



# MANPOWER PLANS & POLICY DISPATCH

June 2026  
Volume No. 10

**Update to the Total Force: Informing Active and Reserve Marines, Sailors, and Civilians on Manpower Policy reform and talent management efforts.**

## **SERGEANT PROMOTION POLICY UPDATED TO EMPHASIZE PERFORMANCE OVER LONGEVITY**

In a significant move to strengthen the NCO Corps, the Marine Corps is updating its promotion policy for Sergeants, effective 1 October 2026 per MARADIMN 222/26. The Time in Service (TIS) requirement for promotion to Sergeant will be reduced from 48 months to 30 months. This change is designed to, above all, foster greater competition among high-performing Corporals, and reward merit.

### **The “Why” Behind the Change**

The previous 48-month TIS requirement, implemented in Fiscal Year 2020, aimed to increase time to gain experience, but many highly qualified Corporals were unable to meet this requirement within their initial enlistment contracts, leading to a promotion system driven more by time in service than by demonstrated leadership and potential. This resulted in critical leadership gaps within Fleet Marine Force (FMF) formations, depriving units of the vital NCO leadership needed at the tactical edge

### **Fostering Competition, Building a Stronger NCO Corps**

By reducing the minimum TIS to 30 months, the Marine Corps is expanding the pool of eligible Corporals, creating a more competitive promotion environment. This ensures that the most deserving Marines are selected for promotion based on their individual performance, initiative, and hard work. The change reinforces the principle that promotion to a leadership rank like Sergeant must be earned through merit and performance and not longevity.



The 39th Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. Eric M. Smith, right, administers the oath of enlistment to Sgt. Isaiah Fisherrich, a section leader with 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, prior to Fisherrich’s meritorious promotion to Sergeant at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, June 12, 2026. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Alexis French)

### **Projected Impacts**

- **Increased Competition:** A larger population of eligible Corporals will compete for promotion, ensuring the most qualified are selected.
- **Eliminating FMF Leadership Gaps:** This policy change will ensure operational units are fully manned with capable NCOs, directly addressing the leadership voids that impact unit readiness and effectiveness.
- **Strengthened Future Leadership:** By promoting top-performing Corporals sooner, the Marine Corps will create a stronger pool of NCOs eligible for future promotion to Staff Sergeant and beyond.

This policy update cancels the Small-Unit Leader Initiative (SULI) signals that the Marine Corps is committed to a talent management system that rewards excellence and builds a more lethal and effective force for the challenges ahead.

# Your Housing, Your Money: A Service Member's Guide To The Basic Allowance For Housing

One of the most common misconceptions regarding BAH is that it is intended to cover all of a service member's housing costs. In reality, you are structurally expected to pay roughly 5% out-of-pocket. Understanding how the system is calculated is the key to making smart housing choices that protect your paycheck.

## What is the True Purpose of BAH?

The Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) is designed to offset your rental housing costs, not eliminate them. It is an equitable, tax-free allowance intended to help you afford adequate rental housing on the local economy near your duty station when government quarters are not provided.

**The Scale:** The program pays approximately \$30 billion in tax-free allowances annually.

**The Reach:** It supports roughly one million service members worldwide.

**The Equation:** Rates are customized by duty location, paygrade, and dependency status.

Per U.S. Code Title 37 § 403, BAH rates must be based on the housing costs of "civilians with comparable income levels to Service members in the same area." As such, the Department of War (DoW) uses housing standards that correlate to the types of housing typically rented by civilian households with incomes equivalent to a Service members' regular military compensation (RMC) of different pay grades.

## The 5% "Absorption Rate" Reality.

Why isn't your BAH covering 100% of your rent and utilities (i.e., electricity, heat, water/sewer)? Since 2019, Congress and the DoW, have maintained a 5% cost-sharing element built directly into the BAH rate.

## Core Truths Every Marine Must Know:

**Calculated on Rentals, Not Mortgages:** BAH rates are based strictly on available local rental market data, not homeownership or mortgage costs. If a member buys a home, the BAH will not adjust to cover the costs of rising property taxes, homeowners insurance, or mortgage interest hikes that occur over time.

