



## FACT SHEET

### Spousal Benefits

Last Reviewed: May 17, 2018

#### Background

The USPHS is committed to ensuring officers who serve are treated fairly and equally. Similar to other USPHS benefit policies, spousal benefits for officers align with Department of Defense (DoD) or US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) policies. Both VA and DoD recognize all legally married military personnel equally, including personnel in same-sex marriages (<http://archive.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=120621> and <https://www.va.gov/opa/marriage/>).

This Fact Sheet summarizes general information about basic issues regarding obtaining spousal benefits. The policies and procedures for obtaining specific benefits vary and should be researched individually. Additional information can be found in the resources listed at the end of this Fact Sheet.

#### Eligibility

- ▶ DOD benefits
  - Spouses and other newly-qualified dependents must be enrolled in the Defense Enrollment and Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) and obtain dependent identification cards; a valid marriage certificate or similar documentation is required to enroll ([http://www.cac.mil/Portals/53/Documents/required\\_docs.pdf](http://www.cac.mil/Portals/53/Documents/required_docs.pdf)).
  - For each family member  $\geq 21$  years of age, two forms of acceptable personal ID are required. Details on acceptable ID and required supporting documents are available at: [https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/PDF\\_docs/DEERS\\_cover\\_memo.pdf](https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/PDF_docs/DEERS_cover_memo.pdf).
  - For additional details, officers should contact their agency liaison's office and speak to the DEERS specialist.
- ▶ VA benefits
  - To establish marriage, the VA requires only a statement by the claimant that includes the date and place of marriage and the name and social security number of the person the claimant has identified as his or her spouse.
  - The VA may investigate further if an assertion concerning a marriage appears unreliable, but the VA will not treat assertions regarding same-sex marriages any differently than those regarding opposite-sex marriages.
  - For some VA-administered benefits, for which Veteran status is not a condition of participation (*e.g.*, Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance, Post-9/11 educational benefits, home loan guarantees), the VA recognizes marriages for these programs using the same standard as used by the DOD.

#### Highlights

- ▶ Locate a nearby ID card office at <https://rapids-appointments.dmdc.osd.mil/>; for some offices, an appointment can be scheduled online.
  - Complete a [DD Form 1172-2](#) (Application for Identification Card/DEERS Enrollment) for each family member. The PHS officer must be present at the ID card office to sign this form. Spouses, dependent adults, and children ( $\geq 10$  years) are eligible to receive CACs.
- ▶ For VA benefits, the VA is in the process of updating all forms that request marital status and dependent information (*e.g.*, replacing references to "husband" or "wife" with "spouse"). In the interim, the existing forms may be used to apply for benefits. For questions on how to fill out a form, call **1-800-827-1000**.

## Resources

- ▶ <http://www.military.com/benefits> – non-government website that provides general benefits information.
- ▶ Additional information for VA benefits can be found at <https://www.va.gov/opa/marriage/>.
- ▶ [http://www.lambdalegal.org/sites/default/files/ltr\\_va\\_20151016\\_same-sex-spousal-benefits.pdf](http://www.lambdalegal.org/sites/default/files/ltr_va_20151016_same-sex-spousal-benefits.pdf) – Internal VA letter to regional offices and centers on administering same-sex spousal benefits.
- ▶ Details on DEERS enrollment and dependent identification cards: <http://www.cac.mil/uniformed-services-id-card/getting-your-id-card/#usidsponsorship>.
- ▶ Physician Professional Advisory Committee (PPAC) [fact sheets](#) on Educational Benefits, Life Insurance, Thrift Savings Plan, Space-A Travel, Survivor Benefits, and Permanent Change-of-Station.
- ▶ Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity Advisory Group (SOAGDAG) – PHS group supporting and sharing information on the evolving rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender officers in uniform and their partners:
  - For more information, contact CDR Richard Dunville ([RDunville@cdc.gov](mailto:RDunville@cdc.gov))
  - To join the group, click [here](#)

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**Note:** Feedback and suggestions for this fact sheet are welcome and may be sent to [PPACBenefitsSC@gmail.com](mailto:PPACBenefitsSC@gmail.com).

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