

**PROCEDURAL GUIDANCE MESSAGE**

Name and Grade of Action Officer MSgt James A. Henry Jr.				Office Symbol RSOPA		Series Number 140 Revision #2		Signature of Action Officer		Implementation Date: 1 Nov 09	
	To	Action	Initials/Date		To	Action	Initials/Date		To	Action	Initials/Date
1	RSOP/ CCU	Coord		3	RSO/ CCU	Coord	RSOPA/ CCU	5			
2	RSOP	Coord		4	RSO/ CC	Coord		6			

**FROM:** HQ AFRS/RSO

**SUBJECT:** Tattoo/Brands/Body Marking and Body Modification Policy Guidance

**TO:** All Recruiting Personnel

**This PGM supersedes PGM 140 Revised dated 8 Dec 06**

1. This guidance is designed to assist you in determining acceptability of applicants with tattoos/brands/body markings or body modifications. It incorporates the most recent Air Force policy guidance, as outlined in AFI 36-2903 dated 2 August 2006 and AFRSI 36-2001 dated 1 Apr 2005.
2. Use this guidance along with AFRSI 36-2001 to make determinations; however, in questionable cases, Recruiter/Liaisons will forward photos through their chain of command. **AFRS/RSO must review all questionable tattoos/brands/body markings/piercings and conduct an Enlistment Eligibility Determination (EED) in AFRISS.**
3. This is the Air Force policy on unacceptable tattoos/brands per AFI 36-2903, table 2.5, **figure 2.9. note 10, and AF/A1 Physical Training Uniform wear policy message dated 28 Oct 09.**
  - a. **“Unauthorized (content):** Tattoos/Brands anywhere on the body that are obscene, advocate sexual, racial, ethnic, or religious discrimination are prohibited in and out of uniform. Tattoos/brands that are prejudicial to good order and discipline, or that are of a nature that tends to bring discredit upon the Air Force are prohibited in and out of uniform. Tattoos that are commonly associated with gang affiliations are prohibited both in and out of uniform.”
  - b. **“Inappropriate (military image):** Excessive tattoos/brands will not be exposed or visible (includes visible through the uniform) while in uniform. Excessive is defined as any tattoo/brands that exceed ¼ of the exposed body part and those above the collarbone when wearing an open collar uniform” **or the PT uniform shirt. Tattoos must not be visible when wearing the AF blue shirt uniform (must be gender specific) with an open collar and “V” neck T-shirt. Ensure females are checked behind the neck with hair up.**
  - c. **“Tattoo’s on the back of the neck must not protrude above the collar when wearing an open collar uniform i.e. ABU shirt or AF blue shirt).** Members should not be allowed to display excessive tattoos that would detract from an appropriate professional image while in uniform. Commanders should use these guidelines in determining appropriate military image and acceptability of tattoos displayed by **future** members in uniform”. **Tattoos must not protrude above the AF PT uniform shirt. No exceptions.**
  - d. **PT Uniform: “Individual items that make up the physical training uniform (PTU)/improved physical training uniform (IPUT) are considered uniform items all personal grooming**

**standards apply while participating in physical fitness activities (refer to AFI 36-2903 table 1.5) with one exception: long female hair will be secured but may have loose ends; body art (tattoos) and jewelry standards apply (refer to AFI 36-2903 table 2.5)."**

4. Exposed body parts. If the authorized tattoo(s) covers more than 1/4 (25%) of the entire exposed body part or if it detracts from an appropriate professional image while in uniform, the applicant is not qualified to enter the AF.
  - a. Arms: from the elbow to the wrist. **From just below the short sleeve to the elbow. No tattoos on the saluting arm.**
  - b. **Hand: from the wrist to the fingertips (with fingers extended). No tattoos on any hand. ETPs may be submitted for left hand through the chain of command to RSOP.**
  - c. Legs: **consider the entire circumference from the top of the kneecap to the ankle. For PTU/IPTU shorts include from the knee to below the bottom of PT shorts as a separate body part.**
  - d. **Ensure no part of a covered tattoo is visible through any AF uniform, i.e. tattoo on chest, covered part of arm, or back not visible through uniform shirt.**

5. This is the Air Force policy on unacceptable body modifications as described in AFI 36-2903, table 2.5, Note 1:

"Applicants who intentionally alter or modify any part of their bodies in order to achieve a visible, physical effect that **disfigures, deforms or otherwise detracts from a professional military image** are disqualified from joining the Air Force. Examples of prohibited body modifications include (but are not limited to) tongue splitting or forking, tooth filing, residual piercing holes to include "gauging" (large enough to where you can see day light), and disfiguring skin implants".

6. **Recruiter's must ask each applicant if they have any tattoos, body piercing or other body modifications. Recruiters must ask the approximate size, type and location of the modification and document it in AFRISS.** Only review those that are readily visible. If the applicant has a tattoo/brand/body marking in the undergarment area Recruiters must ask the approximate size, type and location of the modification and document it the same way. **Recruiters will not ask applicants to remove clothing articles to view tattoos/brands/markings.**
7. MEPS Liaisons must review physicals closely for Medical Section comments mentioning tattoos/brands/markings, piercing, and/or body modifications. Liaisons must also question applicants about tattoos/brands/markings, piercing, and/or body modifications during their interview/job counseling and also on ship day. When tattoos/brands/markings are likely to be seen in uniform, Liaisons must view and evaluate them using this PGM's criteria. Liaisons must also view potentially unauthorized tattoos/brands/ markings even if they will not be seen in uniform, using the guidance in this PGM. **CAUTION:** A Liaison of the opposite gender **will not** view tattoos/brands/ markings that are in the "undergarment area." "When necessary, ask MEPCOM personnel or a sister-service liaison (same gender as applicant) to assist you. (EX: You have an all male Liaison staff and a female applicant has questionable tattoos/brands/markings in an "undergarment area", you must request that a female MEPCOM member or sister-service liaison view the tattoos/brands/markings and then describe them to you).
8. Finally, all applicants should be briefed at the MEPS and by their recruiter that once they are qualified, additional tattoos/brands/markings or body modifications may render them disqualified for service.

Recruiters should encourage their applicants awaiting shipping not to risk serious infection or disqualification that could result from inappropriate tattoos/brands/markings or body modifications.

9. There are no provisions to allow an applicant with disqualifying body markings to process or ship on the condition that the markings will be removed once on active duty.
10. If you have any questions regarding Tattoos/brandings/markings/piercings Comm. 210-565-0369 or DSN 665-0369.

FOR THE COMMANDER

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Deputy Chief, Operations Division

Attachment  
Acceptable/Unacceptable Tattoos

