

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Secretary of Defense Ash Carter Announces Policy for Transgender Service Members

Press Operations

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Secretary of Defense Ash Carter today announced that transgender individuals will now be able to openly serve in the U.S. armed forces.

The DoD policy announced today also establishes a construct by which service members may transition gender while serving, sets standards for medical care and outlines responsibilities for military services and commanders to develop and implement guidance, training and specific policies in the near and long-term.

"This is the right thing to do for our people and for the force," Carter said. "We're talking about talented Americans who are serving with distinction or who want the opportunity to serve. We can't allow barriers unrelated to a person's qualifications prevent us from recruiting and retaining those who can best accomplish the mission."

The policy will be phased in during a one-year period. Effective immediately, service members may no longer be involuntarily separated, discharged or denied reenlistment solely on the basis of gender identity. Service members currently on duty will be able to serve openly.

Not later than October 1, 2016, DoD will create and distribute a commanders' training handbook, medical protocol and guidance for changing a service member's gender in the Defense Eligibility Enrollment System (DEERS). At this point, the services will be required to provide medically necessary care and treatment to transgender service members according to the medical protocol and guidance, and may begin changing gender markers in DEERS. **Prior to October 1, 2016,** requests for medical treatment

will be handled on a case-by-case basis consistent with the spirit of the Directive Type Memorandum and the DoD Instruction issued today.

Over the course of the next year, the Department will finalize force training plans and implementation guidance, revise regulations and forms, and train the force, including commanders, human resources specialists, recruiters and service members. Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Peter Levine will work with the military services to monitor and oversee this effort.

At one year, the services will begin allowing transgender individuals to join the armed forces, assuming they meet accession standards. In addition, an otherwise-qualified individual's gender identity will not be considered a bar to admission to a military service academy, or participation in the Reserve Officers' Training Corps or any other accession program if the individual meets the new criteria.

The full policy must be completely implemented no later than July 1, 2017.

To support service members, medical professionals and commanders during the implementation period, the DoD has set up a central coordination cell which will serve as a central point of contact for technical questions and concerns. The coordination cell is made up of legal experts, policy experts and medical professionals familiar with the issue.