

# Great Lakes Bulletin

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SERVING “THE QUARTERDECK OF THE NAVY” FOR 104 YEARS

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## Video Games Can Enhance Warrior Cognitive Performance

*Story from Bobby Cummings, Office of Naval Research Public Affairs*



The U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps have been using simulators, virtual reality and video games to train Sailors and Marines for years. The Office of Naval Research (ONR) is sponsoring research focused on understanding the cognitive effects that video games have on the human brain.

Can a video game actually improve human cognitive performance? Research

at various universities has found that the answer is yes—certain video games can indeed improve human cognitive functionality.

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# **CNIC**

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effects that video games have on the human brain.

Dr. C. Shawn Green, professor of psychology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. — who previously won a Young Investigator of the Year award through ONR—conducts research on human learning and neuroplasticity. Neuroplasticity is the capacity of the brain to develop and change throughout life.

“Anyone who is in a position where they would benefit from greater than normal cognitive control, top-down attention, peripheral visual processing would benefit from playing action games, which are primarily first- and third-person shooter games,” Green said. “That’s obviously a huge set of individuals, from those involved in combat, to people like surgeons or pilots.”

ONR’s Warfighter Performance Department is sponsoring this research among other programs focused on compiling data on how video games and virtual reality can enhance warfighter performance.

“People who play video games are quicker at processing information,” said Dr. Ray Perez, a program officer in ONR’s Warfighter Performance Department. “Ten hours of video games can change the structure and organization of a person’s brain. In the past few years we have gathered data through research that backs that up. The data will eventually be applied for training to enhance warfighter performance.”

For Green, while this is focused on a game, the topic is very serious, and the research results promising.

“My lab is broadly interested in factors that alter how quickly people learn new perceptual and/or cognitive skills, their asymptotic level of performance (i.e., how ‘good they get’ in the end), and the extent to which their learning transfers to new situations,” Green said. “We use video games as one type of experience that seems to produce some pretty substantial changes in perception and cognition.”

Research typically involves giving participants 100 “pre-test” trials of a task that taps a certain cognitive function. The participants then play various video games for an extended period of time (e.g., 45 total hours spread over many weeks), before again doing 100 “post-test” trials of the cognitive task. Researchers then compare pre-test and post-test performance to see if participants improved.

However, Green and his colleagues recently took a different approach.

“Rather than doing a regular pre-test, post-test training design, we did a learning task No. 1, learning task No. 2 design,” he said. “Here, instead of doing, say, 100 trials of a task at baseline, they did many more trials so we could assess how quickly they learned that task,” Green said. “They then did their video game training as usual. Then, at post-test, they did many trials of a new cognitive task so we could see how well they learned that task,” he said. “Consistent with our hypotheses, we found that those individuals trained on the action game showed faster learning of new tasks compared to those on control video games.”

ONR has funded this research to understand why and how these immersive environments improve the performance of our Sailors and Marines. The research will aid in developing more effective training methods granting Sailors and Marines a strategic advantage in the battles to come.

# Navy Exchange and Marine Corps Exchange customers step up to support NMCRS

This past fall, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, NEX and MCX customers stepped up to support the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS) by donating \$294,130 and \$158,500 respectively.

“Once again, NEX and MCX shoppers have shown their dedication to caring for fellow Shipmates and Marines,” said retired Lt. Gen. Jack W. Klimp, USMC, President, CEO, Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society. “Thank you to everyone who made a purchase and helped NMCRS provide relief to Sailors and Marines in need.”

The NEX and MCX customers support the NMCRS by purchasing \$5 benefit tickets. The benefit ticket gives customers \$5 and a 5% discount applied to a one time purchase at either the NEX or MCX.

In 2021, NEX patrons donated a total of \$586,450 while MCX customers donated \$158,500 to NMCRS through its spring and fall ticket sales. Over the past 10 years, those ticket sales have garnered over \$4.5 million to NMCRS from NEX and MCX customers.

## NEXCOM's NEXT-gen Scholars Program Support Students

The Navy Exchange Service Command's (NEXCOM) NEXT gen Scholars Program offers qualified students the opportunity to win \$2,500, \$1,500, \$1,000 or \$500 each quarter for earning good grades in school. The next drawing is at the end of March 2022.

To enter the drawing, students must be full-time with a “B” grade point average equivalent or better, as determined by their school system. Homeschooled students can also qualify with acknowledgement that the student has a “B” average or equivalent record of accomplishment.

Students must bring their current report card or other performance document to any NEX, fill out an entry card and have any documentation validated by an NEX associate. Once entered, the students will be given a coupon good for \$10 off a one-time NEX purchase of \$20 or more.

