



T H E M I L I T A R Y C O A L I T I O N

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May 12, 2005

Jody Donehoo, Program Analyst
TRICARE Management Activity
TRICARE Operations/Strategic Initiatives Division
Sky 5, Suite 810
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Dear Mr. Donehoo,

The Military Coalition, a consortium of nationally prominent uniformed services and veterans organizations representing more than 5.5 million current and former members of the seven uniformed services, plus their families and survivors, would like to express our concerns over the proposed rule 32 CFR Part 199; [DoD 6010.8-R]; RIN-0720-AA90 -- Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Services (CHAMPUS); TRICARE Reserve Select for Certain Members of the Selected Reserve; Transitional Assistance Management Program; Early Eligibility for TRICARE for Certain Reserve Component Members

The Coalition recognizes that the FY 2005 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 108-375) requires Selected Reservists (SELRES) to elect TRS coverage before the service member leaves active duty. The Coalition believes that this arbitrary deadline will force sudden decisions at demobilization sites at a time when the vast majority of service members (as well as their family members) will not have adequate information to make critical health care coverage decisions with consequences that might not be realized for many months out.

Should servicemembers separate and fail to make the service agreement, they are no longer eligible for the program -- resulting in loss of benefits for both member and family. However, should they commit to the service agreement and discover once they return home that this coverage is not in their best interest, we are dismayed to learn that the Department plans to hold these individuals accountable to the service agreement and the commensurate commitment to continued service -- without taking the second step to "execute the service agreement."

We urge you to change the arbitrary condition that once members enter into the service agreement, they be held to the second step of executing the service agreement. Service members should be able to enter into this agreement and then during the 180 days of the Transitional Assistance Management Program (TAMP) make a final decision based on the best interests of themselves and their families. To force an important choice during demobilization and hold the member to commensurate service is coercive. This rule does little to work in the best interests of SELRES members and their families. If anything, it will discourage election of TRS or result in service under duress.

The Coalition firmly believes this new benefit will be critical to sustaining military readiness and retention in the National Guard and Reserve forces. We urge you to take additional steps to assist members and their families to make this critical decision. It is essential for the well being of Guard and Reserve families that this policy be addressed as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

The Military Coalition
(Signatures enclosed)