**The Dependency Cap:** While BAH increases from "without-dependent" to "with-dependent" status, it does not increase or decrease based upon the number of dependents.

**The Utility Factor:** BAH rates include a calculation for the average cost of utilities, but this is a statistical average, not a guarantee to cover a high thermostat setting in the peak of summer or winter. Utility costs do not include costs associated with the internet or cable.

**Rigorous Local Data:** Every year, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), the Services, and dedicated contractors spend massive resources tracking local rental markets across 300 Military Housing Areas (MHAs) to ensure rates remain accurate and statistically valid.

(Continued on page 4)

## THE MARINE PREDICTION NETWORK (MPN): IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE MARINE CORPS SELECTION BOARDS

The Marine Corps consumes a significant amount of time and resources preparing for and administering selection boards for promotion, command, and various education programs. The Service-wide impact of selection board proceeds (human capability, leadership, etc.) makes the investment well worth it. To this end, the Marine Corps is vigilant about reviewing the selection board process to ensure that it meets statutory requirements and that it maximizes both effectiveness and efficiency.

Selection boards are composed of senior Marine officers and/or staff noncommissioned officers (voting members) who are each assigned a portion of the performance records under review (candidates). The individual voting member is responsible for developing a brief for each assigned candidate. Until 2025, the candidates were randomly assigned to the voting members. This method made it possible for voting members to receive a disproportionate number of high- or low-performing candidates, thus introducing potential for the contrast effect.

(Continued on page 3)

# THE MARINE PREDICTION NETWORK (MPN): IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE MARINE CORPS SELECTION BOARDS

The contrast effect is a cognitive bias where an evaluator judges a candidate's performance by comparing them to other recently evaluated candidates rather than against an objective, absolute standard. If a board member is assigned a disproportionate number of stellar performers, an objectively "above-average" candidate reviewed in the same batch may appear mediocre or poor by comparison. Conversely, if a board member reviews a batch of poor performers, a baseline "average" candidate will look outstanding.

The Marine Corps attempts to mitigate this behavior by disseminating a prioritized set of selection standards into each board's precept. Going further, in 2025, Manpower Plans and Policy Division's operations research analysts (MOS 8850) developed board-tailored machine learning classification models (using the DataRobot application on the War Data Platform) to determine the probability of selection for each candidate performance record. Using this information, the analysts created a merit-balanced candidate set for each voting member. This work minimizes/eliminates the possibility of contrast effect in the boardroom.

Commonly referred to as the "quality spread," to date, this candidate distribution method has been applied to the following selection boards.

- FY25 8999 active component promotion selection board
- FY25 E-8/E-9 active component promotion selection board
- FY25 E-7 active component promotion selection board
- FY25 E-6 active component promotion selection board
- FY25 E-7 SMCR promotion selection board
- FY25 E-6 SMCR promotion selection board
- FY26 8999 active component promotion selection board
- FY26 E-8/E-9 active component promotion selection board
- FY26 E-7 active component promotion selection board
- FY26 E-6 active component promotion selection board

- FY26 O-6 active component command screening board
- FY26 O-5 active component command screening board
- FY26 Recruiting Station CO selection board
- AY26 Top Level Schools selection board
- FY27 O-6 active component promotion selection board
- FY27 O-6 SMCR promotion selection board
- FY27 O-5 active component promotion selection board
- FY27 O-4 active component promotion selection board
- FY27 Recruiting Station CO selection board
- FY28 O-6 active component promotion selection board
- FY28 O-5 active component promotion selection board
- FY28 O-4 active component promotion selection board

By removing the possibility of contrast effect from its selection boards, the Marine Corps is improving its already-sought-after selection board process. Having access to a machine learning platform, like DataRobot, enables improvements like this.

## SUPPORTING OUR CIVILIAN WORKFORCE

### Civilian Employee Assistance Program (CEAP)

The Department of the Navy CEAP provides a vital, free, and confidential service to our civilian employees and their family household members. It offers a wide range of support to help individuals manage personal and professional challenges, contributing to a healthier, more resilient, and productive workforce.

