

## JO VOICE

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### Health Coverage, Medical Leave, and DEERS Enrollment *April 2017*

**Prepared By: DCCPR, Officer Support in coordination with Medical Affairs, Compensation, and the Policy Group. Questions #1 and #7 were co-prepared by the Commissioned Corps Women's Issues Advisory Group (CCWIAB) and DCCPR.**

**Points of Contact: DCCPR, CCMIS website, CCWIAB.**

*The information below, developed by the DCCPR, Officer Support in collaboration with the Junior Officers Advisory Group (JOAG), is designed to serve as an unofficial guide. Please refer to PHS websites for changes or updates to any of the below information.*

#### Questions/Responses

1. What is the step-by-step process that a newly married officer needs to follow to get his/her spouse enrolled and provided with health coverage?
  - a. The sponsor will need to provide the marriage license. The spouse must provide their birth certificate, social security card, and photo ID i.e. driver's license or passport, to the local Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) ID Card office for enrollment and ID card issuance. Check the RAPIDS Site Locator to find your nearest ID card office at <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/rsl>.
  - b. The sponsor should visit the TRICARE website to review and then enroll their spouse into one of the [TRICARE Plans](#).

CCWIAB recently released a *Resource Guide for USPHS Officers Getting Married or Getting Divorced, and for Dependents Surviving the Death of a USPHS Officer*. The guide can be found here: <https://dcp.psc.gov/osg/ccwiab/ccwiabresources.aspx> Section C. provides step-by-step guidance for updating your information with the DEERS and enrolling your spouse or dependent(s) in health care benefits through TRICARE as well as dental benefit.

2. Are we supposed to re-enroll annually for healthcare benefits, or does everything roll over as we had originally selected?

There is no annual re-enrollment for TRICARE.

3. How do we make changes to our healthcare enrollment? Is additional coverage an option?

The TRICARE website located at <https://tricare.mil/> is the best resource for any TRICARE related questions.

- a. Healthcare enrollment: <https://tricare.mil/Plans/SwitchingPlans>
- b. Additional Coverage: <https://tricare.mil/Plans/OHI>

4. Please provide clarity on the medical leave policy.

- a. Does an officer receive pay during medical leave?

An officer should utilize sick leave for an illness or a medical condition that prohibits the officer from reporting to work. As long as the officer has received supervisory approval, then there are no changes in the officer's pay and benefits.

- b. Are there specific time period limits for medical leave?

All officers are expected to be fit for full duty based on rank, category and office. Officers will continue to receive all active duty pay and benefits while on sick leave. An officer should not utilize excessive amounts of sick leave. If at any point an officer is aware that s/he may not be able to continue on active duty due to an illness or condition, then the officer should contact Medical Affairs immediately. An officer's duty station may request a fitness for duty evaluation when the mission of the agency is impacted and is not dependent on the number of days that sick leave is utilized. However, if an officer utilizes 90+ consecutive days of sick leave, or 120 non-consecutive days of sick leave over a year, then a fitness for duty evaluation is mandatory according to Sick Leave Policy.

- c. Should officers maintain short-term and long-term disability insurance policies? Please provide some examples.

DCCPR is not able to advise officers on questions pertaining to short/long term disability. An officer may gain advice from a resource of their choice.

5. How should medical or sick leave be requested if it is less than a day? I am being required by my supervisor to complete a PHS-1345 for every medical appointment.

A supervisor may require an officer to complete a leave request for any absence, to include sick leave in partial days or for medical appointments.

6. What is the process for requesting a uniform waiver due to a medical issue?

While all officers are expected to wear the uniform, if there is a medical condition that would prevent an officer from physically being able to wear a component of the uniform temporarily, this should be discussed with a physician and the first Commissioned Corps officer in the officer's chain of command. For example, if the officer's supervisor is not a Commissioned Corps officer, then the officer should find an officer in authority over their direct supervisor. Some officers may have to go directly to their agency liaison if they do not have an officer in their chain of command. Medical affairs would evaluate the request and make that ruling.

7. In requesting maternity leave, how does one go about doing so if the start date is not known until the birth of the child? Should maternity leave be requested in Direct Access or on paper? Can maternity leave dates be modified, and if so, how?

Maternity leave is a period of approved sick leave for incapacitation related to pregnancy and postpartum recovery. You should notify your supervisor as soon as possible after you confirm pregnancy in the event that necessary staffing adjustments are required for the health and safety of yourself and the fetus. When you know the approximate date of delivery, leave request time frame, and anticipated date to return to duty, a leave request should be submitted (the paper form, PHS-1345) and entered into Direct Access. Upon return to duty, you should submit a provider's statement indicating your fitness to resume duties and have Section 4 of the previously submitted form PHS-1345 completed or entered into Direct Access.

Maternity leave is granted for 84 consecutive days beginning the day following hospital discharge, not the day of delivery. This policy applies to all officers following childbirth, regardless of type of delivery. Sick leave beyond this limit must be justified by your actual incapacity to return to full or limited duty. If it is anticipated that you will require sick leave beyond the limit of maternity leave, then sick leave approval should be obtained prior to the end of the maternity leave period. A sick leave request beyond the maternity leave period shall require a second opinion. Child care is not considered a reason for maternity leave extension. Leave for this purpose, if granted, is chargeable to annual leave.

Officers should request sick leave to be approved by their immediate supervisor and/or leave granting authority through the Direct Access leave portal. This leave is not to exceed a total of 84 consecutive days from the day of delivery (normal or Caesarean) for postpartum recovery.

Supervisors may not decline maternity leave. Maternity leave will be granted in all cases for eligible officers who request it. For more information, please see the policy CCI 363.01- effective 05 December 2016:

<https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/ccis/documents/cc363.01.pdf>

More information regarding policies and resources related to pregnancy and postpartum, can be found in the *Resource Guide for Expectant Parents* available online at:

<https://dcp.psc.gov/osg/ccwiab/ccwiabresources.aspx>