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Ethical Enforcement of the Family Care Plan Policy

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Class # 58

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3 January 2008

Abstract

Regardless to Army Regulation 600-20 paragraph 5.5 defining and giving guidance concerning Family Care Plans for all service members, officers and enlisted, senior Army leaders continue to make decisions that contradict the regulation. Most enlisted Soldiers who can not provide a family care plan for their dependent children are chaptered out of the Army while officers are neither flagged nor chaptered; they seem to operate under their own set of rules. Contradictions such as these create confusion, a sense of unfairness, and a perception that commanders only apply the regulation when it comes to the enlisted Soldiers.

Ethical Enforcement of the Family Care Plan Policy

Ethics are morals and principles that guide a person to do the right thing. Making an ethical decision is simply taking a look at any given situation or dilemma, determining that there is a problem that needs to be resolved, and making the right decisions. You must ask yourself, what is the right thing to do when you are faced with an ethical dilemma? Each one of us is different, and come from many diverse back grounds. We all handle situations differently. Many of us learned about ethics long before we entered the military. As for me, the foundations of my ethics, morals and values started at home with my parents. I was raised with strong religious belief, faith in God and treating all people as you wish to be treated. Leaders with good ethics do the right thing, even when no one is watching. I love my family and I am certain that most people feel the same about theirs. It is very important that I teach my kids about ethics, values and morals. I want them to be able to look back after graduating from high school and college and remember that their father was a role model with good ethical behavior. I want my kids and my Soldiers to know the difference between right and wrong. Doing the right thing is not always easy, but after doing it you have an overwhelming feeling of peace, accomplishment and pride just knowing that your integrity is not in question and you have lived up to the standards of conduct that you have demanded your Soldiers follow. Good leaders must be able to apply good ethical reasoning in any given situation.

The military fine tuned my beliefs and thoughts concerning ethics. I consider myself to be someone who has always been a team player, willing to do my fair share of the work load or detail in order to accomplish the mission. I realize more now than before that it takes the entire team to accomplish any given mission. There is not one member of any unit or organization that

is more important than the next. If we are going to be successful as leaders we have an obligation to ensure that our Soldier's can trust us and that our ethics as leaders are not questionable. As our young Soldiers, junior noncommissioned officers and senior leaders continue to develop you must ask yourself these question: Did I do the right thing, did I set the right example, did I give this Soldier the tools he needs to be successful in his or her career and did I do what is ethically and morally right? As for me I know the answer to these questions is yes.

All senior leaders are human beings and sometimes forget that we are promoted to positions of leadership and it requires us to take charge. We should realize that we are people first and leaders second. How many times have you seen individuals who have been promoted to the most senior ranks who have forgotten where they came from and what it took to get where they are? As leaders we remember that we are always operating under a spot light, on duty and off. We need to realize that our Soldiers are watching our every move. It is imperative that we set the right example for our Soldiers to emulate. Senior leaders have an obligation to the nation and every young man or woman who has decided to join our ranks, especially in times of war.

Most views pertaining to ethical behavior in the ranks has not changed over the years. Violations by senior NCOs have been in the news on several occasions. These violations have brought negative attention to the military and at the same time showed everyone, officers and enlisted Soldiers alike, that unethical behavior will not be tolerated.

Everyone is faced with an ethical dilemma in their careers and no two situations are exactly the same. In my opinion the differences in how AR 600-20 paragraph 5.5 and local policies that are put in place by either the battalion or brigade commander are enforced in regards to family care plans for officers and enlisted Soldiers is definitely unfair and unethical. This is an actual situation that happened during my tenure as a first sergeant. The company commander is

responsible for counseling every Soldier in the command to ensure they had or could provide adequate care for their dependant children in the case they are called on to defend freedom. The commander sets the appropriate date and time that he wishes to see each Soldiers individually so he can counsel the Soldier concerning the need for a family care plan and also to answer any questions that the Soldier may have concerning the family care plan process. During the counseling sessions the Soldiers were notified that they have thirty days from the date of the counseling session to complete their individual family care plan packet and then return it to the commander. For some Soldiers this process does not take the entire thirty days and Soldiers can turn the packet in as soon as he or she has completed everything that's required. If the Soldiers failed to provide the necessary documentation by the end of the thirty days, the commander has the authority to extend the time to allow the Soldiers additional time to find adequate care for their dependent children. After the allotted time had expired and it was clear to the company commander the enlisted Soldier either failed to provide the family care plan or has demonstrated to the company commander the he or she has no intentions to produce one for his or her dependent children, he or she was likely to be chaptered out of the Army IAW the army regulation. An officer faced with the same situation was treated totally different. He or she was not flagged or chaptered out of the Army. The company commander having already chaptered at least three enlisted Soldiers out of the army for not providing a family care plan was faced with an ethical dilemma. When I brought this situation up to the commander he was at a lost for a word because he knew that treating an officer differently than he did the enlisted Soldiers was completely unfair. The company commander did the smart thing and asks for guidance from the battalion

commander in reference to this situation concerning one of his officers. The battalion commander, after telling the company commander to give him a few days that turned into a few weeks told the company commander that his decision was not to flag or chapter the officer out of the Army. Most officers who could not provide a family care plan were simply moved from their position or unit. They did not deploy with their units and often left an unexpected shortage in a deploying unit to be filled. For this reason some unlucky officer is taken out of his or her unit or position at the last minute to fill this shortage. This is truly a disadvantage for the officer that was selected to deploy. In most cases the officer had just returned from a year long deployment and was faced with leaving his family for the second or third time. The officer that could not get the family care plan is now a part of the rear detachment. This officer who has already created a dilemma is still working within the battalion and you still have to see them on a daily basis. As senior leaders it is very hard to explain to our young enlisted Soldiers why it seems like officer's fall under a different set of rules. You know that the battalion commander has created a double standard within the battalion but it is still your duty and obligation to support the decisions officers. The only thing you can do basically is to tell those noncommissioned officers and Soldiers that this situation is out of your control, the decision was made at another level and that they need to stay focused on the mission and not on what officer's are doing.

As the Army goes through a massive transformation, we must continue to set the standards of conduct for our Soldiers. Our ethical conduct will be adopted by our Soldiers who are the future leaders of the Army. The decision to do the right thing is an individual choice. Since we know that our young Soldiers are watching our every move, absorbing what we've done right and what done wrong should make the decision very simple for you. Soldiers are now

and will always be our most precious asset and we owe them the very best leadership that we can provide every day and in every situation. Ethical leaders always do the right thing one hundred percent of the time, it does not matter where they are or what the situation may be. It is imperative that we start teaching our young Soldiers ethics from the first moment they are in our presence.

REFERENCE

AR 600-20, paragraph 5.5. (April 2006).

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