

Women Who Rely on the Military for Their Health Care Deserve Comprehensive Contraceptive Coverage and Family Planning Counseling:

Support the Access to Contraception for Women Servicemembers and Dependents Act

The Access to Contraception for Women Servicemembers and Dependents Act of 2014 ensures that all servicemembers and their dependents who rely on the military health care system have comprehensive contraceptive coverage and family planning counseling. Access to this basic preventive health service will benefit servicemembers, their families, and the military broadly.

This Bill Would Bring TRICARE's Contraceptive Coverage Policies In Line With Other Employer-Based Insurance Plans

- Under the military's health care program, all active duty servicemembers have coverage of all prescriptions with no cost sharing (that is without co-pay, co-insurance, or deductible) no matter where or how they obtain their prescription. That is not the case for dependents and non-active duty women. Due to a statutory provision that requires TRICARE to impose cost sharing on prescription medicine obtained outside of a military treatment facility (MTF), non-active duty women and dependents are faced with cost sharing if their contraceptive prescription is filled outside of an MTF.
- Currently, TRICARE's contraceptive coverage is less comprehensive than most other health plans. Under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), which does not extend to TRICARE, all new group and individual health plans must cover – without cost sharing – all FDA-approved contraceptive methods and any related education and counseling. Federal employees also now have this coverage as the Office of Personnel Management adopted the ACA requirement as part of the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program.
- Contraception is basic preventive health care for women and it is time that women who rely on TRICARE have the same access to, and coverage of, this critical health service other women now have. By making a technical fix, this bill would bring TRICARE in line with standard contraceptive coverage found in other health insurance plans.

This Bill Would Ensure that Servicewomen Receive Comprehensive Family Planning Counseling

- Studies indicate that active duty servicewomen could benefit from comprehensive counseling and education on contraception, especially in their pre-deployment preparations. By providing access to such counseling, the military can help ensure its servicewomen have the information necessary to make informed family planning decisions.

- This bill would remedy gaps in family planning counseling by requiring the Department of Defense (DoD) to develop tools for its health care providers to receive the most up-to-date, evidence-based standards of care regarding the full range of all methods of contraception and associated counseling. Providers trained on the most up-to-date standards can then ensure that servicewomen receive comprehensive contraceptive counseling, including information on the full range of contraceptive methods and the use of effective methods, at all stages of duty – during deployment, pre-deployment health care visits, and all annual physical exams.

This Bill Would Require the Department of Defense to Develop a Uniform Standard Curriculum for Family Planning Education Programs for All Servicemembers

- Recognizing the importance of family planning, the military has taken steps to offer family planning education programs to servicemembers. However, the military must do more to ensure ALL of its servicemembers – both men and women – receive comprehensive family planning education.
- Comprehensive family planning reduces unintended pregnancy, promotes military readiness, and enhances quality of life for servicemembers. Comprehensive family planning that includes consideration of servicemembers’ training and deployment schedules and working conditions, can minimize disruptions to the military’s operations and improve the overall health of the force.
- This bill would enhance existing military family planning education programs by requiring the DoD to establish a uniform standard curriculum for family planning.
- This curriculum would emphasize the importance of family planning for military readiness and servicemember health, and provide current, medically-accurate information to servicemembers in a clear, user-friendly manner.

This Bill Would Improve Access to Emergency Contraception for Servicewomen Who Are Survivors of Sexual Assault

- This bill would improve access to emergency contraception (EC) for servicewomen who are survivors of sexual assault. This bill would require MTFs to inform every sexual-assault survivor who seeks medical care that EC is an option, and to offer the medication upon her request.
- EC is safe, effective, and FDA-approved medication that prevents pregnancy if taken soon after sex. EC does not cause abortion; rather it prevents pregnancy. If taken correctly, this medication has great potential to help a woman reduce her chance of becoming pregnant.
- These provisions ensure that women who are sexually assaulted and present at a military treatment facility receive critical and time-sensitive medical counseling and care they may need.