Army Commander's Guide to Family Readiness Group Operations

Preamble: This Commander's Guide has been created to help you, the Commander, and your Family Readiness Group leader understand the legal and ethical considerations of Family Readiness Group (FRG) support and funding. DA PAM 608-47 was withdrawn over one year ago. The rules in many Army and DoD regulations, and our interpretations of those rules, have been modified; therefore, revised guidelines are needed to help you legally and ethically manage an extremely important facet of our expeditionary Army ...the Family Readiness Group.

We expect to receive feedback from the field on this Commander's Guide. After we incorporate your feedback we will start the staffing process to make this informal guide into an Army Regulation. When that happens, many of the words, 'should' and 'may' will change to 'must' and 'will' where appropriate. Where we have "must" and "will" now, we are summarizing other regulatory resources. In the meantime, use this guide to update your Family Readiness Group policy and operating procedures and integrate local policy and regulations, until a new Army Regulation is published. The US Army Community and Family Support Center (USACFSC) point of contact for questions and feedback on this Commander's Guide is Ms. Brenda McDaniel (brenda.mcdaniel1@us.army.mil).

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1-1. Concept and purpose

a. This Commander's Guide provides guidance for commands on Family Readiness Group (FRG) operations within units to enhance FRG activities for the benefit of members of the Total Army Family (TAF). The TAF consists of Soldiers (Active Army, Army National Guard, and US Army Reserve), civilian employees, retirees, and their family members.

b. Family readiness is a critical aspect of Soldier readiness. Family readiness is the mutual reinforcement and support provided by the unit to Soldiers, civilian employees, retirees, and family members – both immediate and extended. Examples include FRGs, telephone trees, virtual FRGs, newsletters, and other volunteer programs and activities. The FRG is formed in accordance with AR 600-20, Army Command Policy and not AR 210-22, Private Organizations. FRGs are not a nonappropriated fund instrumentality (NAFI) (see AR 215-1, Morale Welfare and Recreation and Nonappropriated Fund Instrumentalities).

c. For the purposes of this Commander's Guide, a FRG is a command-sponsored organization of family members, volunteers, Soldiers and civilian employees belonging to a unit, that together provide an avenue of mutual support and assistance, and a network of communications among the family members, the chain of command, chain of concern, and community resources. The FRG also provides feedback to the command on the state of the unit "family." The FRG is a unit Commander's program. Unit Commanders at all levels should establish and support FRGs to assist in military and personal deployment preparedness and enhance the family readiness of their Soldiers and families. Normally, FRGs are established at the Company level with Battalion and Brigade levels playing an important advisory role. FRGs assist the unit Commander in providing family members with the tools necessary to educate, enable, and empower them so that they are self-sufficient. The FRG helps boost the morale of Soldiers and family members. FRG goals include: gaining necessary family support during deployments, preparing for deployments and redeployments, helping families adjust to military life and cope with deployments, developing open and honest channels of communication between the command and family members, and promoting confidence, cohesion, commitment, and a sense of well being among the unit's Soldiers.

d. Relationship between the Rear Detachment Commander (RDC) and the FRG leader. The RDC is the unit Commander's representative at home station while the unit is deployed. The RDC is the FRG leader's link to the deployed unit. All resources support for FRGs (for example, meeting rooms, non-tactical vehicle use, office equipment and computers, newsletters, telephones) would be authorized through the RDC.

e. The Garrison ACS program provides expertise, classes, training, and support to assist unit Commanders in establishing successful FRGs, as provided at AR 608-1, Army Community Services, paragraphs 2-09g, 2-10r, and chapter 4.

f. FRGs should strive to appeal to both Officer and Enlisted Soldiers' families. Commanders should seek FRG leaders who are particularly adept at energizing both Officer and Enlisted Corps' families. FRGs which do not reflect their unit's make-up should be re-evaluated to address any impediments which exist towards creating a balanced and representational FRG. Typical issues could be FRG meeting times, child care needs, and other family support related issues.

