

CAREER FOCUS

Got a high school senior? Here's a program that might interest you!

BY MASTER SGT.
DAVID HALVORSON
TEAM KIRTLAND
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Thanks to a new policy that came out in March 2004, some Air Force families with a child entering the senior year of high school may be allowed to stay additional time at their current duty stations.

"In today's environment of deployments and high operations tempo, it's important that we alleviate stress on families wherever we can," said Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Gerald R. Murray.

"This initiative is designed to do that."

This policy is designed to increase the quality of life for Air Force families, according to Roger Blanchard, Air Force assistant deputy chief of staff for personnel.

The intent is to decrease turbulence and increase stability for military families. The High School Seniors Assignment Deferment Program allows senior master sergeants and below, and officers up through the rank of lieutenant colonel, to apply for a one-year assignment deferment.

Back-to-back deferments may be possible and military-married-to-military spouses may also apply. Even with the changes, officials said the mission comes first and will be the overriding factor in

granting deferments.

"This policy does not mean that every Airman with a high school senior will remain in place," said Chief Murray. "Deferments will be approved where possible. As in all situations, however, the needs of the Air Force will come first."

Requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis, according to Col. Kathleen Grabowski, chief of assignment programs and procedures.

"The goal is to approve as many requests as mission needs allow without being unfair, but the reality is that some requests won't be possible due to Air Force needs."

"We'll work with people as we always have."

To be eligible, the rising senior in high school must be a dependent of and living with the Airman requesting the deferment, and must be enrolled in the dependent enrollment system, or DEERS. Officers will need to apply before being put on assignment, while enlisted people will not apply until after being matched to an assignment.

Applications are available at military personnel flights and through command-er support staffs.

Officials estimate that annually 20-25 percent of officers and senior noncommissioned officers have children entering their senior year of high school and perhaps one third of those could be eligible for assign-



Master Sgt. David Halvorson

ment in a given year.

"Clearly, it's a great benefit to families if teenagers can attend the senior prom and graduate with their established friends," said Mr. Blanchard.

Of course, this policy simply makes official what was already being done informally, whenever possible, in the past. In some cases assignments teams were already successfully working with Airmen to allow families stability when children were coming up on graduation. Thanks to this initiative, now there's a program and policy in place to back their efforts.

If you would like more detailed information regarding the High School Seniors Assignment Deferment Program, the Air Force Contact Center offers information about this and other personnel programs all day, every day by calling toll free (800) 616-3775 or online at <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil>.



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Nucleus is on the Web
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Editorial deadline
9 a.m. the Friday before
publication. Deadlines
change for holidays.

Advertising deadlines
Classified:
Tuesday, noon, 892-9400,
observerclass@attglobal.net

Display:
Friday, 5 p.m., 892-9400,
observerads@attglobal.net

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COMMAND CHIEF'S CHOICE

Staff Sgt. Charles Garcia is a security forces member assigned to the 150th Fighter Wing, New Mexico Air National Guard.

What do you like best about this assignment?

The people and the work environment are what I like best about this assignment. The people whom I have met have taught me allot about my job in the military and life in general. I feel that everyone we meet in life changes our outlook, and where we are going, whether the experience was good or bad. For me my experiences here have been very positive. My experiences in my work environment have also shaped me into the person I am today. Each of my experiences and the people I have met have further ensured me that I have made the right decision in becoming a member the US Air force.

What are your hobbies?

I enjoy camping, motor biking, and off-roading with my friends. Spending time in the outdoors is a big part of my life. I also enjoy road trips with my friends, which is a good release from the everyday routine of life.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

In 10 years time I will have my commission. And will have started a new chapter in my military career. I will incorporate my experiences as and enlisted person to guide me, making me the best officer I can be.

What is your main goal in life?

Ultimately my main goal is to lead an adventurous and fulfilling life. A life with no regrets and no feelings that I should have done things differently.



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FORUM

kirtlandcc.forum@kirtland.af.mil, 846-4240

Personnel system is a pain

How come that the Air Force personnel system is a pain. We called the Kirtland AFB Civilian Personnel Office and the person told us to call the Air Force Personnel Center at Randolph AFB, Texas. We called Randolph AFB and they said, "we can't tell you that, you're the one who needs to tell us when you want to retire." What I want to find out is when am I eligible to retire because I have time converted to NAF? Thank you

Sometimes, it just takes a bit for us to get on the same page. In this case, because the caller was eligible to retire, the Air Force Personnel Center experts thought the employee was going to provide them a date the employee desired to retire. In reality, our TEAM KIRTLAND member was merely trying to learn if her nonappropriated fund time would be credited for retirement pay calculation and benefits. Now that everyone knows what the issue was, the personnel center will provide a comprehensive estimate of the caller's retirement benefits after a thorough review of the employee's official personnel folder.