Eligible students include dependent children of active

duty members, reservists and military retirees as well as U.S. civilian Department of Defense employees stationed outside the continental United States and U.S. civilian employees of firms under contract to the Department of Defense outside the continental United States. Students must be enrolled in 1st through 12th grade. Dependent children without an individual Dependent Identification Card must be accompanied by their sponsor to submit their entry. Each student may enter only once each grading period and must re-enter with each qualifying report card.

Thanks to its vendor partners, NEXCOM has awarded a total of \$826,500 in savings bonds and monetary awards to students since the program's inception in 1997.

For more information on the NEXT gen Scholars Program visit [myNavyExchange.com/NEXTgen](https://myNavyExchange.com/NEXTgen).

## DOD Awards Contracts to Purchase COVID-19 Antigen Over-the-Counter Test Kits in Support of POTUS' One Billion Free At-Home COVID-19 Tests

This week, the Department of Defense (DoD), in coordination with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), awarded contract modifications to Roche Diagnostics Corporation (Indianapolis, Indiana) and Siemens Healthineers (Tarrytown, New York) purchasing a combined total of 138 million over-the-counter COVID-19 test kits. This effort supports the president's plan to deliver one billion free at-home COVID-19 tests to the nation in response to the Omicron variant.

The DoD's Joint Program Executive Office for Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defense (JPEO-CBRND) led this effort in partnership with DoD's Defense Assisted Acquisition Cell (DA2), Army Contracting Command, and the HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR). The procurement was funded through the American Rescue Plan Act to supply critical medical resources to the nation.

# Navy Personnel Command Announces Refocus on Mid-Term Counseling

*Story by MCI Marcus Meredith, Navy Personnel Command Public Affairs*

On the heels of the release of eNavFit to the Fleet and release of the updated BUPERSINST 1610.10F, the Navy Performance Evaluation System (EVALMAN), Navy Personnel Command's Talent Management Task Force (TMTF) announced an overall refocus on mid-term counseling.

The announcement, in NAVADMIN 039/22, is designed to change the way the Navy has conversations and provides feedback to Sailors about performance.

"For us to get better as a Navy, we need to have honest, real conversations with our Sailors about development and performance improvement," said Rear Adm. Alvin Holsey, Commander, Navy Personnel Command.

A brief summary of changes to Chapter 18 of the EVALMAN include mandating mid-term counseling, the introduction of coach-like skills when conducting performance counseling conversations, the optional use of the Military Individual Development Plan (IDP) as a developmental tool, steps to prepare for mid-term counseling, and how to conduct performance counseling conversations.

"It's important for supervisors to provide quality mid-term counseling because providing feedback can be difficult," said Master Chief Interior Communications Electrician Frank Leone, senior enlisted leader for MyNavy Coaching. "If not done properly, it can do more damage than good. Supervisors need to be able to deliver feedback in a way that will encourage the Sailor and leave them with a sense of direction and enthusiasm to move forward."

According to Lt. Cmdr. Erica Harris, MyNavy Coaching scientific research advisor, the current process for mid-term counseling, "does not yield consistent and measurable results related to deliberate development and desired increases in individual and unit performance.

"You have pockets of excellence across the Navy providing great mid-term counseling while others aren't engaging in these conversations at all," Harris said. "How can Sailors know how they're performing without feedback from the supervisor? Only by receiving feedback about past performance can Sailors enhance their current and future performance. And this is why the IDP is so useful because it serves as a tool for Sailors to keep track of their progress towards their performance goals, providing accountability and ownership of their development."

**4** Along with the updates to Chapter 18 of the EVALMAN,

TMTF also released a new training webinar focusing on the importance of performance counseling conversations, and a new kneeboard card exploring questions supervisors and Sailors can use to bolster mid-term counseling conversations.

The training webinar focuses on the purpose and importance of having any performance counseling conversation, the roles in performance counseling, how to give and receive feedback, and how to complete the IDP (NAVPERS Form 1610/19) to drive development in between performance conversations. The training also discusses the Mid-term Counseling Checklist (NAVPERS 1610/20) to ensure all steps for conducting mid-term counseling are performed. Although this training is not mandatory, it is strongly recommended Sailors review this training within the next 90 days.

A kneeboard card called "Engaging in Performance Counseling for Supervisors" and "Engaging in Performance Counseling for Members" features five open-ended questions for both supervisors and members to use to improve the quality of feedback received during performance counseling sessions.

The kneeboard card is a reference tool Sailors and supervisors can use to ask open-ended questions and obtain meaningful feedback about past performance and future goals, creating bi-directional feedback.

"I personally used the Performance Counseling Kneeboard during my O-6 sessions over the last month and found them to be helpful," Holsey said.

Holsey said this renewed focus on mid-term and performance counseling will set Sailors up for success by engaging with them to get a clearer picture of their performance during the reporting period and identify areas ripe for development.

"In order to develop our Sailors, retain top talent, and identify high-potential Sailors for promotion, we're all going to need to double our efforts," he said.