1-2. Family Readiness Group Roles and Functions

a. The FRG mission is to—

(1) Foster competent, knowledgeable, and resilient families.

(2) Act as an extension of the unit in providing official, accurate command information.

(3) Provide mutual support.

(4) Build Soldier and family cohesion and foster a positive outlook.

(5) Advocate more efficient use of community resources.
(6) Help families solve problems at the lowest level.
(7) Reduce stress and promote Soldier and family readiness.
(8) Contribute to the well-being and esprit de corps of the unit.

b. The type and scope of activities in which the FRG becomes involved depends on a large number of factors. Some examples are—
(1) The identified needs of unit Soldiers, civilian employees, and their families.
(2) Command interest and emphasis.
(3) The number of FRG volunteers available.
(4) The time, energy, and creativity of volunteers.
(5) The make-up of the FRG, including the percentages of single Soldiers, number of years the Soldier and family served with the military, number of families with young children, and other factors.

c. The FRG is established to provide activities and support that enhance the flow of information, increase the resiliency of unit Soldiers and their families, provide practical tools for adjusting to military deployments and separations, and enhance the well-being and esprit de corps within the unit. The activities emphasized will vary depending on whether the unit is in pre/post deployment, deployed, or in a training/ sustainment period at home station. Since one of the goals of an FRG is to support the military mission through provision of support, outreach, and information to family members, certain FRG activities are essential and common to all groups, and include FRG member meetings, FRG staff and committee meetings, publication and distribution of FRG newsletters, maintenance of virtual FRG websites, maintenance of updated family rosters and family readiness information, and FRG member telephone trees and e-mail distribution lists.

d. Other activities that FRGs commonly sponsor, coordinate, or participate in that directly or indirectly foster unit family readiness goals include and are not limited to—
(1) Deployment and Redeployment briefings.
(2) Classes and workshops (Army Community Service has programs and services that can provide support and subject matter experts to educate family members on a variety of subjects: i.e. military benefits, prenatal care, preparing for deployments, family services, Operation READY training, Army Family Team Building, coping with stress, reunion, homecoming, reintegration, deployment cycle support, etc).
(3) Volunteer recognition.
(4) Unit send-off and welcome home activities
(5) FRG member, staff or committee meetings,
(6) Newcomer orientations,
(7) Official Homecoming events are Garrison funded, and should not be funded with monies designated for FRGs.

e. FRGs are an official program of the Department of the Army, subject to the Joint Ethics Regulation (DoD 5500.7-R) and all other applicable regulatory restraints on official activities, use of appropriated funds, and fundraising.

f. FRG social activities: FRG social activities can enhance family and soldier camaraderie, provide stress relief, and reduce family loneliness during deployments. Social activities are not funded using appropriated funds. FRG members may use their informal funds to pay for social activities, as outlined in paragraph 2-2.

2-1. Authorized Support

As an official program of the Department of the Army, FRG mission activities must be supported using appropriated funds (APF) to the same extent as any other Commander's program. The FRG is not a Morale Welfare and Recreation activity. FRG activities authorized APFs may not be supported with non-appropriated funds. See FAQs, Appendix B, for examples of authorized and non-authorized support.

a. *Government Office Space and Equipment.* Support is authorized in the same manner as for any command sponsored activity.

b. *Volunteers.* FRGs may be staffed with volunteers, as provided in chapter 5, AR 608-1, Army Community Service (ACS), and in accordance with 10 U.S.C. § 1588. These "statutory" volunteers may provide services to the Army, including family support programs, child development and youth services programs.

(1) FRG volunteers must register with the local ACS, Family Programs Office, or Army Volunteer Corps Coordinator. They must be supervised, should have a position description, and they must follow all other legal and regulatory requirements.

