

Employee Relations

[printable version]

Lesson Content

Basics of Employee Relations

Click the "X" in the upper right corner to close this page.

Basics of Employee Relations

Overview

Employees face a host of problems in their daily lives. Although these problems range from small to large, their overall impact in the workplace is costly. Statistic after statistic tells us about the rising cost of health care, work lost from absent or unproductive employees, and the cost of turnover and poor morale. Studies also show that about one-third of all terminations are related to employees' personal problems. Fortunately, supervisors do not have to confront these difficulties alone. In this training module, we will review your responsibilities and the resources available to help you deal with employee relations issues. It is management's rights to make certain business decisions needed to execute its mission.

Leave Administration (Sick, Annual, and other Absences)

It is DLA's policy that all Agency personnel must ensure that absence and leave programs are administered in a way that balances the demands of the workplace with the needs of the family. Supervisors must establish and maintain effective leave policies and procedures in their organizations in accordance with federal laws and regulations, OPM guidance, and national and local negotiated bargaining agreements. Supervisors are responsible for understanding, explaining, and implementing leave requesting procedures.

Employee Relations

[printable version]

Lesson Content

Basics of Employee Relations

They are also responsible for ensuring employee job presence at the worksite to support DLA's mission.



The DLA Instruction on Leave (DLAD 5025.30) describes the various types of both paid and unpaid leave. The minimum leave chargeable amount of time (excluding AWOL and military leave) is 15 minutes.

Sick leave requests from employees for an unanticipated health conditions/problems should be requested as soon as possible within parameters outlined in bargaining agreements (e.g., within 2 hours from the start of the employees' shift) and DLA policy. Supervisors should consult with their servicing Employee Relations Specialist if they suspect an employee may be abusing the sick leave privilege.

Annual leave requests, except in cases of emergency, should be requested in writing and approved in advance. Supervisors have the discretion to approve or disapprove annual leave requests for mission and workload reasons (consult your bargaining agreements for more details), regardless of an employee's leave balance.

Court leave (paid time off without charge to leave) may be granted to employees for service as a juror or as a witness in judicial proceedings at the Federal, State or local level. Civil proceedings such as divorce hearings, child support, and wage garnishment are individual matters not involving government entities—the use of annual leave is appropriate in these cases.

Employee Relations

[printable version]

Lesson Content

Basics of Employee Relations

Excused absence (or administrative leave) authority is granted to the head of field level activities. Who may delegate limited amounts of excused absence authority to supervisors. Employees are not entitled to excused absence, but in some cases management may deem it appropriate (blood donation, selective service registration, voting/voter registration, agency sponsored events, etc.).

Leave Without Pay (LWOP) may be granted to employees upon request. However, LWOP is a privilege, not a right, and should only be granted when such a request is in best interest of the agency as well as the employee. Initial requests should not exceed 12 months, although most requests are of much shorter duration, perhaps only a few hours in some cases. Supervisors should confirm approving levels for granting LWOP requests in their organizations.

Absence Without Leave (AWOL), like LWOP, is an unpaid leave category. However, unlike LWOP which may be granted, it is a disapproved leave category. AWOL charges should ordinarily lead to a management investigation of the individual facts and circumstances, and may ultimately result in some type of proposed disciplinary action. Supervisors are urged to consult with their servicing Employee Relations Specialist as soon as possible in such circumstances.

Workplace Violence

Workplace Violence (and violence prevention) is one of the most serious matters facing supervisors. While supervisors are not expected to act heroically at the workplace and risk harm, they are expected to be vigilant when it comes this important issue.



Speak with your servicing Employee Relations Specialist about obtaining the agency's policy/guidance on preventing workplace in the

Employee Relations

[printable version]

Lesson Content

Basics of Employee Relations

violence policy, and the procedures for reporting such incidents when they do occur. Supervisors must take an active role in informing employees about preventing workplace violence. More importantly, supervisors must closely monitor the workplace to prevent workplace violence and take immediate action when such situations do arise.