(Continued on Page 5)

# YOUR HOUSING, YOUR MONEY: A SERVICE MEMBER'S GUIDE TO THE BASIC ALLOWANCE FOR HOUSING

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

## Insights from the "CNA BAH Adequacy Survey"

A study by the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA) looked at how service members utilize their housing allowances. The findings highlight a strong preference for personal flexibility and space:

- **Choosing Personal Comfort:** The study found that 84% of service members choose off-base housing that differs from the baseline BAH standard. Many families prioritize larger, single-family homes with more space or extra bedrooms than the standard baseline accommodates.
- **The Appeal of Off-Base Living:** 87% of BAH recipients choose to live off-base when given the option, enjoying the opportunity to integrate into local civilian communities.
- **Renting vs. Buying:** Off-base choices are balanced, with 52% renting and 48% purchasing homes. Buying is particularly popular among married members, dual-income households, and those with more years in service.
- **The CNA study also revealed a fascinating gap between how we *feel* about our allowance and how the numbers actually stack up on paper.**

  - 70% of service members express dissatisfaction with their BAH rates.
  - Only 10% feel BAH fully covers their actual housing costs.
  - **The Reality Check:** 46% of those dissatisfied members actually had monthly housing costs that were less than their BAH.

## The Takeaway for the Force:

This data shows that BAH often performs better than we realize! Nearly half of the members who felt their BAH was insufficient were spending less than their total allowance. Dissatisfaction often comes down to expectations, if we expect BAH to cover a larger mortgage or a home with extra amenities, we may feel squeezed.

For additional reading on BAH, please review the following websites:

<https://www.travel.dod.mil/Allowances/Basic-Allowance-for-Housing/>

<https://media.defense.gov/2022/Jun/23/2003023204/-1/-1/0/BAH-PRIMER.PDF>



## UNDERSTANDING THE "NEW REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS"

The Department of War (DoW) March 13 memorandum introduces a stricter, more centralized framework for processing Reasonable Accommodations (RA). The DoW Components are to review all RA approvals, to include both Non-appropriated and Appropriated fund employees. This does not include local nationals that are overseas. Reasonable Accommodation requests are changes in the work environment or in the way things are customarily done to provide equal employment opportunity for individuals with disabilities.

RAs are to continue to be reviewed for effectiveness and consistency with the mission. RAs will have a one-time review for limitations/religious practices of existing approved RAs to determine whether each RA is still needed, whether it is effective and whether there is an alternative accommodation that is more closely aligned with mission needs.

There must be a relationship between the limitations/religious practices for the accommodation requested. RAs are granted after being assessed, they are fact specific and analyzed on a case-by-case basis.

# EMPLOYING DATA SYSTEMS TO STRENGTHEN MILITARY EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

The Manpower Equal Opportunity Branch (MPE) is leveraging data systems in its approach to capture Military Equal Opportunity (MEO) case data and the case loads of Equal Opportunity Advisors (EOAs) across the Marine Corps.

## Migrating Data Systems:

MPE Branch's MEO team oversaw the sundown of the Discrimination and Sexual Harassment (DASH) data system and transitioned the Marine Corps to the Misconduct Report Incident Tracker (MRIT). MRIT is the data system which all MEO practitioners across the Department of the Navy use for reporting, managing, and tracking all incidents falling within the MEO portfolio to include bullying, harassment, and hazing.

The DASH to MRIT transition was a year long effort by the MEO program to ensure the efficient data migration of all ongoing and historical MEO case data in the Marine Corps, totaling over 6,000 cases. The transition highlights the Marine Corps' efforts to provide EOAs a more robust platform to analyze case trends and enable MPE Branch to efficiently conduct data calls in conjunction with Department of Navy requirements.

## Using Survey and Business Intelligence Models:

In addition, MPE Branch is leveraging survey and automated business intelligence models to better understand EOA workforce tasking and optimization. One example is MPE's EOA survey designed to better understand the workload distribution and operational demands across the force. When we combine EOA case management data and manpower layout analysis, survey execution provides a clearer picture of where the Marine Corps can most effectively place limited military and civilian EOA resources.

