



An Introduction to Discipline: A New Supervisor's Guide to Setting Clear Expectations

It is 1600, Friday afternoon, and you don't see Airman First Class Snuffy in the unit at his duty station. You ask his wingmen where A1C Snuffy is and they tell you that since work was slow and he completed all of his taskers, he decided to leave early to get a head start on the three-day holiday weekend. This is A1C Snuffy's first time leaving work early without notifying his supervisors or asking permission. Do you cut A1C Snuffy some slack since he did complete his taskers, work is slow, and a lot of people took off today due to the three-day weekend, call A1C Snuffy immediately and order him to return to the unit, or do you write up a Letter of Reprimand?

Now it is 1615, on another Friday afternoon, and A1C Snuffy is nowhere to be found, again. You discover A1C Snuffy decided to leave work early without supervisory approval. What action do you take now? What about on the following Friday when Snuffy leaves work early again? As an observant and informed supervisor, you know that Airman Snuffy is not meeting standards, but you have such an excellent rapport with him, and you do not want to damage that by letting him know that he has a responsibility to request approval from his leadership prior to leaving work early. So what should a supervisor do? The reality is you are his supervisor, not his friend, and you must set A1C Snuffy up for success, which happens through progressive discipline.

Progressive discipline is an effective tool intended to produce a certain level of conduct from Airmen who are not meeting standards. In A1C Snuffy's case, the proper initial response would be to ask him: why did he leave work early without getting supervisor approval and establishing your expectations for him to check in before he departs for the day. On the following Friday, a Letter of Counseling would have been justified, and then a Letter of Admonishment or Reprimand for repeated misconduct. However, supervisors should be talking to their subordinates when they are misbehaving as well, is there underlying issues A1C Snuffy is having, that is causing him to act out. Progressive discipline is to help rehabilitate and correct behavior but should be used in conjunction with proper communication.

Progressive discipline occurs in three steps. First, as a deterrent mechanism, you must set standards. You must draw the boundary line of acceptability and explain to your Airmen your expectations and the consequences of overstepping the boundary. A supervisor's credibility is established when you lead by example. Second, you need to observe Airmen's conduct and performance to make sure Airmen meet your expectations; also, provide feedback when your Airmen surpass expectations. Feedback encourages communication and reduces the need to administer discipline. The last step is to apply discipline, which needs to be done quickly to correct standard violations.

Always remember that if behavior is important enough for you to be concerned about it, then it is important enough to document. Many times, supervisors have either disregarded behavior or simply written a Memorandum for Record (MFR) and put it in the bottom of their desk drawer, never to be seen again. However, when the conduct escalates and becomes more severe, the supervisor will have to begin with

verbal counseling or a LOC, because there was no documentation on the previous performance. Since the goal is rehabilitation, supervisors should not jump to issuing a LOR or recommending an Unfavorable Information File (UIF) if they did not address and correct the conduct the first time, they became aware of it.

Progressive discipline starts the first day you become a supervisor. Clearly and succinctly establish standards and document them during the initial feedback session. Inform your Airmen of the consequences of not meeting standards. Lastly, provide timely and consistent feedback in order to lay a solid foundation for success for you and your Airmen.

Nonjudicial Punishment (NJP)

Nonjudicial punishment (NJP) (also referred to as an Article 15, in reference to the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) which authorizes the action) is a tool that provides commanders with an essential and swift means of maintaining good order and discipline. A member must accept NJP as a forum for allegations of misconduct or demand trial by court-martial once NJP is offered by a commander. NJP is designed to promote behavioral changes in service members without the stigma that comes with a criminal conviction at trial. NJP lies between a Letter of Reprimand and a court-martial on the spectrum of the continuum of discipline, whose ultimate goal is to promote rehabilitation in service members to encourage them to adhere to standards.

The following NJPs were effectuated at Edwards AFB during the first quarter of 2024:

A Staff Sergeant (E-5) assigned to 412 AMXS committed abusive sexual contact in violation of Article 120, UCMJ (Abusive Sexual Contact). The member received a reduction to the grade of Senior Airman (E-4) and a reprimand.

A First Lieutenant (O-2) assigned to 412 HCOS engaged in an unprofessional relationship and fraternization, failed to obey orders, and lied to investigators in violation of Articles 92 (Failure to Obey, Dereliction of Duty), 107 (False Official Statement), and Article 134 (Fraternization), UCMJ. The member was punished with forfeiture of \$2,386.00 pay per month for two months and a reprimand.

A Technical Sergeant (E-6) assigned to 412 HCOS engaged in an unprofessional relationship, failed to obey orders, and was derelict in their duties in violation of Article 92 (Failure to Obey, Dereliction of Duty), UCMJ. The member was punished with a reduction to the grade of Staff Sergeant (E-5), forfeiture of \$1,829.00 pay, suspended, and a reprimand.