(2) FRG volunteer expenses may be paid using the unit's appropriated funds. Reimbursable expenses are described in chapter 5, AR 608-1, Army Community Services.

(3) Registered statutory FRG volunteers are authorized to use government facilities to include dedicated office and meeting spaces; telephone, computer, e-mail, and copying equipment; administrative supplies, administrative and logistical support, and additional equipment needed to accomplish their assigned duties. Long distance telephone calling cards may be authorized by the Commander and distributed to FRG personnel for official calls only. A calling card should remain the property of the government and may be recalled at any time. Government computer use, including email, is authorized only for official FRG business.

c. *Family Readiness Group Deployment/Support Assistants.* FRG Support Assistants provide unit FRG support services generally at the Corps, Division,

and Brigade levels. These services are provided by contracted or Department of the Army Civilian (DAC) personnel assigned to units with a high number of deployments. The services provided are critical to support the mobilization and demobilization requirements for units deployed to Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and assist Rear Detachment Commanders (RDC) and FRG leaders to maintain stability on the home front. The FRG Support Assistants facilitate/coordinate training through local community resources and provide administrative collaboration of the operational roles of the RDC and the volunteer FRG leader. The FRG Support Assistants should not duplicate services nor overlap with existing resources in the military community. These paid support personnel work for the unit Commander and should not impinge on the role and responsibilities of the volunteer FRG leader. The unit Commander should have day-to-day operational direction of the activities of these individuals within the scope of their contract or position description. The types of activities that are outside the scope of their responsibilities include direct involvement in FRG fund-raising activities, involvement with casualty assistance procedures, suicide prevention activities, etc. If a Commander has questions about the tasks and duties of these positions, they should contact their higher headquarters FRG Support Assistant coordinator or site manager for clarification.

d. *FRG Newsletters.* Government paper and printing supplies are authorized for use to publish FRG newsletters to relay information from the command. Commanders decide how frequently newsletters should be published. Each unit should have a Memorandum of Instruction (MOI) or Standing Operating Procedure (SOP) on the preparation, printing, and distribution of FRG newsletters. FRG newsletters may be distributed by the Army or Installation Post Office or via email to unit members.

e. *Army and Installation Post Offices and Official Mail.* FRGs are authorized to use official mail, for official, mission-related purposes and as approved by the unit Commander. Official mail cannot be used to support private organization activities, internal fund-raisers, or commercial ventures. Guidelines for defining official information are provided below. Postal Regulations limit how much unofficial information may be included in an FRG newsletter. So long as the inclusion of some unofficial information does not increase the cost to the Government in printing and mailing the FRG newsletter, some unofficial information may be included in an official FRG newsletter. The FRG newsletter must state whether it contains only official information, or both official and unofficial types of information. If the newsletter contains both types of information, it should include the following statement: "The inclusion of some unofficial information in this FRG newsletter has not increased the costs to the Government, in accordance with DoD 4525.8-M, Official Mail Management Manual."

f. *Government Vehicles.* Government vehicles may be used in support of official FRG activities, including the transportation of FRG members for FRG mission related activities. Further, statutory FRG volunteers may operate government owned or leased non-tactical vehicles under 10,000 pounds in accordance with AR 58-1, Management, Acquisition, and Use of Administrative Vehicles and AR 600-55, Motor Vehicle Driver and Equipment Operator Selection, Training, Testing and Licensing, to support official FRG activities. Official FRG activities include FRG meetings,.FRG staff and committee meetings, newcomer orientations, deployment and redeployment briefings, relocation briefings, military benefits and support training, deployment planning workshops or other events approved by the Commander that support the FRG mission. Should a vehicular accident occur while an FRG volunteer is operating a government vehicle, it must be reported in accordance with AR 385-40, Accident Reporting, whenever property is damaged, lost or destroyed; injury or death results to anyone, including a volunteer, or when a claim is made. Government vehicles may be used to support official FRG activities when the following exist—

(1) The appropriate Commander determines that the use of the vehicle is for official purposes, and that failure to provide such support would have an adverse effect on the FRG mission.

