

**MCRC FROST CALL 022-03 DATED 4 JUNE 2003**  
**(Corrected Copy dated 9 June 2003)**

From: Commanding General, Marine Corps Recruiting Command

Subj: POLICY REGARDING TATTOOS, BODY PIERCING, ORNAMENTATION,  
BRANDING AND BODY MUTILATION

Ref: (a) MCO P1100.72B (Short Title: MPPM Enl Proc)  
(b) ALMAR 194/96  
(c) ALMAR 127/97  
(d) MCRC Frost Call 017-02 (Updated 21 May 02)

Encl: (1) TATTOO Screening Form  
(2) Diagram depicting Head, Neck and Shoulder area

1. Purpose. To notify all command levels within the Marine Corps Recruiting Command on the Marine Corps policy regarding tattoos, body piercing, ornamentation, branding and body mutilation.

2. Background. Body markings have proliferated in today's society. No longer is body art defined or limited to tattoos. It now includes branding and body piercing and the latest transitory fashion includes body mutilation and ornamentation. Examples of this type of body art are, but not limited to, tongue splitting/forking and facial ornamentation silicon implantations. Although the Marine Corps allows Marines to display some types of body marking, it is these types of examples that are in direct conflict with the Marine Corps' high standards and conservative approach to personal appearance. In other examples, the location, intent or content of some body markings are prejudicial to good order, discipline and morale, or are of a nature to bring discredit to the Marine Corps. It is that type of body marking on any individual that prohibits them from serving in the Marine Corps. References (a) through (c) contain the parameters for enlistment of applicants into the Marine Corps and Marine Corps Reserve with tattoos, body piercing, ornamentation, branding and body mutilation. Additional guidance can be rendered in MCO P5354.1 Marine Corps Equal Opportunity Manual and SECNAVINST 1730.80 Accommodation of Religious Practices.

3. Information. It is in the best interest of the Marine Corps to evaluate each applicant with regard to tattoos and/ or body piercing, ornamentation, branding and body mutilation when determining enlistment eligibility. In addition to reviewing

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the particular form of body marking, it is imperative to gain a complete understanding from the applicant on the meaning or purpose that it represents. Although a particular form of body marking may appear innocent or benign, these symbols may represent membership in organizations or personal orientation toward known subversive or criminal behavior. In other cases, applicants may not be assigned to high visibility billets or special duty programs if they display body markings that are visible in the Summer Service "C" uniform. Therefore, recruiters, NCOICS, MEPS liaisons, operations personnel and command group members must be cognizant of the Marine Corps policy.

4. Action. Effective **IMMEDIATELY**, all applicants, prior service and non-prior service, and members of the DEP or SMCR awaiting IADT, will adhere to the guidance contained in the references and the guidance as follows:

a. Criteria for Evaluating. Four criteria will be used when evaluating applicants for body marking. These criteria are **CONTENT, LOCATION, SIZE** and **NUMBER**.

(1) Content

(a) Prejudicial to good order and discipline

Tattoos, ornamentation or brands that are sexist, (express nudity) racist, vulgar, anti-American, anti-social, extremist group or organization, eccentric in nature or brings possible discredit to the Marine Corps are **PROHIBITED**. Any applicant who has body markings that express an association with conduct or substances prohibited by the Marine Corps Drug Policy and the U.C.M.J, to include illegal drugs, drug usage, or paraphernalia are **PROHIBITED**. Any body mutilation (i.e., tongue splitting/ forking, facial ornamentation silicon implantations) are **PROHIBITED**. Enclosure (1) is the screening form to be used in evaluating the content of the body marking. Commanding Officers are responsible for identifying and denying enlistment of applicants with inappropriate body marking. Questionable cases of **body marking in regards to CONTENT** will be forwarded to the region Commanding General for review prior to enlistment. The request must include the Tattoo Screening Form, enclosure (1) and digital photograph of the body marking.

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(b) Gang or Extremist Groups. Any applicant who has tattoos, brands or ornamentation relative to a **gang membership or gang activities** is potentially ineligible for enlistment. Markings in this category must be fully researched and commented by the Commanding Officer of the Recruiting Station, on the DD 1966/4, prior to enlistment authorization. Local law enforcement authorities can provide information and should be utilized when questions arise. An example of DD 1966/4 REMARKS SECTION statement:

" I HAVE REVIEWED THE TATTOOS OR SNA AND THEY ARE IN COMPLIANCE WITH MCRC FC 022-03."

