



Armed Services YMCA and Jack Daniel's Operation Ride Home - 2024 Holiday Season Frequently Asked Questions



What is Operation Ride Home?

Armed Services YMCA (ASYMCA) Operation Ride Home is an application-based travel assistance service, generously supported by presenting sponsor Jack Daniel's and American Airlines, to help junior enlisted service members and their families who may not have the financial means to travel home for the holidays. The ASYMCA reviews and selects eligible applications and facilitates one round-trip airline ticket or gift card for vehicle travel.

Who can apply for Jack Daniel's Operation Ride Home?

Operation Ride Home is limited to E1-E5 active duty service members, both single and married, travelling with their spouse and/or dependent child(ren) ages 0-18, and whose duty station is one of the installations served by one of ASYMCA's 13 Branches in the United States. If the E1-E5 service member is deployed, the spouse and dependent children are eligible to apply. The service member, spouse or a military representative may fill out the application.

Where are the participating locations?

The service member's duty station must be a military installation in the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii, served by one of ASYMCA's 13 Branches. For a listing, visit <https://ridehome.asymca.org>

Does the service member have to be one of the travelers?

No. While generally, the service member travels with their family, there may be instances when their military duties such as deployment or TDY keep the service member from traveling home. In these cases, the spouse with a military ID is eligible to travel home individually or with dependent children. Dependent children may **not** travel by themselves.

What if the service member is deployed?

If a service member is deployed, the spouse with military ID and dependent children ages 0-18 are eligible to receive travel assistance and travel independently of the service member. Dependent children may **not** travel by themselves.

Are there requirements for travel distances?

Yes, for air or vehicle travel, the destination must originate at the service member's duty station. For vehicle travel, the destination must be at least 350 miles from the duty station. The choice to fly or drive is an individual decision made by the applicant.

When can I submit an application for Operation Ride Home?

Applications for the 2024 holiday travel open based on the dates provided by the ASYMCA Branch. Because the dates vary, please check <https://ridehome.asymca.org> for the dates and link to the application.

How are participants selected?

The ASYMCA selects applicants based on level of need and may choose to coordinate with installation command.

By filling out an application am I guaranteed I'll be selected?

No. There may be more applications submitted than funds to fulfill the requests. In addition, applications can be declined at the discretion of the ASYMCA Branch or Headquarters. However, if a Branch reaches its traveler limits, a waitlist will be created in the case that additional funds are made available.

How does the process work?

Visit <https://ridehome.asymca.org> for eligibility, application deadlines and a link to the application itself. For traveling service members, a Leave Dates Approval Form is required to submit an application. The Branch reviews submissions, makes determinations, and contacts approved applicants to coordinate travel logistics.

Why is the program only available at certain installations?

Because funds are limited, the ASYMCA only offers the service through its 13 Branches, which serves nearly 100 military installations in the U.S., including Alaska and Hawaii. For a full list, visit <https://ridehome.asymca.org>.

What if my travel costs are more than the stipend amount?

If the airline ticket exceeds the \$500 amount of assistance per approved traveler, the traveler must pay the difference. The traveler's credit card information will be collected at the time the ticket is booked. While Operation Ride Home is structured to help facilitate travel and offset costs as much as possible, it may not cover 100% of travel costs. To ensure optimal benefit of the donated funds, the program follows guidelines established by the ASYMCA and Jack Daniel's.

Can I book my own air travel and be reimbursed?

No, approved applicants will **not** be reimbursed the travel stipend if they book their own travel. All air travel must be booked by the ASYMCA Branch or ASYMCA-approved travel agent. Again, airfare booked outside of this process will not be reimbursed.

What is the travel timeframe?

The dates of allowable travel are November 1, 2024 – January 31, 2025. This allows service members flexibility to travel home based on their approved leave dates.

Are international flights allowed?

Yes, the airfare stipend may be applied to any destination around the globe; however, it does **not** change the maximum \$500 stipend amount. Any additional costs must be paid by the traveler.

If I'm flying and my ticket costs less than the stipend, will I receive the difference in cash?

No. If your ticket(s) is less than the allotted airfare stipend, the traveler with **not** receive the difference. The difference is put back into the program and allows more troops and family members to participate in the program. The ASYMCA or its authorized travel agents will book travel and will look for the most cost-effective flights. Requests for specific airlines/routes may not be able to be accommodated.

Do you provide flights for family members to visit service members?

No. The intent of Operation Ride Home is to send the service members and their immediate family from their duty station to their home destination for the holidays. Travel is **not** provided for family members to visit the service member.

Can I receive travel assistance for vehicle travel?

Yes. One \$125 pre-paid gift card will be provided for the service member, spouse and dependent children ages 0-18 traveling in the vehicle. This amount is meant to help offset the costs of gas, food, and/or hotel accommodations.

I received travel assistance through Operation Ride Home previously, am I eligible again this year?

Yes. Applications are reviewed on an annual basis and prioritized according to need.

Do you provide cash assistance as part of this program?

No, cash is not distributed as part of this program. The ASYMCA books all flights directly to ensure the proper use of donated funds. For those driving, a pre-paid debit card will be provided.

If I am selected to participate, what is required of me?

As part of the application process, a waiver of liability must be signed, and we ask that the applicant write a thank you note to Jack Daniel's for their generous support of the program. We also ask selected applicants to share photos and videos about their experience to demonstrate Operation Ride Home's value to the military community. On social media, please tag #OperationRideHome.

Where do the funds come from that support this program?

Operation Ride Home is funded by the generous contributions of its Presenting Sponsor Jack Daniel's, its distributors, employees, and parent company Brown-Forman, as well as the general public. American Airlines, the official Airline Sponsor, also donates AAdvantage miles in support of the program.

How can the public participate to help send more military families home for the holidays?

Anyone can make monetary donations or donate airline miles at <https://ridehome.asymca.org>.

If I have questions or comments about Operation Ride Home, who should I contact?

Email opridehome@asymca.org or contact your local ASYMCA Branch.