(2) The driver has a valid and current license to operate the vehicle.

(3) The use of the vehicle can be provided without detriment to the accomplishment of the unit's mission.

g. *FRG Volunteer Support, Appropriated (APF) Funds.* APFs can be used to support FRG volunteers and activities, depending on command approval and funding availability. APFs for volunteer support may be used for:

(1) *Training and travel expenses.* Commanders may, at their discretion, authorize APFs to pay for travel and training of official statutory volunteers, who must be registered with the local ACS, Family Programs Office, or Army Volunteer Corps Coordinator. Since FRG volunteers are subordinate to the unit Commander, unit Commanders should not make decisions regarding travel, or the reimbursement of volunteer incidental expenses, for their immediate family members who volunteer within their own unit. Those decisions should be forwarded to the next person within the Commander's chain of command for determination. This is to avoid possible violation of the DoD 5500.7-R, Joint Ethics Regulation (JER) conflict of interest provisions. Commanders should seek guidance regarding specific ethics issues from their Garrison ethics advisor. Authorized FRG volunteer travel can include FRG leader visits to geographically disbursed members of the FRG where unit Commander approved and directly in support of the FRG mission. Training may be authorized to improve FRG volunteers effectiveness in their assigned roles or enable them to accept increasingly responsible challenges. If the FRG would benefit from the volunteer attending training, APFs can be used to cover enrollment, expenses, travel, and per diem. Invitational travel orders are authorized, pursuant to the Joint Travel

Regulation, Appendix E, Part I, paragraph A, and the Secretary Army Travel Policy. Advance travel and transportation allowances are governed by AR 37-106, Finance and Accounting for Installations – Travel and Transportation Allowances. Funding depends on command approval and availability of funds.

(2) *Reimbursement of incidental expenses.* APFs are authorized for reimbursement of official volunteer incidental expenses for FRG volunteers only as authorized by 10 U.S.C. § 1588, and with the prior approval of the responsible Commander. Commanders should directly address FRG volunteer expectations regarding the reimbursement of incidental expenses. When Commanders have determined that funds are available, volunteers can be provided reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses such as child care, telephone bills, mileage, and other expenses incurred while supporting the FRG's official mission, in accordance with chapter 5, AR 608-1, Army Community Services. Commanders and FRG leaders should inform FRG volunteers that reimbursement is limited. Commanders are encouraged to estimate their requirements for volunteer expenses and include them in their annual APF budget request. An SOP or MOI should outline specific authorized expenses and fund availability, and should be publicized in the unit.

(3) *Awards, banquets, and mementos.* APFs are not authorized or available for volunteer awards other than official certificates of recognition or volunteer incentive awards in accordance with AR 672-20, Incentive Awards. NAFs are authorized for volunteer recognition programs. They can be used for awards, banquets, and to purchase mementos, if budgeted for and approved by the Garrison Commander or Reserve Component (RC) fund custodian consistent with AR 215-1. Commanders are encouraged to estimate their requirements for volunteer recognition programs in their annual NAF budget requests.

h. FRGs whose Armed Forces members are assigned to duty or ordered to active duty in conjunction with a contingency operation are authorized appropriated funds to provide for needed family support including child care, education, and other youth services. See 10 U.S.C. § 1788(b).

2-2. Family Readiness Group Informal Funds

Commanders may authorize FRGs to maintain informal funds in accordance with AR 600-20, Army Command Policy. Informal funds use is limited to expenses consistent with the purpose and function of the fund. Operation of the fund will be consistent with Army Values and DoD 5500.7-R, Joint Ethics Regulation (JER), and AR 600-20, Command Policy. FRGs may only conduct internal fund-raising amongst their own members, in compliance with AR 600-29, Fundraising within the Department of Army, paragraph 1-5, and DoD 5500.7-R, Joint Ethics Regulation.

a. *Examples of authorized use of informal funds:*

(1) FRG newsletters that contain predominately unofficial information.