There may be a tendency to either minimize workplace violence (especially if the supervisor deems the situation or incident to be “minor”), or ignore the matter entirely in with the false assumption that confronting such situations (hostile or angry employees) will only make matters worse. Nothing could be further from the truth. Supervisors need to get involved in potential workplace violence situations as soon as possible, after consulting Human Resources and local Security Specialists as necessary.

Workplace violence is not limited to physical altercations. Any attempts to intimidate others, even by nonverbal means such as angry glares or threatening gestures, are workplace violence issues which must be dealt with in a proactive manner by supervisors.

Reporting such incidents to proper agency personnel is key. Consult with Human Resources so you understand what these procedures are (and get copies of all applicable policies). Make sure you have the phone numbers of security personnel, and keep these numbers with you at all times.

Take seriously all reports of workplace violence, or potential workplace violence, that employees may bring to your attention. Speak with other supervisors when such reports involve their employees so colleagues can take appropriate action. And as always, consult with your servicing Employee Relations Specialist.

Drug Testing

The agency does have (drug) testing designated positions, and employees in such positions are occasionally selected for random drug testing. Since the section method is random, some employees may be selected more often than others, but that’s just the “luck” of the draw. The Office of Human Resources usually facilitates this program, so speak with them to determine the appropriate pointy of contact and/or the obtain the DLA Drug Free Workplace Plan.

Employee Relations

[printable version]

Lesson Content

Basics of Employee Relations

Supervisors need to notify the drug testing coordinator when positions need to be added to, or possibly, removed from, the list of testing-designated positions. Supervisors are typically responsible for the following:

1. Informing all employees that drug use/abuse will not be tolerated at the workplace, and the possible disciplinary consequences for use, possession and/ or selling drugs
2. Notifying employees of scheduled drug tests, but not more than 2 hours in advance
3. Ensuring that employees report for drug tests, and cooperate one they do report
4. Recognizing and documenting suspicious employee behavior that may indicate substance abuse. Consult with your servicing Employee Relations Specialist early and often in such cases!
5. Initiating requests for reasonable suspicion drug testing (consult with Human Resources and/or your drug testing coordinator since such circumstances are very limited)
6. Referring employees to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) counselor when necessary
7. Initiating proposed disciplinary action if appropriate

Employee Relations

[printable version]

Lesson Content

Basics of Employee Relations

Injury Compensation

Supervisors have a number of responsibilities in this area. Know who your Safety Officer is, and for which organization they work (i.e., Installation Services). Become familiar with the forms used for reporting employee mishaps at the workplace.

1. Obtain initial medical treatment for employees injured.
2. Promptly document and report all "on-the-job" injuries (even when the employee says they were not hurt, or refuses treatment).
3. Help employees to accurately complete forms when applying for compensation.
4. Accommodate injured employees in the work environment, to the maximum extent possible (contact your EEO Office for assistance).
5. Keep in touch with employees who may be out of work as the result of a workplace injury to encourage their earliest possible return to work, and identify possible light-duty assignments.
6. Investigate the circumstances that led to an injury or you suspect may lead to injuries. Consult with your Safety Officer.
7. Keep your servicing Employee Relations Specialist informed of what is happening in the event that other steps need to be initiated.

Employee Relations

[printable version]

Lesson Content

Basics of Employee Relations

Serious Illness, Injury, or Death of Employee

These responsibilities are among the most challenging a supervisor may face. It would be nice to have a nice easy checklist to consult in these situations. Unfortunately, the diversity of circumstances in such cases does not lend itself to rigid criteria. Situations often call for tact and diplomacy as much, or more, than a set of guidelines. Here is a summary of your basic responsibilities:

1. Maintain a current list of "next of kin" information, or emergency points of contact information (also consult with Human Resources since this information may be available in their records).
2. Assist in the preparation of any condolence letters.
3. Secure a deceased employee's personal effects, and make sure proper arrangements are made to return them to the next of kin.
4. Obtain the return of property, credit cards, laptops, etc., which may have been assigned to the employee.
5. Work with Human Resources, EAP, etc., to provide support to grieving employees.
6. If serious injury or death occurs while on duty, ensure all mishap reports are to be filed immediately (including any required Situation Reports (SITREPS)), and steps are taken to initiate injury compensation forms. Human Resources, the Safety Officer, and/or the Security Office should be able to assist you with any SITREPS responsibilities.