This is a good opportunity to remind everyone that many of the traditional services of Civilian Personnel Offices—services that we grew accustomed to having at base level—are now performed at the Air Force Personnel Center. As a result, retirement questions now go to the AFPC Benefits and Entitlements Services Team 800-616-3375. The Employee Benefits Information System at www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/dpc/best/menu.htm is another super way for employees to obtain information on all their benefits, including retirement.

Honor Guard is outstanding

I am calling to compliment the Honor Guard that served at my father's funeral last week. It was very short notice that they received and their performance was just outstanding. My father was former Air Force, he served all over with the Air Force, but he was in the Air National Guard stationed here with the 150th Fighter Wing for quite a number of years. I would really like to see these young men commend for their outstanding performance.



COL. HENRY L. ANDREWS, JR.
377th Air Base Wing commander

First and foremost, please accept our condolences on the passing of your father. Thank you also for your compliments on TEAM KIRTLAND's Honor Guard. The team is made up of a truly outstanding group of men and women. These professionals are committed to respectfully showing our gratitude to those whose service has made America great. Senior Airman Noel Singles, Airman 1st Class Jeffery Zahniser, and Airman 1st Class Jason Kissling will be proud to know they made a difference for you and your family at this challenging time.

Several medications not available

Over the last fifteen months, the Air Force pharmacy has cut several medications from their "formulary" (the list of medicines they stock). This forces us and other patients qualified for military medical care to head for commercial pharmacies or some other alternate source to pay for medication (or to pay at least a portion of the charge if Tricare picks up the major part of the bill). In our case, we've been told to go elsewhere for Dovonex (psoriasis medication), Zofran (pre-chemotherapy anti-nausea medicine), liquid morphine (post-chemotherapy pain relief), and some other medications.

Prior to June 2003, neither my wife

nor I required any medications, so maybe we just don't realize whether this is a long-standing trend or not.

Some of these are expensive; and, in a recent article in Army Magazine, it was stated that the Air Force Surgeon General was cutting back on some high-priced drugs as a cost-cutting measure to save Air Force funds. But that doesn't save money in the aggregate; it just shifts the costs. Authorized patrons and other government programs (e.g., Veterans Affairs, Medicaid, Tricare, Medicare) pick up the bill, essentially subsidizing the Air Force.

Increasing medication costs are a constant concern, especially since Kirtland AFB fills a large number of prescriptions for a very diverse patient population. In that process, we are committed to using our funds in the most effective way possible to meet our patients' needs and remain within our financial limitations.

Our formulary helps us meet this objective.

The medications on the formulary are selected by two different sources.

First, the DOD Pharmacoeconomic Center establishes a basic core formulary that must be carried at all military medical treatment facilities.

Second, a committee comprised of medical providers, pharmacists and nurses at the 377th Medical Group meet to select additional medications based on effectiveness, safety, cost, standards of care and the needs of our patients. This committee, known as the Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee meets periodically to update the formulary and ensure there are options from each drug class.

A current list is always available at the pharmacy or on line www.kirtland.af.mil/Organizations/MedGroup/PharmacyFormulary.htm.

Civilian providers may not be aware of what is on our formulary. This is why we strongly encourage you to bring a current copy of the formulary to each visit with your civilian provider. If your provider is unable to select from our formulary options, prescriptions may be filled at a local Tricare network pharmacy or through the Tricare Mail Order Pharmacy for modest copay.

We hope we can work together to minimize any further inconvenience and ensure that all of our patients receive the benefits they have earned.

Base theater in bad shape

I attended a presentation at the base theater Sept 1. The condition of the facility was simply atrocious. Every seat was so terribly stained that I was reluctant to sit down, and the floor was stickier than a roach motel. In 19 years of association with the Air Force, this was by far the worst maintained Air Force building I've ever been in. I hope some serious clean up will be done in the theater before I have to go there again.

AAFES shares the base theater with the 377th Services Squadron. On some Mondays, after a weekend full of movies, the theater floor has been dirty and sticky. So, we have since had the carpets and floors cleaned by our janitorial contractor and identified some facility challenges that are on our "to do" list.

An AAFES manager now checks theater condition each Monday morning to ensure the theater is ready to go for the coming week of meetings and other sessions that are often scheduled in this venue.

Our entire team wants this and all base facilities to meet the standards you are accustomed to and deserve. We're on it!

Forum

We want your suggestions and comments concerning Kirtland AFB.

However, may we also suggest giving base agencies or the chain of command the chance to resolve your concern before calling Forum.

If you decide the Forum is the right answer, we don't print callers' names.

Customer service

Chapel, 846-5691

CE Help Desk, 846-8222

Commissary, 846-9586

Computer help, 846-5926

Energy wasting, 846-4633

Exchange Service, 266-9887

Family Services, 846-0741

Finance, 846-8045, 846-6639

Law Enforcement, 846-7926

Legal Services, 846-4217

Medical Clinic, 846-3406

Services Squadron, 846-1828

Write: 377 ABW/CC Forum
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Kirtland AFB, NM 87117