The NAVADMIN can be found at <https://www.mynavyhr.navy.mil/References/Messages/NAVADMIN-2022/>. More information about the BUPERSINST 1610.10F, links to the webinar training videos, and kneeboard cards can be found at: [https://www.mynavyhr.navy.mil/Career-Management/Performance-Evaluation/MidTerm\\_Counseling/](https://www.mynavyhr.navy.mil/Career-Management/Performance-Evaluation/MidTerm_Counseling/).



# The Secretary of the Navy Increases Secondary Caregiver Leave to 21 Days

*Story by MC2 Rebekah Watkins, Chief of Naval Personnel Public Affairs*

Sailors will now have more time to spend with their family after the birth or adoption of a child as the Department of the Navy increased its maximum Secondary Caregiver Leave (SCL) to 21 days. The Secretary of the Navy, The Honorable Carlos Del Toro, authorized the extension on February 11, 2022.

“Navy is dedicated to supporting our new parents, and we fully understand that our families are as much a part of our service as our Sailors,” said Vice Adm. John B. Nowell, Jr. the chief of naval personnel.

Nowell said, “This change, effective Feb. 11, is an interim solution while we await more significant changes anticipated as part of NDAA-22. While we wait, we will work with the Department of Defense to update regulations and modify our E-Leave system to reflect the change.”

NAVADMIN 037/22 released Feb. 14 announced the policy change. This policy change aligns secondary caregiver leave duration in the Navy and Marine Corps with that in the Army and Air Force. The extension to three weeks comes in advance of an increase to twelve weeks authorized in the recently enacted NDAA, which will become effective at the end of 2022.

The Navy’s Parental Leave Program details are covered in MILPERSMAN article 1050-415 and are being updated to reflect the increase. Parental leave is “non-chargeable,” meaning it does not count against a member’s earned leave balance.

SCL is only for Sailors properly designated in their service records as secondary caregivers. The leave is authorized once either a Qualifying Birth Event (QBE) or Qualifying Adoption (QA) has happened. Steps necessary for Sailors and commands to ensure the member qualifies for the leave are also outlined in the MILPERSMAN article.

Sailors with a QBE or QA who have not yet taken their authorized Parental Leave as the Feb. 11 effective date qualify to take up to the new 21-day maximum with the approval of their chain of command. Parental leave must be taken within a year of the QBE or QA.

Those Sailors who have already taken their parental leave won’t be eligible for additional non-chargeable leave under this program.

Complete details are available in NAVADMIN 037/22, and MILPERSMAN article 1050-415.



**Gym 2A - The Loft**  
Mon - Fri: 5 a.m. - 1 p.m.

**Gym 440 - The Fieldhouse**  
Mon - Fri: 6 a.m. - 6 p.m.

**Gym 4 - Courts Plus**  
Mon - Fri: 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.  
Sat & Sun: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

*Check out the latest events and activities from our MWR at*  
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# COVID-19 Vaccine Mandate: Evolving Guidance & Procedures

*Story by Lt. Laura Supple & Lt. Kyra Ziesk-Socolov, RLSO NDW*

In recent months, the Department of the Navy (DON) has taken significant steps to counter the ongoing threat posed by the COVID-19 pandemic to the health and safety of the Fleet. On 31 Aug 2021, NAVADMIN 190/21 announced the Navy's mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policy.

## Mandatory Vaccination

In recent months, the Department of the Navy (DON) has taken significant steps to counter the ongoing threat posed by the COVID-19 pandemic to the health and safety of the Fleet. On 31 Aug 2021, NAVADMIN 190/21 announced the Navy's mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policy. The NAVADMIN implemented a 24 Aug 2021 memorandum from the Secretary of Defense requiring vaccination against COVID-19 for all DoD service members. Navy Sailors will be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 with vaccines that have received Food and Drug Administration licensure or through the voluntary administration of vaccines under FDA Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) or World Health Organization (WHO) Emergency Use Listing. The NAVADMIN set firm deadlines for vaccination: Sailors on active duty were required to be vaccinated by 28 November 2021, while reservists were required to be compliant by 28 December 2021. The Navy's definition of "fully vaccinated" required service members to be at least two weeks past their second shot (or two weeks past their vaccine date for a single-dose vaccine like Johnson & Johnson) by the deadline to be compliant with the NAVADMIN.

While the 31 Aug NAVADMIN provided Sailors with clarity about the deadline for full vaccination, it left several important questions unanswered, including what would ultimately happen to service members who continued to refuse the COVID-19 vaccine or would not be vaccinated by the mandatory deadline. Further, while the NAVADMIN did explain that these Sailors' cases would be handled by a designated COVID Consolidated Disposition Authority (CCDA) with access to the full range of administrative and disciplinary responses, the NAVADMIN did not indicate who the CCDA would be, or how the Navy intended to address service members who continued to refuse the vaccine.