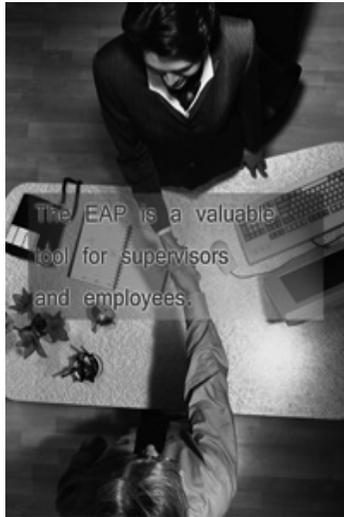
Employee Relations

[printable version]

Lesson Content

Basics of Employee Relations

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)



The EAP is a valuable tool for supervisors and employees. Most supervisors are aware that EAP counsels employees with emotional and psychological problems. However, EAP can also assist (directly or indirectly) with employee's financial and legal matters, and/or family matters (child care advice, marital/divorce advice, etc.). Most activities have an EAP counselor onsite (at least part of the time, and an emergency "1-800" number for employees and supervisors to call in emergencies.

EAP counselors can also assist supervisors who are dealing with employees experiencing a variety of personal/work problems, and explain to supervisors "what to say" and "what not to say."

Supervisors should:

1. Inform all employees about the availability of EAP services, including the name, location, and phone number of any onsite representative, as well as the "1-800" emergency number.
2. Recognize and document employee behaviors that may indicate a need for EAP referral (after consulting with Human Resources).
3. Refer employees to seek help from the EAP, if deemed appropriate.

Employee Relations

[printable version]

Lesson Content

Basics of Employee Relations

4. Make reasonable accommodations for employees to receive EAP counseling and treatment, even during duty hours (consult with Human Resources and your bargaining contracts).
5. Maintain confidentiality at all times, especially if medical or personal documentation is received. Consult with Human Resources as to how this documentation should be handled (and or to whom it should be provided, such as the EEO Office).

Employee Recognition (Awards)

The DLA Awards and Recognition Program serves as a vehicle to reward employees for working towards and accomplishing DLA goals. Awards are presented to employees to recognize superior service or performance and special acts or achievement in support of the Agency's mission and functions.

Types of Monetary Awards:

Sustained Superior Performance Award (SSP) is a monetary award given in recognition of high level performance significantly above that ordinarily found in the concerned position. To be eligible for a SSP, an employee's performance rating must be at the Fully Successful level and meets all of the following criteria:

- has exceeded the Fully Successful level for a majority of the elements in his/ her performance plan
- has not received a previous monetary award (other than On-the-Spot awards) based in whole or in part on the contribution currently being recommended for recognition
- has not received any other Sustained Superior Performance award during this period

Employee Relations

[printable version]

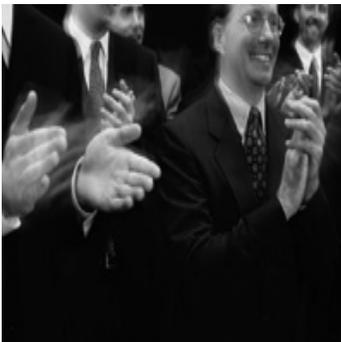
Lesson Content

Basics of Employee Relations

Quality Step Increase (QSI) consists of an extra within-grade increase and provides an incentive and recognition of high quality performance above that ordinarily found in the type of position concerned. To be eligible for a QSI, an employee must have a Fully Successful rating and meets all of the following criteria:

- is a General Schedule employee
- has consistently exceeded the Fully Successful level of all the elements in his/her performance plan
- has not received a Quality Step Increase in the preceding 52 calendar weeks
- is not on a temporary promotion

NOTE: Consideration should be given if the QSI will place the employee at either the step 4 or step 7 of their grade. In these cases, the waiting period for the employee's next within grade increase is extended by 52 calendar weeks. The time that an employee has already waited counts towards their next increase, but they must wait the full period that the new step requires.