(2) Purely social activities

(3) Holiday parties.
(4) FRG parties or outings.
(5) Volunteer recognition.
(6) Supplemental unit send-off and welcome home activities.
(7) Other purely social activities, such as baby showers, birthday parties, pizza parties, and potlucks.

b. *Examples of unauthorized use of FRG informal funds:*
(1) FRG informal funds should not augment other unit informal funds such as the unit's "cup and flower" funds
(2) FRG informal funds should not be used to purchase items or services which may be paid for using APFs.
(3) FRG informal funds should not be used to purchase traditional military gifts, such as Soldier farewell gifts, which are not related to family readiness.

c. *Fund Custodian.* The unit Commander should sign a letter designating the fund custodian and an alternate. The fund custodian (treasurer) or alternate are responsible for informal fund custody, accounting, and documentation.
(1) The FRG informal fund custodian and alternate are liable for any loss or misuse of funds.
(2) After designation of the informal fund custodian, the custodian can establish a bank account under the FRG's name (never the individual's name). The Commander authorizes opening of the account and prepares a letter naming the persons authorized to sign checks drawn on the account. The Commander or a deployable Soldier should not be signatories on the account.
(3) The informal fund custodian should provide reports to the unit Commander at least monthly or more frequently, as requested. Reports should also be provided upon change of command, upon change of custodians, and whenever there is a suspicion of irregularity. FRG informal funds books need not be kept in accordance with formal accounting procedures. They may be maintained like a personal check register. Likewise, reports to the Commander are not a formal audit, but should summarize the informal fund's financial status to include current balance, total amount earned, and how informal funds were spent.
(4) FRG informal funds cannot be deposited or mixed with personal or unit funds. FRG informal funds should not be invested in interest or dividend bearing accounts, to avoid potential tax liabilities to the FRG informal fund.
(5) For additional protection of FRG informal funds, Commanders may consider requiring the FRG fund to be bonded in accordance with the procedures of AR 210-22, Private Organizations on Army Installations, paragraph 3-2 b, Fidelity Bonding.

d. *FRG SOP.* FRGs with an informal fund must have an organizing SOP that provides the following minimal information: the FRG name, a description of the FRG's purpose and functions, and a summary of its routine activities. The

following statement must be included in the FRG Informal Fund SOP: "this FRG informal fund is for the benefit of its members only. It is not a business and is not being run to generate any profits."

e. *Fund Cap*. The FRG informal fund should be maintained for specific planned purposes and all acquired funds should be earmarked accordingly in the FRG informal fund ledger. Although there is no fund cap for informal funds maintained IAW AR 600-20, it is recommended that FRG informal funds be capped at $5,000 average balance per year, to avoid Federal income tax liability. Should FRG funds exceed this cap, a plan should be instituted to reduce those funds to appropriate levels to insure that the average FRG informal fund value remains below $5,000 per year, to avoid Internal Revenue Service Code tax liabilities. FRGs are not equipped to handle the complex tax ramifications and stringent accounting requirements that can result from excessive informal funds.

(1) Informal funds should only be collected for a specific goal, event, or activity. For example, if an FRG is planning a Holiday Ball, the FRG must be able to state the planned use of the informal funds, i.e., total cost is $3,000 (dinner, $2,100; hall rental $250; and band $650). Any disbursements of the informal funds that are made should be for those purposes and should be for the benefit of the FRG members as a whole.

(2) The FRG should ensure that general sub-accounts, such as "general morale," are carefully monitored to insure that the entire FRG membership has an opportunity to benefit. A sub-account could cover modest expenditures such as new baby welcome gifts, refreshments for meetings, new FRG member welcome gifts, and volunteer farewell gifts, etc. While these expenditures might not directly benefit each and every member, all members could have an opportunity to benefit.

