

Coast Guard Commanding Officer and Officer-in-Charge Transgender FAQ

Background

The Department of Defense has announced a new transgender policy for the military services, including the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard will publish implementing guidance within the next 30 days. In the interim, this document provides additional guidance that may be helpful to commands in responding to questions from Service members.

Unit Briefings

Coast Guard commanding officers, officers-in-charge, and supervisors at all levels should be sure their members are aware of the policy changes, and know who they can talk to should they have any questions or want to discuss the changes. Though commands are not required to brief their members on the transgender policy change, you may find it helpful to do so. These discussions could include unit all hands briefings, as well as individual discussions with members that seek to discuss or better understand the policy. The following Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and resources are intended to assist those discussions at your unit, and ensure members have access to the information they need.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

What changes can I expect as of the effective date of the new policy?

Effective April 12, 2019, individuals with a history of gender dysphoria will be permitted to join the military if:

1. They are stable for 36 consecutive months in their biological sex immediately prior to application as certified by a licensed medical provider; and,
2. They have not transitioned to their preferred gender and a licensed medical provider has determined that gender transition is not required to protect their health; and,
3. They are willing and able to adhere to all standards associated with their biological sex.

An applicant with a history of cross-sex hormone therapy, sex reassignment or genital reconstruction surgery is disqualified.

Under the new policy, service members who are diagnosed with gender dysphoria after entering service will be permitted to continue serving if a military medical provider has determined a gender transition is not required to protect their health, and the member is willing and able serve in their biological sex.

Service members who have been diagnosed or have obtained treatment from a military medical provider for a diagnosis of gender dysphoria prior to the effective date of this policy may continue to serve in their preferred gender and receive medical treatment.

After April 12, 2019, service members who are diagnosed with gender dysphoria will be permitted to continue serving if they do not require a gender transition and are willing and able serve in their biological sex.

No otherwise qualified Coast Guard member can be involuntarily separated, discharged, or denied re-enlistment or continuation of service, solely on the basis of their gender identity.

What does it mean to be a transgender Service member?

DOD defines transgender as “Individuals who identify with a gender that differs from their biological sex.”

Considering oneself as transgender is not a medical condition.

A subset of transgender covers persons diagnosed with gender dysphoria. Personnel who have gender dysphoria experience discomfort with their biological sex, resulting in significant distress or difficulty functioning. Gender dysphoria is a serious mental health condition that can require substantial medical treatment. Persons diagnosed with gender dysphoria often seek to transition their gender through prescribed medical treatments intended to

relieve the distress and impaired functioning associated with their diagnosis.

How should I handle impacts on my unit?

Unique to military service, you are responsible and accountable for the overall readiness of your command. You are also responsible for the collective morale and welfare and good order and discipline of your unit, the command climate, and for ensuring that all members of your command are treated equally, and with dignity and respect. When you receive any request from a Service member that entails a period of non-availability for duty (such as for necessary medical treatment, ordinary leave, emergency leave, temporary duty, or other approved absence), you must consider the individual need associated with the request and the needs of your command, in making a decision on that request.

How should I handle the potential for harassment and bullying?

It is Coast Guard policy that discrimination based on gender identity is a form of sex discrimination. Coast Guard policies are being revised to prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender identity and to incorporate such prohibitions in all aspects of the Coast Guard civil rights and equal opportunity (EO) policies. You, as the unit commander, are responsible to set and maintain the appropriate tone in your command such that discrimination will not be tolerated. If you know of or suspect discrimination, harassment, or bullying of transgender service members in your command, you must, in consultation with your command legal and civil rights service providers, take actions to ensure that such behavior ceases immediately, that the allegations are investigated, and that those involved are held accountable, as appropriate. Refer to Chapter 3 of the Discipline and Conduct Manual (COMDTINST M1600.2 (series)) for additional guidance.

Whom do I contact if I require general information about gender identity and transgender service?

Members and supervisors can confidentially reach out to the Service Central Coordination Cell (SCCC), comprised of personnel, legal, and health care experts, to assist members and their commands through issues that may arise due to the transgender service policy changes. The SCCC can be contacted by email at SCCC@uscg.mil. General information can be found at www.uscg.mil/transgender.

What if I am a Service member who wants to transition or a command with a Service member who wants to transition?

CG-1 established a Service Central Coordination Cell (SCCC) to assist commands and Service members with gender transition questions and concerns. The SCCC will have personnel, legal, and health care experts available to answer questions for transgender members and their commands, including those who may be experiencing gender dysphoria. Members who wish to transition, or commands with a member who wishes to transition, should contact the SCCC for guidance on how to proceed. The SCCC may be contacted via email at SCCC@uscg.mil.

The Military Transgender Service Manual (COMDTINST M1000.13) will be released on the effective date of the new policy and will establish a process for currently serving Service members who received a medical diagnosis of gender dysphoria prior to April 12, 2019, indicating that gender transition is medically necessary. Throughout this interim period, you should follow the guidance in ALCOAST 077/19 and consult with your chain of command.

As with all Service members under your command requiring medical care, you should consider your unit readiness requirements as well as the morale and welfare and good order and discipline of your command.

How do I accommodate the potential scenario of a mix of genitalia in shared spaces (e.g., showers, berthing)?

Service members will use the facilities associated with their gender as recognized in DEERS, unless granted an exception to policy by COMDT (CG-13). When a transgender Service member's gender marker is changed in DEERS, that member will use facilities associated with that new gender marker. When necessary, you may take reasonable steps to respect Service member privacy interests. Commands should consult with the SCCC on how best to accommodate such interests.

What if a member of my command expresses moral or religious concerns regarding the new policy?

Policies regarding Service members' individual expression and free exercise of religion already exist and should be followed. In today's military, people of different moral and religious values work, live, and fight together.

Commands should attempt to accommodate religiously based or other deeply held beliefs in personal modesty. Each of us has a responsibility to treat others with dignity and respect. This commitment to dignity and respect always will be a keystone value of service in our armed forces and always must guide our treatment of one another. This will not change.

Can transgender members with or without gender dysphoria dress in clothing of the opposite sex while on liberty?

The Coast Guard has little policy dictating what members can wear while off duty. So long as the clothing does not violate Coast Guard policy, and is not otherwise contrary to good order and discipline (i.e. depicting drugs, advocating drug use, or of a sexual, crude, extremist, or racist nature), then when off duty and out of uniform, Service members may generally express their gender identity how they wish, including their clothing. Keep in mind, however, that the Uniform Regulations (COMDTINST M1020.6J) state that grooming standards appropriate to a member's gender apply when wearing civilian clothing on duty.

RESOURCES

There are several resources that can provide more additional information on the policy changes, as follows:

- **ALCOAST 077/19:** Announces the update to the Military Transgender Service Policy.
- **Internal Communications Bulletin (ICB) 002-19:** Provides internal guidance and discussion on the transgender policy change.
- **Transgender Website** www.uscg.mil/transgender: Centralizes resources to assist commands and members, including FAQs and policy updates.
- **Service Central Coordination Cell (SCCC):** The Coast Guard chartered the SCCC, comprised of personnel, legal, and health care experts, to assist members and their commands through issues that may arise due to the transgender service policy changes. Members and supervisors can confidentially reach out to the SCCC with any questions. Additionally, all units with members requesting transition prior to April 12, 2019 are required to contact the SCCC to gain initial guidance. The SCCC can be contacted by email at SCCC@uscg.mil.