Special Act or Service Award (SAS) is an award for a nonrecurring contribution occurring either within or outside of job responsibilities. The award value is based on either intangible or tangible benefits. Granting of an SAS does not affect the employee's eligibility for an SSP unless the SAS is based in whole or part on the same contribution being recommended for recognition by the SSP.

Special Act or Service Civilian Deployment Award is an award to recognize civilian employees who have done an extraordinary job beyond their job responsibilities while deployed overseas. The award value is based on the number of months deployed in an overseas tour and the percentage of Danger Pay authorized for the overseas tour.

On the Spot (OTS) Award is a Special Act or Service Award within the range of \$50-\$475, which may be given by a supervisor for recognition of exceptional day-to-day worksite accomplishments.

Employee Relations

[printable version]

Lesson Content

Basics of Employee Relations

Time Off Awards are awarded in recognition of superior accomplishment or other personal effort that contributes to the quality, efficiency, or economy of Government operations. Timeoff awards may be used in combination with cash or honorary awards and may be granted individually or by organization.

Timeoff awards expire one year from their effective date. The maximum amount of time off granted to an individual for a single contribution is 40 hours. The minimum award is four hours or one-half workday. One workday equates to the number of hours scheduled for work for the approved day off. The total amount of time off which may be granted to an employee in any one leave year is 80 hours. Time off awards may not be transferred. Managers and supervisors must make every effort to ensure that the employee is able to use the timeoff award before he or she leaves the organization. Time off awards may not be converted to cash under any circumstance.

Types of Honorary Awards:



DLA Superior Civilian Service Award is the third highest DLA honorary recognition for contributions not broad enough in scope to warrant the DLA Meritorious Civilian Service Award (e.g., significant contributions through consistent high quality performance or special acts or achievement with Field Activities-wide impact).

DLA Meritorious Civilian Service Award is the second highest DLA honorary recognition for contributions not broad enough in scope to warrant the DLA Exceptional Civilian Service Award (e.g., accomplishing assigned duties in an exemplary manner, exercising unusual initiative in devising new or improved work methods and procedures, outstanding achievement in improving the morale of workers in an organization unit with consequent improvement in work performance and demonstrating unusual competence or courage in an emergency while performing assigned duties).

DLA Exceptional Civilian Service Award is the highest DLA honorary award granted by the Director, DLA to those civilian employees who have distinguished themselves by exceptional service or contributions of the broadest scope to DLA or DoD as a whole.

Employee Relations

[printable version]

Lesson Content

Basics of Employee Relations

Certificate of Achievement is awarded to civilian employees for significant contributions which warrant official recognition, but are not broad enough in scope to merit the granting of the DLA Superior Civilian Service Award. It may be used to recognize sustained high quality performance over a period of time or special acts or achievements.

DLA Distinguished Career Service Award is given to employees upon their retirement in recognition of highly distinguished service.

Commendable Service Certificate may be awarded by managers at the Directorate/Major Office level to civilian employees for significant contributions to the efficiency, effectiveness, or economy of operation of the immediate function to which assigned. Nominations should cover a minimum period of service of 3 months.

Conduct and Discipline



Good employee self-discipline is best developed and maintained by strong and fair leadership from supervisors, and the fair and equitable treatment of employees. While employees are ultimately responsible for what they do or fail to do, at the workplace. Good supervision and personnel management are crucial.

Formal disciplinary action should only be taken for just cause, and for the primary purpose of correcting employee behavior as opposed to simply being punitive. However, in some cases an employee's misconduct is either so egregious (e.g, drug use at the worksite, fighting, and/or insubordinate), or repetitive in nature (tardy and/or fail to

Employee Relations

[printable version]

Lesson Content

Basics of Employee Relations

properly request leave) as to warrant formal investigation and proposed disciplinary action.