## Disciplinary Consequences

Sailors gained additional insight into the processes and disciplinary consequences associated with continued



vaccine refusal on 14 Oct 2021, when the Navy released NAVADMIN 225/21. This NAVADMIN identified the Chief of Naval Personnel (CNP) as the CCDA, and clarified that any Navy service member who refused the COVID-19 vaccine and was not fully vaccinated by the applicable deadline, absent a pending or approved vaccination exemption request, would be processed for administrative separation. All separation proceedings associated with COVID-19 vaccine refusal will be centralized under the CCDA, with the exception of Entry Level Separations (ELS)(only available for Sailors in their first 180 days of continuous active duty service). Commanders and commanding officers remain the ELS separation authority under the NAVADMIN. Officer promotions and enlisted advancements will also be withheld for any Sailor refusing the vaccine.

## Vaccination Exemptions

Exemptions to immunization requirements fall into one of three categories: medical, administrative, or religious.

**Medical** - exemptions are applicable if a Sailor's medical history suggests that getting a given vaccine would adversely impact their health (e.g. underlying medical conditions, allergies to vaccine ingredients). Medical exemptions are generally of indefinite duration unless the exemption is granted in response to a temporary health condition like pregnancy or hospitalization. Sailors seeking medical exemptions should contact a military physician.

**Administrative** - NAVADMIN 225/21 specifies that Sailors

who will begin terminal leave on or before their applicable vaccination deadline may be administratively exempted from receiving the vaccine. See BUMEDNOTE 6150 (21 Sep 21) and BUMEDINST 6230.15B for more information.

**Religious** - If the COVID-19 vaccine substantially burdens a service member's sincerely-held religious beliefs, the Sailor may request a waiver by routing a religious accommodation package via their commanding officer to the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Manpower, Personnel, Training and Education) (DCNO (N1)). DCNO (N1) is the decision authority on all religious accommodation requests. Service members seeking religious accommodations must be counseled by a qualified healthcare provider on the medical risks associated with refusing the vaccine and must conduct an administrative interview with a Navy chaplain prior to submitting a package. Reference DoDI 1300.17 (Religious Liberty in the Military Services), BUPERSINST 1730.11A (Standards and Procedures Governing the Accommodation of Religious Practices), and MILPERSMAN 1730-020 (Immunization Exemptions for Religious Beliefs)

for additional information on requesting a religious accommodation.

If you have any questions, please contact your chain of command or your local SJA office!



# FY23 Advanced Education Voucher Program Offers Chiefs Mess Path to Master's Degree

*Story by Navy Education and Training Command Public Affairs*

The Navy Exchange Service Command (NEXCOM) achieved 'Full Operational Capability' of Navy Gateway Inn & Suites (NGIS) on Jan. 30, 2022. With this milestone, NEXCOM attains complete operational control of NGIS and all administrative functions.

"Over the past year, NEXCOM; Commander, Navy Installations Command's Fleet and Family Readiness; and NGIS teams have worked diligently to ensure a smooth transition, one that was seamless to our patrons," said retired Rear Adm. Robert J. Bianchi, Chief Executive Officer of NEXCOM. "I appreciate all the support we received from Navy leadership as we successfully reached Full Operational Capability eight months earlier than directed. I look forward to supporting our NGIS team as they continue to provide quality lodging for TDY travelers."

On Jan. 4, 2021, Gregory J. Slavonic, Performing the Duties of the Under Secretary of the Navy, issued a memorandum that directed the consolidation of the Navy's Permanent Change of Station lodging program, NEXCOM's Navy Lodge Program and the Department of the Navy's Temporary Duty Lodging program, NGIS, under NEXCOM with Initial Operational Capability by Oct. 1, 2021 and Full Operational Capability by Sept. 30, 2022.

A small ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on Oct. 1, 2021, on Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story, Virginia, when Initial Operational Capability was achieved and NGIS operations transitioned to NEXCOM.

NGIS is a professionally managed, business-based DoD Lodging Program. NGIS contributes to mission readiness by offering quality lodging and services for a mobile military community, while keeping official travel costs to a minimum. With 16,000 rooms at 61 military installations worldwide, NGIS provides Priority-One lodging for the Official Temporary Duty (TDY) traveler. NGIS delivers comfortable and welcoming accommodations with cost-saving room rates for individual and group TDY travelers, permanent change of station (PCS) travelers, Department of Defense civilians and leisure travelers, retirees, reservists and sponsored guests. For more information or to make a NGIS reservation, visit <https://ngis.dodlodging.net/>.

NEXCOM oversees seven business lines that include Navy Exchange (NEX) stores, Navy Lodges, Navy Gateway Inns & Suites, Ships Store Program, Navy Clothing and Textile Research Facility, Uniform Program Management Office and Telecommunications Program Office.