(Signature)

I.M. COMMANDER MAJOR RS ANYTOWN

(2) Location

(a) Head or Neck Area. Tattoos, ornamentation, branding or body mutilation on the head and/ or neck area are **PROHIBITED** and no waivers will be considered. The neck area for the purpose of definition is **any portion above the collarbone in the front area, or otherwise visible without a skivvies shirt in the short sleeve khaki shirt and above the first cervical vertebrae in the back area**. See diagram contained in enclosure (2). Use of crewneck, mock turtleneck, turtleneck undershirts, or standard quarter length khaki shirt, as basis for determination of the neck area is prohibited. Questionable cases of **body marking with regards to LOCATION** will be forwarded to the region Commanding General for review prior to enlistment. The request must include the Tattoo Screening Form, enclosure (1) and digital photograph of the body marking.

(b) Dental Ornamentation. Dental ornamentation outlined in reference (c) is prohibited, and enlistments are not authorized.

(3) Size

(a) Cases of **body marking that exceed the size dimensions described below** will be reviewed by the region Commanding General prior to enlistment. The request must include the Tattoo Screening Form, enclosure (1) and digital photograph of the body marking. The review is done to ensure the body ornamentation is not of a size to be prejudicial to good order and discipline.

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(b) Combined tattoo coverage on a particular part(s), i.e., leg or arm, exceeds **one-quarter of the respective body part (s) exposed surface** while the applicant is wearing the standard physical training uniform (shorts and shirt).

(c) Individual tattoos exposed by the wearing of a short sleeve khaki shirt should be no larger in size than the wearer's hand with fingers extended and joined with the thumb touching the base of the index finger.

(4) Number. Cases of **more than four (4)** tattoos, ornamentation, branding or body mutilation will be reviewed by the region Commanding General prior to enlistment. The request must include the Tattoo Screening Form, enclosure (1) and digital photographs of each of the body markings. The review is done to ensure the body marking is not of a size to be prejudicial to good order and discipline.

b. Recruiting Regions, Districts, Recruiting Stations

(1) Reference (d) is cancelled along with the Tattoo Screening Form.

(2) Instruct all recruiters to utilize the Tattoo Screening Form, enclosure (1) on all applicants. The Tattoo Screening Form contained in the AEP cannot be used until directed.

(3) The Tattoo Screening Form will be used to conduct an interview with a commissioned officer. **This interview can be face to face, or conducted telephonically.** Use of the facsimile machine is authorized for telephonic interviews. The Tattoo Screening Form will be forwarded to recruit training as part of the recruits SRB and a copy placed in the residual file for future reference.

(4) Individuals who have had any body markings that meet the criteria contained herein removed, concealed, or altered still require review by the region Commanding General before authorized for enlistment.

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(5) For administrative processing of body marking  
Reviews the entry into MCRISS Waiver Module as:

"**X** - ADMIN UNIQUE/**Y** - NOT APPLICABLE /**C** - REGION, which will  
produce a waiver code of **XYC**".

(6) Recruiters will not render any opinion or  
guidance that removal, concealment or alteration of any  
disqualifying body marking will result in approval to enlist.

(7) Recruits receiving an MCRD Entry Level  
Separation (ELS) due to the Marine Corps body marking policy,  
and who subsequently have the body mark removed or covered, may  
be exempt from the two year wait. Waiver requests will be  
submitted to region Commanding General. These waivers will  
contain the Tattoo Screening Form, enclosure (1) and digital  
photograph of the altered area where the body marking was  
previously located.

(8) Digital photographs are not required in areas  
of the body where the undergarments (male shorts)(female short  
and bra) cover the body marking. The body ornamentation located  
in these areas will be documented and described on the Tattoo  
Screening Form.

(9) Many high profile and visible positions/  
assignments, such as duty with Marine Barracks 8<sup>th</sup> & I,  
Washington, D.C., Marine Corp Security Forces, or Marine Corps  
Drum and Bugle Corps are prohibited from having any tattoos,  
ornamentation, branding and body mutilation below the biceps, or  
that show when wearing the summer service uniform. Caution  
should be taken when assignment of incentive programs for  
applicants in this category.

3. This Frost Call will be cancelled upon release of the  
revision to reference (a).

4. Point of contact is LtCol Wittle, MCRC G-3, at commercial  
(703) 784-9403 DSN 278-9403.

/s/  
D. L. MCMANUS  
By direction