MPE is exploring the use of Power BI dashboards to provide commanders with a more holistic view of their MEO program. By integrating survey data and case trends, leadership gains improved visibility into program health, emerging trends, workload distribution, and areas where commanders may need to focus additional attention.

## SUPPORTING OUR CIVILIAN WORKFORCE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

### Key Services and Utilization Trends

During the second quarter of FY26 (January 1 to March 31, 2026), there was a significant increase in the use of CEAP services, with 108 cases opened compared to 67 in the previous quarter. This increased engagement demonstrates a growing awareness and trust in the program.

The data reveals the top reasons civilian employees sought support:

- **Occupational Stress:** This was the most common concern, with 25 employees seeking assistance for work-related pressures.
- **Financial and Legal Support:** A significant number of employees reached out for help with financial insecurity and legal conflicts, with 17 and 13 cases respectively.
- **Family and Relationships:** Ten employees sought assistance for family issues, and eight for intimate partner relationship challenges.

These trends highlight the diverse pressures our civilian workforce faces. CEAP provides counseling, referrals, and resources to effectively address these issues.

### CEAP Resources Available

- **Work-Life Referrals:** For needs such as childcare, adult care, and pet care.
- **Financial and Legal Services:** Consultations with financial experts and legal professionals.
- **Health and Wellness:** Resources and coaching for personal health and well-being.
- **LifeMart Discount Program:** Access to discounts on a wide range of products and services.

(continued on page 6)

# SUPPORTING OUR CIVILIAN WORKFORCE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)

## Monthly CEAP Webinars: Proactive Learning and Support

Marine Corps and the Department of the Navy conduct weekly CEAP webinars designed to proactively support employee well-being.

These webinars offer a wealth of benefits, providing practical strategies for personal development, stress management, and professional growth. Whether you are looking to improve your work-life balance, navigate life transitions, or build mental resilience, these sessions provide expert insights in an accessible format.

For supervisors and leadership, these webinars serve as an invaluable management tool. Specialized sessions equip leaders with the skills to effectively support their teams, recognize signs of employee burnout or stress, handle challenging workplace dynamics, and understand how to appropriately refer team members to CEAP resources when they need help.

Understanding that our civilian workforce has busy schedules, all live sessions are recorded. Employees can easily access and view these recorded webinars on-demand, ensuring you never miss out on valuable information.

CEAP is available 24/7/365 for all civilian APF employees and their family household members at no cost. No CAC required. Completely confidential. Access using any device with internet access.

## How to Access CEAP

Accessing the CEAP is simple and confidential. The majority of employees (81%) initiated contact via phone, while a growing number are using email and web-based services. The program offers various forms of support, including telephonic and video sessions for non-medical counseling, ensuring accessibility for all.

Contact CEAP via the following ways:  
24/7 support line 1-844-366-2327 TTY: 711  
Website:  
<https://member.magellanhealthcare.com/>

MCB Quantico DONCEAP Field Consultant:  
Mary Albritton, LCSW, MSW  
Direct: 703-236-2179  
Email: [albrittonm@magellanfederal.com](mailto:albrittonm@magellanfederal.com)  
Schedule Appointment with Mary Albritton:  
<https://federaleap.my.site.com/SelfScheduler/self-scheduler?Division=001cr000003Vx5TAAS&Provider=0Hncr0000002lorCAE&Territory=0Hh8300000003jCAA>

## A Confidential Resource for a Stronger Force

The Civilian Employee Assistance Program is a critical resource that empowers individuals to navigate life's challenges. We encourage all civilian employees to familiarize themselves with the benefits offered by CEAP.

To find more information regarding upcoming webinars, access recorded sessions, or learn more about how CEAP can support you or your team, please contact your local Human Resources office.

## MP LEADERSHIP

Director, SES Michael R. Melillo (Acting)  
Deputy Director, SES Michael R. Melillo  
CSEL, SgtMaj Dennis R. Turner

**MP SMB: [SMB MP Division@usmc.mil](mailto:SMB_MP_Division@usmc.mil)**



MPO: Col Lindsay Mathwick  
MPP: Col Darryl Ayers  
MPE: Col Bryce Carter

MPA: Mr. Jonathan D. Raymond  
MPC: Ms. Mylechia Smalls