(3) The requirements of Status of Forces Agreements (SOFA) may make a lower fund cap necessary for some FRGs' informal funds located OCONUS. Commanders and fund custodians in overseas locations should consult their Staff Judge Advocate to ensure that FRG informal funds comply with the SOFA and any local policy or rules regarding informal funds.

2-3. Family Readiness Group External Fund-Raising

FRGs are not established for the purpose of being a fund-raising organization. FRGs may not engage in fundraising activities beyond what was described above at paragraph 2-2, Informal Funds. The FRG has no authority to engage in external fundraising on or off post.

2-4. Solicitations and Donations

FRGs may not solicit donations or gifts. See DoD 5500.7-R, Joint Ethics Regulations (JER).

a. Garrison Commanders are authorized by AR 608-1, Army Community Services, paragraph 3-2a, to accept unsolicited gifts or donations made to ACS for FRGs provided support by their Garrison's ACS program. See AR 215-1,

Morale Welfare and Recreation and Nonappropriated Fund Instrumentalities, paragraph 7-39 for further instructions regarding the acceptance authority for gifts into non-appropriated fund accounts. Donations to ACS meant for FRG support will be deposited in the Garrison Army Community Services (ACS) supplemental mission fund, pursuant to AR 608-1, Army Community Services, paragraph 3–2. ACS donations intended for FRG use will be assigned a different sub-account code, to distinguish them from more generalized ACS donations.

b. Supplemental mission monies are non-appropriated fund monies. They may be used only to provide quality of life services as adjuncts to the FRG mission activity, consistent with DOD Instruction, 1015.15, Procedures for Establishment, Management, and Control of Nonappropriated Fund Instrumentalities and Financial Management of Supporting Resources, Enclosure 5 paragraph E5.2.1.1. The Garrison's Director of Morale, Welfare, and Recreation can assist unit Commanders with the proper use of supplemental mission program funds. Donations accepted into the Garrison's ACS supplemental mission program sub-account for FRGs may only be used for FRG activities not authorized to be paid for by APFs. Supplemental mission program funds may only be used for the Garrison FRGs which receive support from the Garrison ACS which accepted the donation/gift into their supplemental mission sub-account, and as consistent with AR 215-1, paragraph 4-9 and 4-12. Therefore, all FRGs which receive support from the ACS Garrison accepting the donation/gift must share in the use of that donation/gift. See FAQs, Appendix B, for examples of proper FRG use of supplemental mission donations/gifts.

c. Commanders and FRG leaders must be careful to avoid implying that the Army officially endorses any person or private organization who has offered a gift. The FRG must not imply that donations are tax deductible. Businesses may be encouraged to speak with their tax adviser regarding business tax deductions.

d. FRGs who are offered large donations should also consider referring the prospective donor to other government or private organizations such as Army Emergency Relief, American Red Cross, United Service Organization, local tax qualified charities, foundations, fraternal or service organizations, or to the installation Garrison Commander to make a gift to the Army or MWR programs in accordance with AR 1-100, Gifts and Donations, AR 1-101, Gifts for Distribution to Individuals, or AR 215-1, Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Activities and Non-appropriated Fund Instrumentalities.

e. The local Staff Judge Advocate should provide guidance to the Commander when FRGs are offered unsolicited donations. For further regulatory instruction regarding gifts offered to the Army or to individuals, see AR 1-100, Gifts and Donations, and AR 1-101, Gifts for Distribution to Individuals.

f. Private Organizations. If individuals form Private Organizations (POs) which support shared family readiness goals and objectives, it is essential that the unit Commander treat these POs in the same manner that all similarly situated POs are normally treated by the Command. Unit Commanders must treat POs consistent with the requirements of the DoD 5500.7-R, Joint Ethics Regulations (JER); AR 600-29, Fundraising within the Department of the Army; and AR 210-22, Private Organizations. To prevent potential conflicts of interest, if such POs are established, managers or Board members of the PO should not also be placed in the FRG leader's position. Garrison ethics advisors can provide unit Commanders with additional guidance. See FAQs, Appendix B, for examples of issues between FRGs and private organizations.

