

COVID-19 MILITARY PERSONNEL, PAY, AND BENEFITS POLICY QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(As of March 26, 2020)

(1) ALTERNATE PLACES OF DUTY AND TELEWORK

Q1.1: I am unable to report to duty with my unit because my wife has tested positive for COVID-19, and I was told to stay home. Will I be given leave to care for her?

A1.1: You should discuss this issue with your chain of command, who may be able to provide you with options based upon your specific circumstances. Potential options you may wish to discuss with them include: leave, designation of an alternate place of duty, and telework.

Q1.2: Why haven't all military members been told to stay home instead of coming in for duty?

A1.2: The military must still perform all essential missions, but military commanders have been given guidance to apply leave and liberty policies liberally to the maximum extent while continuing to ensure they can fulfill these missions. Military commanders have broad authority to assign members to alternate places of duty, such as a member's residence or government quarters, which could include allowing members to care for family members. Military commanders can also authorize members to perform duties remotely if possible.

Q1.3: Is telework an option for military members?

A1.3: Yes, telework-ready military members, who can perform appropriate military duties remotely, may be assigned to an alternate duty location in their residence or government quarters. Military commanders will determine those members who can work remotely and assign appropriate duties. Not every military member is able to telework, and it is up to the discretion of each commander to determine how to effectively utilize telework. In certain circumstances, you may be ordered to telework and will not be given the option of reporting for duty at your regular duty location. You should check with chain of command for specific guidance on who is authorized to telework and who must report for duty at the primary duty location.

Q1.4: I am unable to telework from home because my job is to perform maintenance on helicopters. What do I do if I am potentially exposed to COVID-19 and need to stay home?

A1.4: Members who are sick should notify the chain of command and seek medical attention, as appropriate. The commander will make a decision whether or not to order you into restriction of movement for self-monitoring. An inability to perform traditional "telework" is not a barrier to complying with restriction of movement orders. Your commander has authority to assign you to an alternate place of duty, which could include your residence, during a period you are ordered to restriction of movement for self-monitoring.

(2) BASIC ALLOWANCE FOR SUBSISTENCE FOR ENLISTED MEMBERS

Q2.1: Will Basic Allowance for Subsistence (BAS) stop if I start receiving food (room service) from the government dining facility while under self-monitoring?

A2.1: No, your BAS should not stop but you will likely have to pay for those meals under the dining rate rules, unless granted an exception to policy by your commander.

Q2.2: If I am self-monitoring at home, can I get Basic Allowance for Subsistence Level II (BAS II) instead of BAS?

A2.2: Generally, no. BAS II (i.e., twice the monthly rate) may be authorized for those members ordered to lodging that cannot store food, which in turn requires the member to get his or her meals from a commercial source. BAS II may only be authorized for an individual in these circumstances if it is uniformly authorized for all enlisted members in similar situations at the same installation or in the same geographic area.

Q2.3: If I am self-monitoring at my house (or any non-government provided facility such as a hotel) and would normally have my BAS auto-deducted because I eat at a government dining facility, can I stop the auto-deduction?

A2.3: Yes, but only if your meals are not being provided by the government. Isolated members who are given “room service” from the government facility should have those meals deducted from their BAS as they would normally do.

Q2.4: I am an officer, will my Basic Allowance for Subsistence (BAS) change?

A2.4: No, BAS for officers is not changed at this time.

(3) FAMILY SEPARATION HOUSING

Q3.1: If my dependent is not authorized concurrent travel on my PCS orders to my new duty station because of the travel restrictions, am I eligible to receive a second basic allowance for housing allowance?

A3.1: Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) at the new duty station and Family Separation Housing Allowance (FSH) will be authorized if ALL of the following conditions are met:

- 1) government quarters are not available at the new duty station,
- 2) the member has obtained private-sector housing, and
- 3) the dependent does not reside at or near the new permanent duty station.

Q3.2: How much do I get if I am eligible for Family Separation Housing Allowance (FSH) in the U.S.?

A3.2: You will continue to receive Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) at the “with-dependent” rate for your dependent’s location or the old permanent duty station (whichever is more equitable). Additionally, FSH will be paid in a monthly amount equal to the “without-dependent” BAH rate applicable to your paygrade for the new permanent duty station.

Q3.3: If my dependent visits me at my new duty station, will I continue to receive Family Separation Housing (FSH)?

A3.3: Your FSH will continue uninterrupted while your dependent visits at or near the new duty station, but the visit cannot exceed 90 continuous days. If, for unforeseen reasons, such as illness or another emergency, a visit lasts 91 or more days, FSH stops at the end of the 90-day period. FSH is authorized again on the day the dependent depart from the permanent duty station. If one or more, but not all, dependents visit for longer than 90 days and you are authorized a with-

dependent housing allowance on behalf of the dependents who are not visiting or do not reside in the vicinity of your PDS, then FSH will continue uninterrupted.