The good news is that in many situations involving minor workplace infractions, a supervisor's early intervention (where he/she verbally counsels or warns employees) is most effective. The key is addressing these issues with employees in a firm, but professional manner, as soon as the supervisor recognizes that the employee's behavior is inappropriate. Conversely, ignoring "small" problems usually leads to bigger problems down the line, often resulting in proposed disciplinary action and grievances. In addition, failure to address these "minor" disciplinary matters as soon as possible leads to poor morale among your subordinates who resent management's reluctance to confront their peers when appropriate. In short, the employees you supervise are looking to you to maintain discipline in the workplace! They respect the fact that this occasionally means counseling, and perhaps disciplining, coworkers.

One point cannot be overemphasized—speak with your servicing Employee Relations Specialist as soon as you suspect you may have an issue involving employee misconduct (no matter how minor). They will be able to provide you with a comprehensive list of sound options to assist you in correcting an employee's behavior.

The most common disciplinary matters involve leave-related issues (e.g., tardiness, failure to properly request leave, AWOL, poor leave balances/ suspected leave abuse). Other common infractions (see the DLA One Book on Maintaining Discipline, DLAD 1406.1) include:

1. Disregard of instructions; failure to follow directives; insubordination

Employee Relations

[printable version]

Lesson Content

Basics of Employee Relations

2. Leaving the worksite without permission
3. Disruptive behavior
4. Improper use of the internet, etc.

Your servicing Employee Relations Specialist will guide you when it comes to how to conduct investigations, the union's role in the investigatory process, drafting proposal and decision disciplinary letters, and applying the "Douglas Factors" (aggravating and mitigating factors supervisors must consider when disciplining employees, found in the DLA One Book under Maintaining Discipline). There are also a variety of non-disciplinary letters which Human Resources can assist you in preparing.

Many pages could be written when it comes to employee conduct and maintain discipline. You are urged to take formal employee relations training, and in particular, training on the agency's disciplinary (and grievance) programs as soon as possible. The Office of Personnel Management (www.opm.gov) has an excellent website on various Employee Relations topics. You also need to carefully review any national or local bargaining agreements dealing with employee discipline as there are often very specific timeframes and criteria which must be followed. While your servicing Employee Relations Specialist can guide you, it is imperative for you to understand the disciplinary process.

Employee Relations

[printable version]

Lesson Content

Basics of Employee Relations

Telework



Telework is a voluntary program which may be authorized when an employee's officially assigned duties can be performed at an alternate location. Regular and recurring and ad hoc (intermittent) telework arrangements benefit employees and the Agency. For employees, it offers greater flexibility and the opportunity to improve work/life balance, as well as savings through reduced commuting costs.

For the Agency, it improves our ability to maintain continuity of operations, while showcasing DLA as an employer of choice as we compete for talent.

The authority to either approve or disapprove an employee's request for telework is found in two different places:

- 1) DLA Instruction (DLAI) on Telework
- 2) Master Labor Agreement dated April 2007 Article 9 "Telework"

Website:

<http://www.hr.dla.mil/resources/employment/current/telework.html>

If you supervise bargaining unit employees these two documents must be used in concert when determining to approve or disapprove a telework request. However, if there is a conflict in the language of the documents, the Master Labor Agreement prevails. In the event you only supervise non-bargaining unit employees, the DLAI on Telework is the controlling document.

- Telework will be permitted from 1 to 5 days a week, if the requesting employee's job has been approved for telework.

Employee Relations

[printable version]

Lesson Content

Basics of Employee Relations

- Approving officials have the sole discretion to determine the number of telework days that a teleworker is approved to work and the approving official will advise the teleworker of the number of days they have been authorized to telework.
- The decision to permit or end participation is the responsibility of the approval official except in cases where the request to telework is due to a medical condition (reasonable accommodation).
- Employees who are qualified individuals with disabilities requesting telework as a reasonable accommodation will follow the guidance set forth in the DLA Reasonable Accommodations Procedures at <http://www.dla.mil/do/ReasonableAccommodation.asp>. Additional information on reasonable accommodations should be directed with your servicing Disability Program Coordinator (DPC). A list of DPC can be found at http://www.dla.mil/do/pdw_coordinators.asp.
- Organizations may not impose blanket or arbitrary restrictions on the number of days of telework.
- The approval or disapproval of the telework request must be in writing and must be communicated to the employee normally within 10 workdays, but no later than 15 workdays.

- End -