



THE SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE
CHIEF OF STAFF, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON DC



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MEMORANDUM FOR DISTRIBUTION C
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SUBJECT: Air Force Policy Memorandum for *Appearance and Accession Standards Review*

This Air Force Policy Memorandum implements revised Air Force policy on tattoos, and pre-accession medical screening of eczema, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), asthma and pre-accession use of marijuana.

The tattoo policy guidance outlined in this memorandum is effective on Feb 1, 2017. The guidance will be incorporated into AFI 36-2903, *Dress and Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel*, AFI 36-2019, *Appointment to the United States Air Force Academy (USAF A)*, AFI 36-2002, *Enlisted Accession Standards* and AFI 36-2011, *Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFROTC) Program*. To the extent the memorandum's directions are inconsistent with other Air Force publications, the information herein prevails, in accordance with AFI 33-360, *Publications and Forms Management*.

There are no releasability restrictions on this publication. It applies to the Regular Air Force, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard as identified herein. Ensure that all records created as a result of processes prescribed in this publication are maintained in accordance with Air Force Manual 33-363, *Management of Records*, and disposed of in accordance with Air Force Records Disposition Schedule in the Air Force Information Management System.

This memorandum becomes void after one-year from the date of this memorandum, or upon publication of interim change or rewrite of the affected publications, whichever is earlier.

Deborah Lee James
Secretary of the Air Force

Dave Goldfein
General, USAF
Chief of Staff

James A. Cody
Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force

Attachment:
Appearance and Accession Policy Guidance w/tattoo policy addendum

Attachment

APPEARANCE AND ACCESSION POLICY GUIDANCE

1. Applicability

a. This memorandum provides policy and guidance for all military personnel serving in the United States Air Force, including those serving in the Reserve and Guard components of the Air Force as identified herein.

b. Policies and procedures are based upon the imperative for continued outreach in order to recruit and retain America's top talent, with the intent of ensuring that AF policy reflects a logical and evidence-based approach that is representative of today's society while also supporting AF mission.

2. Policy. The Tri-signature Air Force Policy Memo (AFPM2017-36-01) directs the following with respect to Air Force policy on appearance and accession policy:

a. **Tattoos. (Total Force).** Effective immediately, there are no size or area limitations for authorized tattoos on the chest, back, arms, and legs. Tattoos, brands, and body markings will not be on the head, neck, face, tongue, lips, and scalp. Hand tattoos are limited to one single-band ring tattoo, on one finger, on one hand. The attached guidance (Addendum) supersedes the current tattoo policy for Air Force Personnel and will be codified in a rewrite of AFI 36-2903, Dress and Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel.

b. **Medical accession policy and waivers.** The following conditions have been reviewed and have been determined to present minimal risk to the mission and the individual. IAW Secretarial authority provided for in DoDI 1304.26 and DoDI 6130.03, the Secretary of the Air Force authorizes the individual review and waiver consideration of qualification standards for eczema, asthma and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) within the defined parameters. All Air Force accession candidates will be worldwide qualified and deployable. Additionally, the policy removes Service prescribed numerical limitations on pre-accession use of marijuana in determining accession qualifications and standardizes the policy across all accession sources.

- 1) **Eczema.** Select candidates medically classified as having mild forms of eczema will be processed for a waiver. Certain occupational restrictions may be applied to secure personal and mission safety.
- 2) **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).** Candidates who do not meet the standard of never having taken more than a single daily dosage of medication or not having been prescribed medication for their condition for more than 24 cumulative months after the age of 14 will be processed for a waiver if they have demonstrated at least 15 months of performance stability (academic or vocational) off medication immediately preceding enlistment or enrollment and they continue

to meet remaining criteria as outlined in DoDI 6130.03.

- 3) Asthma. The Air Force will utilize the Methacholine Challenge Test (MCT) to provide an objective measure of candidates with an ambiguous or uncertain history of asthma. Candidates who successfully pass this test will be processed for a waiver.
- 4) Pre-accession Marijuana usage. Self-admission of pre-service marijuana use (including organic or synthetic cannabis or tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)) without exposure to legal proceedings is in itself not disqualifying. The Air Force will remove any prescribed limits on prior use of marijuana in determining accession qualifications. Subordinate commands and agencies are prohibited from developing separate criteria with respect to pre-service use of marijuana. The AF/SG will implement screening standards that will identify potential drug dependency. In accordance with DoD standards, a medical diagnosis of Substance-Related Disorders or addiction remains medically disqualifying for service. The Air Force maintains a strict "no use" policy. An applicant or enlistee will be disqualified for Service if they use drugs after the initial entrance interview. Also, any legal proceedings associated with pre-service use would continue to be reviewed and adjudicated separately and may be disqualifying depending on the nature of the offense(s).
- 5) The AF/SG and AF/A1 will continue to explore policy changes that will reduce the complexity and steps required to complete a waiver action.