(4) FAMILY SEPARATION ALLOWANCE (FSA)

Q4.1: I have been hospitalized at a medical facility near my permanent duty station and near where my dependents live. I am unable to see them. Am I eligible for Family Separation Allowance (FSA)?

A4.2: No, unfortunately Family Separation Allowance (FSA) is not authorized in this situation.

Q4.3: My command ordered me into restriction of movement for self-monitoring near my permanent duty station and I am unable to return to be with my family even though we live nearby. Am I eligible for Family Separation Allowance (FSA)?

A4.3: No, unfortunately Family Separation Allowance (FSA) is not authorized in this situation. You may be eligible for other benefits, such as Hardship Duty Pay – Restriction of Movement (HDP-ROM) depending on where you are ordered to self-monitor (see Section 7).

Q4.4: I am away from my family on TDY and not allowed to return because of the stop movement order? I was receiving Family Separation Allowance – Temporary (FSA-T). Will that continue?

A4.4: Yes, FSA-T will continue until the TDY ends, as long as the total length of the separation is 30 days or more.

Q4.5: I am currently in the middle of a permanent change of station (PCS) move. As a result of the stop movement order, I am separated from my dependents and expect to be separated from them for an extended period of time. Am I eligible for FSA?

A4.5: Yes. Members who are separated during the PCS process, where a member is at the original or new duty location, but the dependents are at the other, should receive Family Separation Allowance – Restricted (FSA-R) if the directed separation lasts longer than 30 days. If the separation lasts longer than 30 days, FSA-R will start and will apply retroactively.

(5) PER DIEM ALLOWANCES WHILE ISOLATED OR AWAITING TRAVEL

Q5.1: I was ordered in to self-monitoring after I returned from official government travel. What benefits are available to me?

A5.1: The Joint Travel Regulations (JTR) was updated to provide guidance on per diem allowances that are impacted by COVID-19. This website is a helpful source of information: https://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/news_Coronavirus.cfm

Q5.2: We are in the middle of a permanent change of station (PCS), but our travel was halted after I checked out of my command. How do I pay for lodging and meals?

A5.2: You will likely be eligible for per diem while awaiting transportation to cover lodging, meals, and incidental expenses. You will want to communicate with both your detaching command and your gaining command about your situation while awaiting travel.

Q5.3: I was ordered to self-isolate while in the middle of temporary duty travel for official duty. What will happen when my TDY orders are supposed to end?

A5.3: If you are ordered into restriction of movement for self-monitoring at a TDY location, your command may authorize continued TDY travel and transportation allowances. Your TDY orders should be modified to extend the TDY assignment to cover the period of self-monitoring, allowing your per diem and travel allowances to continue until you can return to your permanent duty station.

(6) HOUSEHOLD GOODS SHIPMENTS

Q6.1: I was supposed to move my household goods next week. Will that still happen?

A6.1: No, if the actual move has not commenced (i.e., HHG has not been packed-out/picked up from the residence), the responsible Personal Property Office will suspend or reschedule the shipment and inform the members their shipment will be rescheduled to a later date.

(7) HARDSHIP DUTY PAY – RESTRICTION OF MOVEMENT

Q7.1: I have heard about this new pay called HDP-ROM. What is that?

A7.1: Hardship Duty Pay – Restriction of Movement (HDP-ROM) is a newly-authorized pay that compensates service members for the hardship associated with being ordered to self-monitor in isolation (i.e., restriction of movement) somewhere other than at their home or a government-funded lodging facility. HDP-ROM is only payable in situations in which the member remains assigned to the same permanent duty station; it is not payable when a member is isolated while on official travel or Permanent Change of Station (PCS). For allowances payable while on travel or PCS, see Section 5.

Q7.2: I haven't been feeling well and am worried that I may have Coronavirus. I don't want to infect my family and friends. Can I just isolate myself at a hotel and then request HDP-ROM to defray the cost?

A7.2: No, HDP-ROM may only be paid in the case were your commander (in conjunction with military or civilian health care providers) determines that you are required to self-monitor and orders you to do so away from your existing residence at a location not provided by or funded by the government.

Q7.3: I have been ordered to restriction of movement for self-monitoring because I recently returned home from travel during which I may have come in contact with someone infected by COVID-19. I have spent the past two weeks alone in my personal residence. When will I receive my Hardship Duty Pay – Restriction of Movement (HDP-ROM) payment?

A7.3: Although you have been ordered to restriction of movement for self-monitoring, you have been allowed to do so at home in your personal residence. You receive Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) for your residence. Therefore, you are not eligible for HDP-ROM.

