

Signed Up For the Military? If You Change Your Mind . . .

You Don't Have to Go! Getting Out of the Delayed Enlistment Program is Easy!

What is the Delayed Enlistment Program?

Most people who enlist are signed up into the Delayed Enlistment Program (DEP), also called the Delayed Entry Program, for up to a year before they report for active duty training.

How does someone get out of the DEP?

Fundamentally, the way to get out of the DEP is NOT TO GO, not to report on your ship date. Some people simply do not go; others choose to write a letter stating their decision not to go. In either case, the results are the same: you do not have to go to MEPS on the ship date.

What are the consequences if I don't go?

There are no consequences and no records as a result of withdrawing from the DEP that currently have any effect on things like employment or your legal record. This is the case for non-citizens as well as citizens. Withdrawing from the DEP has no effect on future employment.

Will I be harassed?

The Military Recruiting regulations instruct recruiters to not harass members of the DEP who've changed their mind. Still, we hear every day of recruiters harassing people who have decided not to join the military. Recruiters often cross the line from reselling to harassing, and they have become increasingly aggressive. On the GI Rights Hotline, we have heard stories of recruiters coming to people's homes, calling their parents, going to their workplaces, and even trying to kidnap them.

The recruiter may tell you that you have to go, that you have signed a contract, and things like You'll go to jail for five years; you'll get a dishonorable discharge, you'll never get a job. Our favorite is Just go to boot camp, and if you don't like it, you can get out. None of these things is true. In particular, once you go to boot camp it is much harder to get out!

What can I do if I'm harassed by a recruiter?

What is important to realize is that you hold the cards! It may be hard to feel like you have the power

877-447-4487

The GI Rights Hotline

For more information, contact Seattle Draft & Military Counseling Center:

206-789-2751 in Washington State, 877-447-4487 nationwide, or by email at counselor@sdmcc.org

over your life when you're dealing with these well-financed, slick, uniformed recruiters, but you do! What they rely on is pretend-friendliness, an air of authority, bluff, intimidation and outright lies. You can enlist the support of your family, friends, and co-workers so that you do not have to speak to the recruiter. You can write a letter stating that you want no further contact, and citing one of the regulations above that forbids them from harassing you. You can screen your calls so that you do not accept any calls from the recruiter. A letter or call from a lawyer may stop the harassment. Some people choose not to be at home around the date they had planned to ship so that they avoid potential contact.

Should I write a letter? Where do I send it?

If you decide to write a letter, address it to the commander of the recruiting station where you were recruited, not to the recruiter him or herself. You don't need to know the commander's name (write simply, Commander, Recruiting Station) but you need to know the address. You can look up the address of the recruiting station in the phone book (under US Government) or look on the enlistment agreement. Keep a copy of the letter. In your letter, you should give the reasons why you have changed your mind, and why you are unwilling and/or unable to enter the military. Multiple reasons are fine.

Any reason is good enough: they don't get to reject your reasons, though They'd like you to think they have that right. Despite threats of involuntary activation from recruiters, the military currently releases all DEP recruits who request a separation.

What are the advantages of writing a letter?

1. If you fit into one or more of the categories in the regulations for release from the DEP, stating these in your letter can fit into the recruiter's framework for release from the military, and might result in the recruiter bothering you less.
2. By writing the letter well before the ship date, you can get off their radar screen ahead of time and avoid any drama around the time of the ship date.
3. The letter may provide a sense of closure for you. By expressing your thoughts, writing the letter and mailing it, you take concrete steps to determine your own future. This may help you assert your own power and move forward in your life.

Are there drawbacks to writing a letter?

There aren't really drawbacks, but there are situations where a letter may not be particularly helpful.

1. It can be confusing if you think the recruiters and military have a right to deny your request for separation. They don't have that right.
2. If it's close to your ship date, the letter won't do you much good. In this case, you might do well not to be home on your ship date, to avoid a difficult situation.

What happens after the letter is sent?

The recruiter will try to re-sell you on the military. Typically, she or he will tell you that you have to come down to meet the commander and discuss the issue. YOU DON'T. Once you have sent your separation request letter, there is no need for further contact with the recruiting station. (An exception - if you have gotten money from the military through College First, you may have contact with the recruiting station concerning repayment. If you do go to meet the recruiters for such a reason, it's best to take someone with you who will back you up).

What if my request is denied, or if I don't receive a response to my letter?

The recruiter may tell you that your request has been denied or that you have to come to a meeting about your request. Current military policy requires that your request for separation be honored. In general, you do not have to attend any meeting or even talk to the recruiter for any reason.

When your request has been processed, the military issues a void enlistment or uncharacterized separation that will not affect your record or career. We have heard from some people that they did not receive any response to their letter. That's OK. Even if you have not heard from the military in response to your letter, you have no obligation to them.

While the military theoretically could send a DEP member to active-duty for not reporting to basic training or boot camp, Not a single person has been involuntarily ordered to active duty, court-martialed, or otherwise prosecuted in civilian courts for being in the DEP and refusing to ship out to boot camp in *AT LEAST* the past 27 years. Not one single person. (Rod Powers, usmilitary.about.com)

For more information, contact Seattle Draft & Military Counseling Center:

206-789-2751 in Washington State, 877-447-4487 nationwide, or by email at counselor@sdmcc.org