

## **Military Can't Discriminate Against Pregnancy, but There are Restrictions**

By Mathew B. TullyQ. I am on active duty, and I'm pregnant. What are my rights and responsibilities?

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Female service members should know that discrimination on the basis of pregnancy is not allowed in the military. All troops have reproductive rights that cannot be taken away, and they cannot be disciplined solely for becoming pregnant, regardless of their marital status. Service members cannot be demoted, receive lower evaluation marks, or otherwise be discriminated against simply because they are pregnant. That said, the military does place significant restrictions on pregnant service members, depending on their duty status and how far along the pregnancy is. Generally, troops who become pregnant may terminate their enlistment with an honorable discharge. But they certainly do not have to end their service. Officers also may request to be released. However, officers who have service obligations due to schooling must complete their service requirements prior to receiving a discharge. Service members who choose to stay on active duty need to be aware of several basic details. First, pregnant troops will not be assigned to an overseas duty station, and they will not be considered deployable until six months after giving birth. (However, if they're already overseas, they'll most likely remain at that duty station.) Service members in the continental U.S. can be transferred to new duty stations during pregnancy, but they can't be transferred to positions where nausea, easy fatigue, or sudden lightheadedness would be hazardous. Certain other restrictions apply during the course of a pregnancy: A pregnant service member is exempt from physical fitness requirements upon diagnosis of the pregnancy until six months after giving birth. However, your branch may require participation in a program to keep pregnant and post-partum service members fit.

Service members are also exempt from all physiological training during pregnancy.

The wearing of body armor and other load-bearing equipment is not required after 14 weeks of pregnancy.

After 20 weeks of pregnancy, service members are not to be placed at parade rest or attention for longer than 15 minutes.

Further restrictions apply after 28 weeks. Pregnant troops should always remember that they are still subject to all the other rules and regulations of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. They also have certain rights. A pregnant service member who experiences discrimination based on her status should contact her local Equal Employment Opportunity officer for help.