Fact Sheet: Building the Second Link to the Force of the Future
Strengthening Comprehensive Family Benefits

On his first day in office, Secretary Carter set a goal to build the Force of the Future in order for the Department of Defense to maintain our competitive edge in attracting top talent to serve the nation. After directing a comprehensive review of the Department's civilian and military personnel systems, Secretary Carter announced in November 2015 at George Washington University a series of reforms to increase permeability of personnel and ideas between the public and private sector and improve recruiting, talent management, and retention.

Secretary Carter is now announcing a second tranche of reforms focused on improving the quality of life of military parents so they may better balance commitments they make to serve in uniform and start and support a family. The stresses of military service on our families are heavy and well known and it is one of the top reasons people transition out of the military. Secretary Carter believes this comprehensive package of family benefits will enable the Department to attract, incentivize, and retain the best talent today and in the future while improving overall mission effectiveness and the strength and health of our teams.

Establish a DoD-wide standard for Paid Maternity Leave of 12 Weeks
Across the Department, women service members will receive 12 continuous weeks of fully paid maternity leave as the standard across the Joint Force – doubling the maternity leave offered to all service members from when Secretary Carter took office. This immediately puts DoD in the top tier of institutions nationally and will have significant influence on decision making for our military families.

This benefit will be offered to the over 200,000 women in uniform today who comprise 14.8 percent of enlisted personnel and 17.4 percent of the officer corps. The percentage of women in the military has increased significantly over the last few decades and this benefit will be even more critical for the future.

As a point of comparison, a 2015 Survey by "Working Mother" found the 100 Best Companies offered on average eight weeks of paid maternity leave; only the top quartile of these highly rated companies offer twelve weeks. The extension of this benefit to our entire force is unprecedented for an organization of DoD's size as well as diversity of job functions.

This decision applies to all service members in the active duty component, and those Reserve component service members serving in a full time status or on definite active duty recall or mobilization orders in excess of twelve months. Sailors and Marines who are currently pregnant or become pregnant within 30 days of the enactment of this policy

will still be eligible to take the full 18 weeks of paid maternity leave, consistent with the Department of the Navy's 2015 announcement.

Expanding Paternity Leave to 14 Days
The Department will seek legislation to expand the current ten day paternity leave benefit offered to service members to a 14 day (two week) non-continuous leave. Secretary Carter is also encouraging men to take the leave that is currently available to support their new families.

Expanding Adoption Leave
Currently, the Department provides three weeks of adoptive leave to one parent. In the case of dual military couples, the Department will seek authority from Congress to provide two weeks of leave for the second parent as well. There are 84,000 military to military marriages that may take advantage of this new benefit.

Extend Childcare Development Center Hours To A 14 Hour Minimum
Today, nearly half of all military families have to rely on an additional provider to meet their childcare needs outside the hours provided by DoD subsidized Child Development Centers. The Department will extend hours of CDCs to overlap the normal working shifts of service members by at least two hours to ensure hours of operation consistent with the work patterns of the majority of service members at each specific installation. For example, for a normal workday of 0700 to 1700, CDCs would remain continuously open from 0500 to 1900, providing a minimum of 14 hours of continuous coverage. Each child will receive up to 12 hours of subsidized care per day.

Modify Or Install Mothers' Rooms At Each Military Installation
To further help transition from maternity leave, DoD will set a single Department-wide standard requiring installation or modification of Mothers' Rooms throughout all facilities when there are more than fifty women regularly assigned. That will result in the improvement or establishment of 3,600 rooms across DoD installations. These rooms must be a designated, clean, and private space that is not a restroom. The room must also be equipped with electrical outlets, as well as table and chair access for each person using the room. Finally, the room must be as close as possible to a water source for washing hands and rinsing equipment, and there must be assured access to dedicated refrigeration or other cooling devices for breast milk.

Examine Additional Options For Childcare Services
The Secretaries of the Military Departments will conduct long-range strategic planning and assessments for childcare options to improve access and usability. Planning will require the services to a) develop a strategic plan to expand capacity in critical areas where wait times for Childcare Development Center (CDC) enrollment exceed 90 days; b) ensure all service members can go on CDC waiting lists upon receipt of orders, rather than requiring them to wait until they have arrived at the next duty station; c) create a universal CDC application for major military concentration areas which will enable service members to apply only once for multiple CDC waiting lists; d) develop training for CDC directors on how to connect parents to other regional care resources; e) direct CDCs to sponsor new parent mentor networks, local forums for home-based child care, and to establish parent advisory boards. The Services should complete their reports and submit their findings no later than June 1, 2016.

Allow Service Members to Remain at a Station of Choice For Family Reasons
The Department will seek an amendment to existing Title 10 authorities to permit Service members to postpone a Permanent Change of Station and remain at their duty station in certain instances where it is in the best interests of the family. For example, if a daughter is in her senior year of high school, or a spouse is getting a graduate degree at a local university, or a service member needs to care for a nearby ailing parent, the service member would be able to stay at their current station to address those needs. In exchange, the service member would agree to an additional commensurate active duty service obligation.

Provide egg and sperm cryopreservation
Through the TRICARE purchased care network, the Department covers the cost for active duty service members to freeze their sperm or eggs. This benefit will apply only to active duty service members through a pilot mechanism within the current governing rules of TRICARE. One purpose of the pilot is to understand the costs and potential recruiting and retention benefits for providing this medical service. After two years, the pilot may be renewed or service members can pay for additional storage out of pocket. The Department is also committed to continuing to look at how we can broaden reduced cost Advanced Reproductive Technologies to the active force beyond current care at some Military Treatment Facilities.

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