

## INFORMATION PAPER

AFZC-JA-AL  
29 September 2003

SUBJECT: Operations and Fundraising for Family Readiness Groups

1. PURPOSE: To provide legal guidance to Family Readiness Groups

2. Command sponsored Family Readiness Groups (FRGs) play an integral role in building the Army Family. The Army recognizes that FRGs increase confidence, commitment and create a sense of well-being for both soldiers and family members. Fort Carson has many thriving FRGs. General guidance for FRGs is found in DA Pamphlet 608-47, *A Guide to Establishing Family Support Groups* and Fort Carson & 7th ID Reg. 608-47, *Family Readiness Groups on Fort Carson*. The following paragraphs address common legal concerns and questions about the role and functions of an FRG.

3. *Structure*. The FRG structure should depend on the needs of the organization. DA Pam 608-47, paragraph 2-1b, describes how organizations can tailor their structure to the needs of the unit, mission, and family members. Any FRG that generates or manages funds must register their fund with the Directorate of Community Activities (DCA) (FC Reg 608-47, paragraph 4-1 c(7) and Appendix D). A copy of the registration must be provided to the commander. The registration must name the person responsible for maintaining the fund. If an FRG fund has a net worth exceeding \$1000, then it must apply for Private Organization status (DA PAM 608-47, paragraph 3-7a). There are occasions, however, when FRGs may maintain an amount greater than \$1000 for a short period of time without applying for Private Organization status. For example, if an FRG is sponsoring a Holiday Ball or similar event, fund raising may increase the amount in the fund above \$1000 but expenses will later reduce the amount under the \$1000 threshold. Additionally, Fort Carson FRGs may not earn more than \$2000 per year (FC Reg 608-47, paragraph 4-1c(5)).

4. *Support*. FRGs are unique organizations in the Army community. DA Pam 608-47 paragraph 1-7 defines unit FRGs as "command sponsored vehicle[s] for people within the unit to help each other." FRGs perform both official and non-official functions. When the FRG serves an official purpose, it may receive official support. Official purposes are those that promote unit cohesion, are educational in nature, and are related to family and unit readiness. Commanders can give official support in the following four areas:

a. Official mail. An FRG can use official mail for an official, mission related purpose if approved by the commander. However, official mail is not authorized for fundraising, commercial ventures, or to support private organization activities.

b. FRG newsletters. Official information can be printed with a unit's appropriated funds. Official information is defined in DA Pam 608-47, paragraph 3-6a(2). Information related to mission and family readiness is official. Personal, social, fundraising, and commercial venture information is non-official and does not qualify for appropriated fund support.

c. Government facilities. Commanders may permit FRG volunteers to use office space, equipment, supplies and telephones to conduct FRG business.

d. Military vehicles. A commander may authorize FRGs to use government non-tactical vehicles (NTVs) when he determines that the use of the vehicle is for official purposes and that failure to provide such support would have an adverse effect on soldier morale. For example, NTVs may be used to transport food and equipment to an FRG bake sale. Requirements regarding the use of government vehicles, such as obtaining a valid and current driver's license, still apply (FC Reg 608-47, paragraph 3-5).

5. *Fund uses.* FRGs can raise money through authorized fundraising activities. DA Pam 608-47, paragraph 3-7b, states that FRG funds should be used for activities that support the entire group rather than specific individuals. FRGs are not in the business of collecting and maintaining funds but are established to provide activities and support that will enhance the flow of information, morale and esprit de corps within the unit. The FRG fund should not duplicate what other agencies provide (i.e., establishing a loan fund or emergency food locker when other agencies such as ACS or AER have already established such programs).

6. *Fund raising.* On post fund raising activities must be approved by DCA and comply with the requirements set forth in AR 600-29, DA Pam 608-47, FC Reg 608-47, and the Joint Ethics Regulation (DoD 5500.7-R). FRGs are prohibited from engaging in any off post fund raising. Soldiers or family members raising money in their personal capacity off post must ensure their actions do not imply Army endorsement or support. Unit Commanders and FRG leaders should contact Mrs. Gini Joyner at 526-5580 for guidance and suggestions as to appropriate fund raising activities.

7. *Reimbursement of incidental expenses.* FRG registered volunteers may be reimbursed with appropriated or nonappropriated funds for incidental expenses such as child care, mileage, or telephone costs. Funds must be available and command approval must be sought before any expenses are incurred. FRGs volunteers should contact their respective commander or Ms. Gwen Ragle, Installation Volunteer Coordinator, at 526-8303, with reimbursement questions.

Administrative and Civil Law Division/526-0618.