2-5. Commercial Sponsorship.
FRGs may not enter into commercial sponsorship agreements. Commercial sponsorship is an agreed upon arrangement under which a business provides assistance, funding, goods, equipment, or services in exchange for public recognition or other promotional opportunities on the installation. In accordance with DoDI 1015.10, Programs for Military Morale, Welfare, and Recreation, and AR 215-1, commercial sponsorship is generally only authorized for official MWR programs and events.

3-1. Official Information
Official FRG information relates to command and mission essential information that the Commander believes families should have to be better informed. Official information relates to unit mission and readiness. It includes training schedule information, upcoming deployments, unit points of contact and the chain of concern. Additional examples of official information include personal information such as phone numbers, addresses, accomplishments by Soldiers or family members, birth or adoption announcements, FRG member job changes, promotions, and receipt of awards, etc. Official information is subject to all applicable regulations governing its use and to the Privacy Act and AR 25-55, Army Privacy Program (5 U.S.C. § 552 (b)).

Appendix A. References

AR 1-100, Gifts and Donations
AR 1-101, Gifts to Individuals
AR 25-30, The Army Integrated Publishing and Printing Program
AR 25-55, Army Privacy Program
AR 37-106, Finance and Accounting for Installations-Travel and Transportation Allowances
AR 58-1, Management, Acquisition, and Use of Motor Vehicles
AR 210-22, Private Organizations
AR 215-1, Morale Welfare and Recreation and Nonappropriated Fund Instrumentalities
AR 385-40, Accident Reporting
AR 608-1, Army Community Service
AR 600-20, Army Command Policy
AR 600-29, Fundraising within the Department of Army
AR 600-55, The Army Driver and Operator Standardization Program (Selection, Training, Testing and Licensing)
AR 672-20, Incentive Awards
Joint Travel Regulation, Appendix E, Part I, paragraph A,
NGR 600-12, The National Guard Family Program
The Secretary of Army Travel Policy
USARC Regulation 608-1, Family Readiness Handbook
5 CFR § 2635.101(b), Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch
DoD 4525.8-M: DoD Official Mail Management
DoD 5500.7-R Joint Ethics Regulation
DoDD 1342.17, Family Policy
DoDI 1342.22, Family Centers
DoDI 1015.10, Programs for Military Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR)
DOD Instruction, 1015.15, Procedures for Establishment, Management, and Control of Nonappropriated Fund Instrumentalities and Financial Management of Supporting Resources, Enclosure 5
DoDI 1100.21, Voluntary Services in the Department of Defense
Operation READY Army Leaders' Desk Reference for Soldier/Family Readiness
5 U.S.C. § 552(b) the Privacy Act
10 U.S.C. § 1588, Authority to Accept Certain Voluntary Services
10 U.S.C. § 1788(b), Family Support for Children of Armed Forces Members Assigned to Support Contingency Operations
26 U.S.C. § 501c(19) Exemption from Tax for Nonprofit Armed Forces Organizations

Appendix B. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

FAQ1. FRG leader would like to hold an FRG meeting and luncheon. The meeting agenda includes discussing upcoming training exercises, introducing new members, reviewing ACS classes for FRG members, and planning for a unit car wash. What actions are authorized, and what funds can be used?

FAQ1, Answer: APFs may be used to support the meeting, provide equipment, and print newsletters and materials necessary towards carrying out the meeting activities. All refreshment or luncheon costs may be paid using the FRG's informal fund or their private money. APF monies cannot generally be used for food or refreshments. Holding a "unit car wash" is external fundraising, and is not authorized. Limited internal fundraising among FRG members consistent with AR 600-29 and the JER may be authorized pending Garrison ethics advisor review. If internal fundraising is approved by the unit Commander with ethics advisor guidance, those monies may be kept in the FRG's informal fund, IAW AR 600-20.

