

## INFORMATION PAPER

SUBJECT: Family Readiness Groups (FRGs) Legal Status

15 September 2006

1. Purpose. To provide information on a Department of the Army regulatory change regarding Family Readiness Group (FRG) status and operations.

2. Status.

a. In accordance with AR 608-1, Appendix J, Family Readiness Groups (FRGs) are now official "commander's programs" of the Department of the Army. An "Army Guide to Family Readiness Operations" with frequently asked questions dated 25 June 2006 provides additional useful information.

b. FRG official activities will be supported using only appropriated funds (APFs) and government resources in order to disseminate command information and ensure personal and family readiness. For example, commanders can use APFs and provide logistical support for activities such as mailing official bulletins, emailing official information, and funding TDY travel. However, commanders cannot use APFs and must obtain an ethics opinion before providing logistical support for unofficial activities such as fundraising, family events, social activities, or gifts.

c. Commanders can accept voluntary services, through the installation volunteer coordinator, from individuals to be FRG leaders. Commanders can use APFs to reimburse volunteers for certain incidental expenses pursuant to 10 U.S.C. § 1588(e) and AR 608-1, but cannot be the approval authority for any payment/benefits to their own spouses.

3. Fund-raising.

a. The Joint Ethics Regulation (DoD 5500.7-R) applies to FRG members, including the volunteers. As a result, FRGs cannot solicit gifts or conduct external fundraising.

b. FRGs may conduct internal fundraising, similar to an office cup and flower fund, but must comply with AR 600-29, para. 1-5 and AR 600-20, para. 4-21. FRGs can only fundraise among their own members. DA has interpreted this to include the installation population if the FRG can show that that population benefits from the FRG. In addition, any fundraising conducted outside of the commander's immediate area must be coordinated with the commander who controls the space where the fundraising occurs. For example, bake sales at the PX or Commissary must be coordinated with the Garrison Commander. The FRG informal fund may be used only for the benefit of FRG members. The unit (typically at company or battalion level) will develop an SOP to govern the informal fund. Annual gross receipts will not exceed \$5000 per year.

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4. Expenditures. AR 608-1, Appendix J contains detailed information on expenditures.

a. Commanders can now use APFs and provide logistical support such as procuring a suitable meeting room, reimbursing volunteers for training and travel, FRG member TDY, copying, information technology, logistical support, administrative supplies, newsletters, and mail.

b. Commanders cannot use APFs to pay for social activities, food, mail that includes fundraising appeals or contains unofficial matters that increase the cost of the mailing, volunteer awards, holiday parties, and outings. Informal funds may be used to pay for these expenses.

5. Relationships with Private Organizations (PO).

a. There is no legal objection to establishing POs that share the goals and objectives of FRGs. Unlike FRGs, these POs can conduct external fundraising and can solicit for gifts/donations in accordance with AR 210-22.

b. To prevent potential conflicts of interest, unit or FRG leaders cannot also be leaders of the related PO. Nor can their spouses. Government personnel can join the PO in their private capacity, but must disqualify themselves from taking any official action concerning the PO.

6. Contact the Ft. Knox Office of the Staff Judge Advocate, Administrative Law Division, (502) 624-7414 if you have any legal or ethics questions.