A Senior Airman (E-4) assigned to 412 HCOS used THC-9 in violation of Article 112b (Wrongful Use of a Controlled Substance), UCMJ. The member was punished with a reduction to the grade of Airman First Class (E-3) and a reprimand.

An Airman First Class (E-3) assigned to 412 OMRS altered their military ID card by changing the date of birth in violation of Article 105a, UCMJ (False or Unauthorized Pass). The member was punished with a reduction to the grade of Airman (E-2) and a reprimand.

A Senior Airman (E-4) assigned to 412 SFS was absent from duty numerous times and lied about going to numerous medical appointments in violation of Articles 86 (AWOL) and Article 107 (False Official Statement), UCMJ. The member was punished with a reduction to the grade of Airman Basic (E-1),

forfeiture of \$1,008.00 pay, suspended, and a reprimand.

Administrative Discharges

Involuntarily discharging a service member from the United States Air Force may be an appropriate action for a commander or civilian director to take when a member has demonstrated an inability to meet Air Force standards. Common basis for discharge include, but are not limited to: drug abuse, sexual assault, a civilian court conviction, or a series of minor misconduct. Discharges can result in one of three service characterizations: honorable, under honorable conditions (general), and under other than honorable conditions.

The following discharge action was completed during the first quarter of 2024:

A Senior Airman (E-4) assigned to 412 AMXS was involuntarily discharged for sexual assault. The member received an under other than honorable (UOTHC) service characterization.

A Senior Airman (E-4) assigned to 812 CES was involuntarily discharged for a Condition that Interfered with Military Service (Adjustment Disorder). The member received an honorable service characterization.

An Airmen First Class (E-2) assigned to 412 OSS was involuntarily discharged for Conditions that Interfered with Military Service (Adjustment Disorder). The members received honorable service characterization.

Federal Magistrate Court

The federal magistrate court program is run in conjunction with the United States Attorney's Office. Edwards Security Forces personnel are empowered to issue citations for traffic violations and criminal activities that occur on a federal reservation. Those actions are then prosecuted in Federal Magistrate Court by judge advocates with the 412 Test Wing Office of the Staff Judge Advocate appointed as Special Assistant United States Attorneys. This tool is primarily useful to ensure enforcement of standards for civilians, including military dependents, DoD employees, contractor employees, and any other civilian present on Edwards AFB or Plant 42 who commits traffic violations or crimes on our federal reservations. By contrast, violations of traffic laws and the criminal code by service members are addressed under the UCMJ.

Driving on and Department of Defense installation, including Edwards AFB and Plant 42, is a privilege. The expectation is that everyone will strictly adhere to the traffic laws on the installation. The Defense Department standard for miles allowed over posted speed limits on military installations is zero! In 2023, 412 SFS personnel issued over 1,300 traffic citations. Approximately 1,100 of those citations were issued to base affiliated civilians resulting in the imposition of nearly \$60,000 in fines. For the safety and security of everyone who lives and works on our installation, please follow the posted speed limit signs, make a full stop at stop signs, and don't drink and drive!

The following magistrate court citations were closed out during the first quarter of 2024:

84 civilians were cited for speeding.

They received an average fine of \$250.00.

18 civilians were cited for not having proof of insurance or registration.

They received an average fine of \$305.00.

16 civilians were cited for not having their drivers' licenses in possession.

They received an average fine of \$242.50.

7 civilians were cited for failure to stop.

They received an average fine of \$171.00.

5 civilians were cited for not having a child restraint for a child under 8 years old.

They received an average fine of \$405.

4 civilians were cited for possession of a controlled substance.

They received an average fine of \$430.00.

2 civilians were cited for trespassing.

They received an average fine of \$3,500.

2 civilians were cited for having an open container of alcohol while driving.

They received an average fine of \$405.00.

2 civilians were cited for driving without wearing a seatbelt.

They received an average fine of \$405.

A civilian was cited for cellphone use while driving.

They were fined \$238.00.

A civilian was cited for having no license plate on the vehicle.

They were fined \$133.00.

A civilian was cited for allowing a minor to drive.

They were fined \$268.00.

A civilian was cited for driving recklessly.

They were fined \$171.00.

Other Consequences for Driving Offenses

California law still applies on Edwards base housing; Kern County sheriff can and will enforce state law. Security Forces may suspend those who do not meet standards from driving on base, such as those who speed or commit other traffic infractions. Aggravated violations of standards, such as repeated offenses or speeding in a school zone, may result in a complete base driving ban by the Installation Commander.

The 412 Test Wing Office of the Staff Judge Advocate, Edwards AFB, CA, can be reached by phone at COMM 661-277-4310, DSN 312-277-4310, or by email at 412tw.ja.workflow@us.af.mil.