FAQ2. Unit Commander wants to organize an FRG picnic, provide transportation, buy welcoming gifts to new FRG members, and pay for pony rides. What APF support is authorized?

FAQ2, Answer: None. APFs may not be used for this purely social activity. If the FRG has informal funds, they may be used. The use of government vehicles to support the picnic is also not authorized, since the FRG activity is purely social. However, see FAQ6 for authorized use of supplemental mission funds.

FAQ3. Unit Commander would like to send the FRG leader, who is a statutory volunteer, to family support training. What funds are authorized?

FAQ3, Answer: Statutory volunteers may be sent on Invitational Travel Orders to training, as provided in AR 608-1, 10 U.S.C. §1588, and the Joint Travel Regulation, Appendix E, Part I, paragraph A, and the Secretary Army Travel Policy. If the FRG leader is the unit Commander's family member, the unit Commander should send the request to authorize travel to the next higher level person in the unit Commander's chain of command, to avoid potential violation of the JER, conflict of interest provisions.

FAQ4. Unit Commander has established a monthly FRG meeting, and would like to offer free child care services and refreshments regularly.

FAQ4, Answer: The Commander can use APFs to pay for child care for the following FRG members: FRG members who are statutory volunteers may be re-imbursed for incidental expenses, including child care, pursuant to AR 608-1

and 10 U.S.C. §1588. Families of Armed Forces members supporting contingency operations, may be provided child care, pursuant to 10. U.S.C. § 1788(b). APF may not generally be used for refreshments. FRG members may use their own monies, bring a potluck, or use FRG informal funds for refreshments.

FAQ5. Unit Commander stationed at Garrison "X" receives an offer from a local business, to make a $20,000 donation to support "local Army families". May the Unit Commander accept the donation?

FAQ5, Answer: The unit Commander should inform the Garrison "X" Commander of the donation offer. The Garrison Commander may accept a conditional donation meant for family support, into the Garrison ACS supplemental mission program, as provided at AR 215-1, paragraph 7-39 and AR 608-1, paragraph 3-2. Such donations should be accounted for using a department code/sub-account, so that ACS supplemental mission donations are separately accounted for from FRG intended gifts/donations. The Garrison Commander should request the installation Judge Advocate's office review the gift offer prior to acceptance.

FAQ6. Several FRGs which receive support from the Garrison "X" ACS, have heard about the donation. The FRGs request permission to provide transportation and tickets to a festival or amusement park. May they do so?

FAQ6, Answer. Yes, the supplemental mission donation may be used to fund this activity, provided that all FRGs who are supported by the ACS Garrison which accepted the donation can participate. The proposed use would provide quality of life services as adjuncts to the FRG mission, consistent with DOD Instruction, 1015.15, paragraph E5.2.1.1, and AR 215-1, paragraph 4-9 and 4-12.

FAQ7. An FRG leader establishes a registered non-profit private organization. The FRG leader requests permission to continue serving as the FRG leader in a statutory volunteer capacity. What should the unit Commander do?

FAQ7, Answer. The unit Commander should coordinate a response with the servicing ethics advisor for their Garrison. The Commander must request the FRG leader choose either to manage the non-profit, or serve as the FRG leader. Serving in both capacities could lead to a conflict of interest. Should the FRG leader decide to continue managing the non-profit private organization, he or she can still participate as an FRG member and volunteer, but not as the FRG leader. The Garrison Commander should seek ethics advisor guidance regarding the limits of providing support to private organizations, particularly those that seek permission to fundraise. See AR 210-22, JER, and AR 600-29. Government officials cannot provide one non-profit organization with support beyond that which they normally provide similar types of non-profits.