Addendum
1 -Tattoo Policy

Addendum
Tattoo Policy Guidance

3.4. Tattoos/Brands/Body Markings. For purposes of this instruction, a tattoo is defined as a picture, design, or marking made on the skin or other areas of the body by staining it with an indelible dye, or by any other method, including pictures, designs, or markings only detectible or visible under certain conditions (such as ultraviolet or invisible ink tattoos). A brand is defined as a picture, design, or other marking that is burned into the skin or other areas of the body. Body markings are pictures, designs, or other markings as a result of using means other than burning to permanently scar or mark the skin. Members who violate the prohibitions and mandatory provisions in **paragraphs 3.4.1, 3.4.1.1, and 3.4.2** are subject to prosecution under Article 92, UCMJ.

3.4.1. Tattoos/Brands/Body Markings. (Unauthorized content/locations).

Tattoos/brands/body markings will not be on the hands (except one ring tattoo on one finger on one hand), head, neck (anything visible above the open collar uniform), face, tongue, lips, and scalp. Tattoos/brands/body markings anywhere on the body that are obscene, commonly associated with gangs, extremist, and supremacist organizations, or that advocate sexual, racial, ethnic, or religious discrimination are prohibited in and out of uniform. Obscene tattoos/brands/body markings are grossly offensive to modesty, decency, or propriety. AFOSI maintains information regarding gang/hate group, etc. on tattoos/brands/body markings. Commanders should contact their servicing AFOSI unit for additional information. Extremist tattoos/brands/body markings are those affiliated with, depicting, or symbolizing extremist philosophies, organizations, or activities. Sexually discriminative tattoos/brands/body markings are those that advocate a philosophy that degrades or demeans a person based on gender. Racially discriminative tattoos/brands/body markings are those that advocate a philosophy that degrades or demeans a person based on race, ethnicity, or national origin. Tattoos/brands/body markings with unauthorized content that are prejudicial to good order and discipline or the content is of a nature that tends to bring discredit upon the Air Force are prohibited both in and out of uniform. Airmen may not cover up tattoos, brands, and/or body markings with bandages or make-up in order to comply with unauthorized content tattoo policy.

3.4.1.1. Members who have or receive unauthorized content tattoos, brands, and body markings are required to initiate tattoo, brand, and body marking removal and alteration. At the commander's discretion, members may be seen, on a space and resource available basis, in a Department of Defense (DoD) medical treatment facility for voluntary tattoo, brand, and body marking removal. When DoD resources are not available, members may have the tattoo or brand removed or altered at their own expense outside of DoD medical treatment facilities. Permissive TDY is not authorized for this purpose; therefore, travel is

at member's expense. Members who fail to remove or alter unauthorized tattoos/brands/body markings in a timely manner, or who choose not to comply with appropriate military standards, will be subject to a variety of appropriate quality force actions, including but not limited to reprimand, UIF, control roster, referral EPRs/OPRs, military justice action (Article 15, UCMJ punishment), ineligibility for schools and assignments and administrative discharge. If removal at government expense is not possible, the member's affirmative responsibility for complying with this AFI or the Air Force's responsibility to enforce it with any or all available options does not change.

3.4.2. Tattoos (**Authorized**). Tattoos are authorized on the chest and back (below the open collar uniform), arms, legs, and a ring tattoo on one finger on one hand (per para 3.4.1.). Ring tattoos are limited to a single band of no more than 3/8 of an inch in width, below the knuckle and above the finger joint (portion closest to the palm). Airmen with tattoos on the hand prior to this policy will be grandfathered; however, hand tattoos other than as described above are unauthorized after the date of this publication. Grandfathered tattoos on the hand are required to be documented on the members AF Form 4428. Hand tattoos that are grandfathered, arm, leg, and ring tattoos can be exposed and visible while wearing any uniform combination(s). Chest and back tattoos will not be visible through any uniform combination(s) or visible while wearing an open collar uniform. There are no size or placement limitations on tattoos as long as they are in accordance with this publication.

3.4.3. Cosmetic tattooing. Tattooing for cosmetic purposes is authorized when directed by licensed, qualified medical personnel to correct a medical condition, illness or injury for both men and women. When not medically directed, cosmetic tattooing is permitted for women if done to apply permanent facial makeup (i.e. eyebrows, eye liner); the cosmetic tattooing must have a natural appearance and be conservative, moderate, within reasonable limits, not excessive or extreme, not distinctly contrast with their complexion, and in good taste.

3.4.4. Initial accessions must disclose any tattoos or brands not meeting the above criteria and receive appropriate Air Force Component Recruiting Service review (AFRS, AFRCRS, ANG) to determine eligibility when questionable for enlistment or appointment. Complete removal or alteration of unauthorized content and/or excessive tattoos/brands/body markings is otherwise required prior to being accepted in the Air Force.

3.4.5. Commanders will use these provisions in determining the acceptability of tattoos, brands, and body markings displayed by members in uniform. Failure to observe these mandatory provisions and prohibitions by active duty Air Force members, USAFR

members on active duty or inactive duty for training and ANG members in federal service is a violation of Article 92, Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). In addition, failure to comply with the AFI also subjects the member to adverse administrative sanctions.

3.4.6 Per AFI 36-2903, paragraph 2.10, commanders will retain the authority to be more restrictive for covering up tattoos, body ornaments and personal grooming based on legal, moral, safety, sanitary, and foreign country cultural reasons.