

Disabled American Veterans

Stance on Abortion and IVF

<https://www.dav.org/wp-content/uploads/Item20220622.pdf>

Joy Item, the Disabled American Veterans' national legislative director, made the following statement to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health regarding bills that advocate for abortion and IVF for military veterans:

The Reproductive Health Information for Veterans Act would require VHA providers to offer abortion counseling to veterans with unwanted pregnancies, to include health and provider information for such services. **DAV does not have a resolution on this issue and takes no formal position on H.R. 345.** However, we do offer the following comments. **The cornerstone of quality health care is trusted, open communication with one's health care providers.** It is in a veteran's best interest to have candid dialogue with their VA medical providers pertaining to any condition, treatment or procedure that impacts their health, regardless of whether services are provided by VA or not. ² This is especially important in the case of pregnancy, as it could have serious effects on the physical and mental health and overall wellness of veterans, particularly for those with disabilities.

Here is what DAV has to say about the H.R. 1957, the Veterans Infertility Treatment Act of 2021, concerning IVF:

VA provides access to fertility counseling and standard diagnosis and treatment for infertility including artificial insemination, and some hormonal and surgical interventions. However, current law only authorizes VA to provide assisted reproductive technology services, on a very restricted basis, to veterans or their legal spouses if the veteran has a grievous service-connected injury that affects his or her ability to procreate. **It does not allow donated genetic material to be used, which means even veterans who are unable to provide their own gametes, same-sex spouses and single veterans who otherwise meet the eligibility criteria may not access this benefit. . . . DAV supports H.R. 1957 in accordance with DAV**

Resolution No. 005, which calls for us to support legislation to improve veterans' access to assisted reproductive technology for all service-related conditions that affect procreation that were not present before military service regardless of marital status. We do encourage the Subcommittee to seek technical assistance from VA to ensure that the bill meets all of its intended purposes.

Stance on LGBTQ+ Lifestyle

<https://www.dav.org/get-help-now/veteran-topics-resources/lgbtq-veterans/>

DAV echoes the Veterans Affairs' support of the LGBTQ+ lifestyle on their website. Here is what they have to say about "gender confirming or affirming surgeries" with regard to veterans:

The VA is not authorized to provide gender confirming or affirming surgeries or reconstructive surgeries for cosmetic purposes. However, the VA does provide support letters for veterans who seek those surgeries outside the VA and will work with the surgeons to provide letters that help make that individual qualified to get those surgeries.

The above link also describes the resources the VA has made available about those identifying with any of the LGBTQ+ lifestyles:

Veterans can utilize no-cost DAV benefits advocates to learn more about available veterans' benefits, programs and services. Additionally, DAV's legislative team is dedicated to advancing equity in health services and benefits for underserved and minority veteran populations, including LGBTQ+ veterans. Learn more about DAV's critical policy goals here. More information on the VA's LGBTQ+ veterans' policies and programs can be found here. The VA has also made available the following fact sheets to identify health care topics for sexual and gender minorities:

VA Health Care for Transgender Men

VA Health Care for Transgender Women

VA Health Care for Gay, Bisexual and Queer Men

VA Health Care for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Queer Women

DAV also provides definitions for each of the various terminologies (cisgender, transgender man and woman, gender expression and identity, etc.) in the above link.

<https://www.dav.org/wp-content/uploads/Barefield20210922.pdf>

In 2021, Marquis Barefield, assistant national legislative director, advocated for the implementation of H.R. 4845 to establish an LGBTQ advisory committee to advise the VA secretary:

H.R. 4845 proposes to establish a new Advisory Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) veterans to advise the VA Secretary on benefits and health care matters relevant to this community. The Committee would be required to meet at least twice a year and consist of LGBTQ representatives, experts in the field of LGBTQ veterans and their specific health care needs, at least one service-connected lesbian, gay or bisexual veteran and at least one service-connected transgender veteran and veterans who identify as LGBTQ, who were recently separated from service and those that were involuntarily separated. The committee would also include representatives, as ex officio members, from the Departments of Labor, Defense and the VA Under Secretary's offices for Health and Benefits.

<https://www.dav.org/learn-more/news/2019/dav-interview-with-dr-michael-kauth-director-of-the-lgbt-health-program-vha/>

This 2019 interview by DAV with Dr. Michael Kauth, director of the VA's LGBTQ health program, is another example of both the VA's and DAV's support for the LGBTQ+ lifestyle, particularly with transgenderism.



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