

## **For 1st Time in 3 Decades, Military Families and Retirees Are Getting Revamped IDs**

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The military is ditching flimsy laminated paper-based ID cards for military retirees and dependents for an all-new card system: the Next Generation Uniform Services Identification Card.

According to a Defense Department announcement published Monday, the cards, which represent the first ID update for these military communities since 1993, will be more durable and more closely resemble the Common Access Cards, or CACs, used by active-duty troops and DoD civilians.

The new IDs are already in circulation: the military quietly began issuing them to retirees, reservists and dependent military family members July 31 at a few ID card facilities, according to the DoD release.

The new USID cards are enhanced with an updated design and security features to deter counterfeiting and fraud, Michael Sorrento, director of the Defense Manpower Data Center, said in a statement.

To date, only about 20 Real-Time Automated Personnel Identification Card System (RAPIDS) sites now offer the new cards; other sites await equipment upgrades in order to make them. All DoD USID card facilities are set to offer the IDs by December 2020, according to the release. The complete transition to new USID cards is targeted for January 2026.

This transition doesn't affect current card expiration dates and doesn't change the populations who are eligible to get the current USID cards.

In addition to dependents of active-duty troops and reservists and retirees and their dependents, those eligible for these DoD-recognized IDs include Medal of Honor recipients and their dependents and 100% disabled veterans and their dependents, among others. A full list of eligible groups can be found [here](#). The cards facilitate access to military bases and to other exclusive facilities, such as commissaries and exchanges.

The COVID-19 pandemic has complicated the rollout of the new cards. Sorrento advised that it would be better to wait to get the new card until next summer unless the holder's current one is expired. Applicants should call ahead for appointments to get the new USID cards.

In April, Pentagon officials announced that dependent and retiree cards set to expire in 2020 would be automatically extended through September in light of the pandemic, and changed policy to allow some ID updates and new enrollments to be done by mail.

DoD is further developing the ID card process, Sorrento said in the release, and eyeing changes such as a mail-in ID process with online vetting, eliminating the requirement to apply in person at a RAPIDS site.

Submitted by AGCS Corbett, USN RET