CHAPTER 16

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

16-1. GENERAL.

a. AR 600-85, Chapter 5, prescribes policies and procedures for governing the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

b. Employees with problems (alcohol, drug, emotional, family, financial, etc.) work in all levels in Government. Early symptoms are often disarmingly subtle. The employee who is frequently troubled, or whose behavior or performance fails to meet expectations may have a serious problem. Recognizing that you have such an employee is sometimes difficult. If the employee has the skills and has previously performed well, chances are you have an employee with a problem that may require professional help.

c. Employees with abuse problems should be given the opportunity to recover. If an employee's use of alcohol or drugs causes performance or behavior problems, they may be offered assistance as an alternative to, or concurrent with discipline. If the employee refuses help or otherwise doesn't improve performance or correct improper behavior, established disciplinary procedures will be followed (See Chapter 26 - Discipline). If you believe that an employee's problems involve criminal conduct directed toward or potentially harmful to others, you should contact the Provost Marshal, Management-Employee Relations Division, and/or the Criminal Investigation Division (CID).

d. The EAP functions as a referral service for employees with alcohol and drug abuse problems. It also serves as a screening service for employees whose job performance and/or conduct appear to be affected by other problems, such as abuse, emotional, or financial problems.

16-2. ACTIONS BY THE SUPERVISOR.

a. Be alert, through continuing observation, to changes in the work and/or behavior of assigned employees.

b. Document specific instances in which an employee's performance, behavior, or attendance fails to meet minimum standards, or where the employee's performance appears to be deteriorating.

c. Consult with the EAP Coordinator, or your MER representative regarding questionable employee behavior/ performance, which may indicate substance abuse or other personal problems.

d. Have a face-to-face talk with the employee. Review the nature of the job performance problem and explain that if the problem is not corrected, appropriate action will be taken. The supervisor also informs the employee of available help for any personal problems through the EAP.

e. You may offer to temporarily suspend/hold in abeyance disciplinary/adverse action if the employee agrees to seek assistance. However, the disciplinary/adverse action is only suspended/held in abeyance (not canceled) and if the employee fails to improve, or continue with follow-up treatment, the supervisor can continue the action. The option of suspending a disciplinary/adverse action will only apply to employees, who have an active, signed consent form on file and are progressing with follow-up treatment.

f. If job performance continues to deteriorate or the problem has not been resolved, contact your MER representative.

16-3. REFERRAL PROCEDURES.

a. Supervisor identifies employee with unresolved job performance/conduct problem, believed to be caused by abuse problems.

b. Supervisor contacts the Civilian Program Coordinator (CPC) at the Fort Bragg EAP.

c. Supervisor consults with CPC concerning employee's job performance, problems, attendance, or behavior.

d. An appointment is established for the employee to be referred to the CPC.

e. The supervisor will be advised by the CPC whether the employee kept the appointment and accepted or rejected program enrollment. If enrollment is rejected, the case is returned to the supervisor for appropriate disposition.

f. The CPC must obtain the employee's consent to communicate program progress reports to the supervisor.

g. Job performance and conduct are the only criteria for rehabilitation success. Adverse action may not be initiated based on failure to participate in or complete the rehabilitation program, but can be initiated for failure to properly perform official duties.

16-4. TIPS TO SUPERVISORS.

a. Supervision requires constant observation of employee performance and behavior. When an otherwise capable employee fails to meet performance and/or behavior expectations, they may need help. The first step is to contact the MER Division and EAP to help you and the employee.

(1) This does not commit you to any action. The decision(s) whether to confront an employee, to refer, or to take action against him remain yours.

(2) Be prepared to discuss job performance deficiencies, behavior, and other observations such as deteriorating relationships with others, personality changes, and disregard for accepting work practices.

(3) Asking for assistance is not an admission of failure as a supervisor. On the contrary, it's good management. Look at it this way: Any time you need a specialist; whether it is to program a computer or paint a wall, you get one. Helping a troubled employee is one of those times.

b. After talking with the MER Specialist or EAP you may want to confront the employee. Here are some general guidelines:

(1) Keep a record of work performance - good points as well as weak (you should be doing this for all of your employees, anyway). When you speak with the employee, you cannot operate on the basis that you have a "vague feeling" that his performance is slipping.

(2) Do not put off addressing the problem. Employees have the right to know what you expect. And you have a right to expect that they will do what they were hired to do. The sooner you confront an employee, the sooner he can be helped.

(3) Have an informal talk. Tell the employee what aspects of their performance or behavior are unsatisfactory and use your documentation to back up your statements. Describe, don't evaluate. For example, you might say, "I notice that you have been on sick leave every Monday for seven weeks" rather than,

"you must be drinking a lot on weekends to have a hangover every Monday." Tell the employee that if they have a health or personal problem, you can refer them to someone who may help. If you have any reason to suspect the poor performance or conduct may be related to personal problems, offer the employee assistance through the EAP. Tell the employee that it is their decision to seek assistance, but with or without assistance, there must be improvement or more formal action will be taken. (Document this offer of assistance.)

(4) Be consistent. Once you have confronted an employee, follow through. If you say that additional action will be taken unless there is significant improvement, take it! An employee's commitment to help himself or herself hinges very strongly on your commitment to follow through.

(5) Don't wait for the next crisis - by then you may be too late.

c. Feedback. What kind of feedback can you expect once you've referred an employee for help? Because the confidentiality between the employee and counselor must be maintained, specific details or a definition of the problem may never reach you. That information is confidential in the same way an employee's medical record is confidential; however, with the employee's signed consent, you can generally expect answers to the following questions:

(1) Did the employee keep his appointment with EAP?

(2) Will the employee be referred to a professional?

(3) What can I do to help?

(4) How often will I receive feedback from the EAP?

While feedback you receive from the EAP will give you a general idea of the employee's progress; your best indicator will always be an improvement in performance or conduct. If there is no change, make the decision when to take appropriate disciplinary action with the advice of your MER Specialist. If the employee doesn't give the CPC written consent, the counselor cannot release any information. In that rare event, you must proceed as if the employee has not tried to get help, basing any decision you make solely on job performance and conduct. The decision to take disciplinary action is never easy, but sometimes it is necessary. Sometimes the kindest thing you can do is to pursue disciplinary action when it is appropriate. With some employees, this may be necessary before they fully understand the need to cooperate.

d. If the employee refuses help or if there is no improvement in performance and/or conduct, appropriate adverse action on the unacceptable performance or conduct should be taken. The important point is that by offering the EAP you have met your obligation to both the employee and the agency.

16-5. TRAINING.

The EAP conducts training workshops for supervisors several times each calendar year. These workshops will assist supervisors in understanding the EAP referral process for problem employees. Proficiency in the handling of problem employees is a part of good personnel management. Supervisors are encouraged to attend this training annually. Consultations or additional training may be scheduled by calling the program coordinator directly.