Q7.4: I am in the middle of a PCS move and just checked out of my old command. But, now I was ordered to stay at my old duty station as a part of the stop-movement. Am I eligible for HDP-ROM?

A7.4: No, however you will likely be eligible to receive per diem while awaiting transportation. See Section 5 or check with your personnel office.

Q7.5: I just returned from a deployment and transited through a CDC THN Level 3 country. I am required to self-monitor but don't want to potentially expose my dependents. Am I eligible for HDP-ROM?

A7.5: Your commander may order you to self-isolate from your family who did not travel to the CDC Level 3 country and are not currently affected by COVID-19. If no on-post government facilities (e.g. barracks, dorms) or government-funded lodging (e.g., government contract off-post hotel rooms) are available and you are required to incur additional costs for lodging, which are neither reimbursed nor defrayed by any other source, you are eligible for Hardship Duty Pay – Restriction of Movement (HDP-ROM). You will receive a taxable payment of \$100 per day, not to exceed \$1,500 per month. HDP-ROM compensates you for the hardship incurred from being ordered by your command to restrict your movements and self-monitor under conditions where you incur lodging costs.

Q7.6: I just returned from deployment and am not required to self-monitor. However, we think one of my dependents was exposed to COVID-19 while I was gone. If I return to my residence, I will also be exposed. Am I eligible for HDP-ROM?

A7.6: Your commander may order you to restrict your contact with your potentially exposed dependents. If no on-post government facilities (e.g., barracks, dorm) or government-funded lodging (e.g., government contract off-post hotel rooms) are available and you are required to incur additional costs for lodging, which are neither reimbursed nor defrayed by any other source, you are eligible for Hardship Duty Pay – Restriction of Movement (HDP-ROM). You will receive a taxable payment of \$100 per day, not to exceed \$1,500 per month. HDP-ROM compensates you for the hardship incurred from being ordered by your command to restrict your movements to isolate you from your family under conditions where you incur lodging costs.

(8) LEAVE

Q8.1: Can I still take the ordinary leave that was previously approved?

A8.1: Yes, but only in your local area. Military members who already have leave scheduled are still able to take leave; however, current restrictions limit military members to taking leave in the local area.

Q8.2: If I travelled to a location away from my permanent duty station and am required to self-monitor for 14 days, will I be charged extra leave?

A8.2: Not necessarily. If you become ill or are required to self-monitor, you should alert your chain of command immediately. Depending upon your circumstances, your command may place you in a different leave or duty status for the duration of your illness or period of self-monitoring.

Q8.3: I am worried about exceeding my 60 days of leave and losing it because of this crisis. What can I do?

A8.3: It is too early to determine how long the crisis will last or what the long-term effects on your leave benefits may be. We expect to revisit the limitation on carrying forward more than 60 days of leave toward the end of the summer. In the meantime, your command may still authorize you to take leave as long as you remain in the local area.

Q8.4: Can I take emergency leave to travel and care for my parents or another relative in another state?

A8.4: Possibly, but that will need to be authorized by your chain of command. Except in very limited circumstances, leave may only be taken within your local area. However, exceptions may be authorized in compelling cases where the travel is: (1) determined to be mission-essential; (2) necessary for humanitarian reasons; or (3) warranted due to extreme hardship.

(9) RESERVE SPECIFIC GUIDANCE

Q9.1: I am a member of the Reserves. Will my annual training be cancelled?

A9.1: The reserve components have broad discretion to reschedule, cancel, or determine other ways for Reserve and National Guard members to complete training requirements. Recommend checking with your specific unit or military commander for guidance.

Q9.2: How can reservists and Guard members continue to perform duty if their units are cancelling unit assemblies and drill weekends?

A9.2: There are options for use of alternate duty locations for performance of some reserve and National Guard duties in lieu of performing duty at the primary drill location. Where possible, military commanders will issue guidance to continue performing certain Reserve and National Guard duties via alternate duty locations. In situations that do not allow alternate duty locations, commanders will reschedule Inactive Duty Training (IDT) or grant authorized absences for the period in which drilling is limited. Commanders will need to be mindful of the minimum service requirements each member of the Reserve and National Guard needs to perform to achieve a creditable year of service toward retirement, and considerate of the anniversary dates for their members.

(10) ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Q10.1: Where can I go for more information?

A10.1: These websites provide important information on DoD's response to COVID-19:

<https://www.defense.gov/Explore/Spotlight/Coronavirus/>

<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/coronavirus>

https://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/news_Coronavirus.cfm

Service members and their families are encouraged to call Military OneSource at 1-800-342-9647 and consult <https://www.militarysource.mil/coronavirus> for information and referrals to helpful resources. Military OneSource is available 24/7/365 and is also accessible via phone outside the United States at no cost to the caller (see <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/international-calling-options> for details).