hazard questions in 2019, gambling questions in 2020, and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) Pre-exposure Prophylaxis education in 2023.

Have the following changes to the PHA been considered?

Instituting Annual Sports Physicals

Requiring annual sports physicals for all Service members is not currently under consideration. The establishment of the PHA program replaced the requirement for periodic physical exams for all Service members. During the PHA process, the HCP can recommend further evaluation, including Military Service-specific physical examinations, if warranted. Preventive health screening recommendations are based on USPSTF guidelines. Various high-risk occupations (e.g., aviators, divers, firefighters) require annual specialty physical exams, in addition to the PHA.

Requiring Annual Blood Screening

Additional annual blood screening for all Service members is not currently under consideration. All Service members are screened for sickle cell trait and glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase upon accession and tested biennially for HIV. Deployers receive blood donor pre-screening testing. Additional blood screening is conducted based on health condition, clinical indication, and/or USPSTF guidelines.

Intermittent Blood Work for Individuals on Prescription Drugs for More Than 9 Months

DoD's view is that the determination of requiring lab work for individuals on medication for more than 9 months is under the purview of the prescribing HCP. Routine lab work for most prescription medications is not medically warranted in most cases.

Annual Mental Health Screening

Annual mental health screening is conducted for all Service members as part of the PHA since 2016. The mental health assessment questions embedded into the PHA include evidence-based scales for depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, alcohol use, and suicide risk.

Conclusion

The PHA is mandated annually for all Service members and focuses on medical conditions, behavioral health/mental health, preventive health care services, and readiness. The PHAO WG has built in processes to consider proposed changes to the PHA form and to make modifications, as necessary. Physical exams and lab work are recommended at the discretion of the HCP based on clinical indicators and/or USPSTF guidelines. Certain occupational specialties require annual physical exams in addition to the PHA. For individuals on medication, the prescribing HCP is responsible for determining need for lab work. An annual mental health screening had been conducted as part of the PHA since 2016.