

## Things Sailors should know about starting a



in the Navy

*From Chief of Naval Personnel Public Affairs*

So you've decided to start a family? Congratulations! It's an exciting time and there is a lot to think about. Have you thought about all the details? What color to paint the baby's room? Do you name the child after that old quirky uncle? Have you found the perfect baby stroller? Is the timing right? Most importantly, how will having a child affect your naval career?

The policy instruction on pregnancy and parenthood (OPNAVINST 6000.1C) in the Navy was released in 2007.

While the Navy Office of Women's Policy is working on an updated version due out next year, now is good time to review some of the policies and responsibilities that affect you and your family.

### **Notifying your Command**

So you've just found out that you're having a baby! Sailors are required to inform their commands of their pregnancy and parenthood status as soon as possible, but no later than two weeks from the time the pregnancy is confirmed by a medical professional. This ensures the safety of the servicewoman and child. OPNAVINST 6000.1C lists the forms that service members are required to submit to their administrative office, and provides a samples of the pregnancy notification to the Commanding Officer (CO) or Officer in Charge (OIC) and pregnancy counseling form.

### **Family Care Plan**

Single parents and dual military couples with eligible children are responsible for completing a family care plan (in accordance with OPNAVINST 1740.40, Navy Family Care Policy). This plan is submitted to their respective commands to ensure that their child or children will be cared for during the service member's absence. The plan identifies a caregiver and potential logistical relocation plans and financial arrangements.

### **Commanding Officer's Responsibility**

COs are responsible for creating an environment where Sailors are treated with dignity and respect. As such, COs must ensure that pregnant servicewomen

are not subjected to harassment, imposition of personal opinions, or infringement of legal rights. Once pregnancy is confirmed, COs will ensure servicewomen receive counseling on military entitlements to obstetrical care, policy on worldwide assignability, and have been afforded the opportunity to be counseled by a Health Care Professional (HCP).

### **Leave for the Birth of a Child**

COs will make an effort to allow new parents to take 10 days of Parental Leave (formerly known as Paternity Leave) in conjunction with their wife giving birth to their child. It's free leave and does not count against your regular leave balance. New mothers are granted a minimum of 42 days of convalescent leave (CONLV) upon leaving the hospital after the birth of their child. If the servicewomen experienced any medical complications, the mother's doctor can recommend an extension of CONLV beyond the 42 days, notifying the mother's command of the extension.

### **Getting back in shape for the PFA**

Postpartum servicewomen are required to gradually resume an individual exercise program under the guidance of their HCP. Postpartum servicewomen are exempt from participating in a physical fitness assessment (PFA) for six months following convalescent leave and upon return to full duty status by an HCP. At the conclusion of this six month period, servicewomen are required to participate in the next PFA cycle, as outlined the Command Fitness Leader Operating Guide: Managing PFA Records for Pregnant/Postpartum Servicewomen.

### **Adopting a Child**

COs can authorize up to 21 days of non-chargeable leave to any service member adopting a child in a qualifying adoption, to allow the service member to bond with their adopted child and work out family arrangements and schedules. Adoption leave may be used in conjunction with regular leave. Additionally, a service member who adopts a child is authorized four months operational deferment.

For more news from Chief of Naval Personnel - Navy Office of Women's Policy, visit <http://www.npc.navy.mil/AboutUs/BUPERS/WomensPolicy>.