

DeCAH 50-13



MENTORING HANDBOOK

DEFENSE COMMISSARY AGENCY

HEADQUARTERS

1300 E Avenue

Fort Lee, Virginia 23801-1800

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From the Director...

The aim of mentoring is simple: helping people to grow. By sharing wisdom, knowledge, and experience, mentors help employees realize their full potential. The mentoring process can play a significant role in your professional development and in implementing DeCA's strategic business plan to develop a multifunctional workforce capable of meeting future job challenges and skill requirements within the Agency.

This Guide is designed to explain the mentoring process and to get you focused on setting and achieving your personal and professional life goals. It covers three key areas: professional development, job knowledge and performance, and personal growth. Questions within each area will aid you in setting achievable goals. The Mentoring Assessment Plan (MAP) documents the goals you have chosen, your commitment to both your mentor and supervisor to achieve these goals, and your mentor's commitment to support your efforts.

The DeCA mentoring program's target audience is *every* employee regardless of geographical or organizational location, pay plan, series, grade level, level of experience, or service time with the Agency. My personal commitment to you is this: Any DeCA employee with the desire to advance will have the opportunity to work with a mentor to map out achievable goals and a career development strategy. Participation in the mentoring process is voluntary and perhaps not of interest to all employees. I encourage those of you who want to grow with DeCA to work with a mentor to define your career and personal goals, map a course of action, and commit to make it happen. Use the tools in this handbook to build your development plan, enlist the help of your mentor and supervisor in achieving your goals. I suggest that you keep a copy of your plan in a visible location as a constant reminder of your commitment.

You are ultimately responsible for your career enhancement. A mentor will provide you valuable advice and help you reflect on and learn from experiences, but it is up to you to take the initiative, demonstrate your capabilities, and seize opportunities!

Mentoring provides managers, supervisors, and employees the opportunity to actively plan and participate in the growth, development, and reshaping of the DeCA workforce. Remember, mentoring is a "win-win" relationship for the employee, the mentor, and the organization.

I wish each of you success in achieving your life goals and encourage you to take full advantage of the developmental opportunities offered through the DeCA mentoring process.



ROBERT J. COURTER, JR.
Major General, USAF

Human Resources Management

MENTORING HANDBOOK

BY ORDER OF THE DIRECTOR



Edward S. Jones
Lt Col, USAF
Executive Director for Resources

DAN L. MARCUM
Acting Director, Information Technology

AUTHORITY: The Defense Commissary Agency mentoring program is established in compliance with provisions of 5 CFR, Part 410.

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS: This directive does not contain Internal Management Control provisions that are subject to evaluation, testing and other requirements of DeCAD 70-2 and as scheduled in DeCAD 70-3. However, the Management Control Checklist to be used by assessable unit managers to conduct the evaluation and test management controls is at Appendix B of DeCAD 50-20, Training Policies and Procedures.

HOW TO SUPPLEMENT: Lower echelon units may supplement this directive by contacting HQ DeCA/RMHS for permission and instructions. No new forms are authorized without prior authorization.

HOW TO ORDER COPIES: Copies may be read or downloaded from the DeCA Intranet at www.deca.gov.

SUMMARY: This directive establishes DeCA's mentoring guidance.

OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY (OPR): HQ DeCA/RMHS
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Purpose of the Mentoring Program

The Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) is embarking upon an exciting new path as we move into the 21st century. DeCA exists to provide the commissary benefit, an essential element of our military members' non-pay compensation, to our authorized patrons. In order to endure and prosper in the coming years, DeCA must build upon its past successes and embrace an entirely new approach in strategy, organization, operations, and financial management. The DeCA Strategic Plan captures this new philosophy in its five strategic objectives. In order to excel as a DeCA employee, you must understand the new philosophy and focus your career planning on DeCA's new strategic direction.

DeCA's future holds many opportunities for employees who are motivated to acquire fresh skills and who will actively work to broaden themselves. Over the next several years, nearly half of our total workforce will be eligible to retire. Moreover, during this same period, we must make increasingly greater use of technology and new processes to enable us to better compete with the private sector in delivering better savings, lowering costs, and improving service output to our patrons. Our people will need to acquire new skills, become multi-functional, and have a healthy turnover rate that encourages advancement and the sustained infusion of state-of-the-art industry knowledge and techniques. We will meet this challenge with an approach that benefits the individual employee as well as the Agency overall.

The Agency will define the proper mix of skills and expertise needed to meet our future mission requirements. We need to shape our workforce with the skills and talents needed to match our critical outputs and business areas. Rather than continuing the traditional stovepipe occupations in the Agency, our future workforce will require new and multi-functional skills. We will need different skill sets, because we will operate the commissary system in a new and different environment. For example, today, store directors walk the aisles and eyeball the shelves to estimate the next day's order. As we gain technical mastery of the data concerning our checkout sales and backroom inventories, our people will replenish the shelves from a computer keyboard and screen. Our buyers will need new skills to make full use of our competitors' sales trends, as well as our own, as they negotiate better prices with our suppliers. Our contracting experts and the entire workforce will increasingly use paperless ordering and contracting. Even our facility engineers will need new skills, because we will decide whether to build new stores based on long-term market analysis. Finally, moving the Agency from a budget culture to a unit cost culture requires new skills and basic competencies for everyone, because every manager will be held accountable for their performance and cost targets.

Since we will run the Agency more like a business, our future leaders will need to know how to run stores, manage resources, and have skills in fiscal and unit cost management. Positions at all levels within DeCA will have similar competency requirements in fundamental areas such as: interpersonal skills, customer service, teamwork, problem-solving, reasoning, decision making, oral and written communications, technology application, planning and evaluating, stress tolerance, integrity/honesty, self-management, and self-esteem.

Employees will be provided appropriate training to enable them to make greater use of technology and perform more than one job. All DeCA employees will have equal opportunity to

compete for these training and development opportunities. DeCA's mentoring program will be an integral part of this education process. In this regard, mentoring will serve as an equal partner to formal training and other developmental efforts in the reinvention and revitalization of the Agency. Any DeCA employee who desires to advance in his or her career will have the opportunity to select and work with a mentor to outline achievable goals and develop a Mentoring Assessment Plan (MAP). The MAP will document the employee's objectives and will represent the commitment by the employee and the mentor to attain them.

Mentoring is a relationship in which a person in the organization with greater experience and wisdom guides another person to develop both personally and professionally. The mentoring process, consequently, helps prepare employees for the increased responsibilities they will assume as they progress in their careers. However, mentoring is not a promotion enhancement program nor will it guarantee automatic promotion. The Agency will adhere to the basic principles of the merit system that emphasize fair and open competition for promotion.

Appendices A-C contain more detailed information on such topics as the background of mentoring, the relationship of mentors and employees, and the potential pitfalls of mentoring relationships.

Scope of the Mentoring Program

The DeCA mentoring program's target audience is *every* employee regardless of geographical or organizational location, pay plan, series, grade level, level of experience, or service time with the Agency. Mentoring requires personal commitment and action from both the mentor and the employee. Both need to work together cooperatively to outline the employee's future and then establish clear goals to achieve that future.

The Mentor's Role

Mentoring facilitates someone else learning something the learner would otherwise have learned less well, more slowly, or not at all.

The mentor is a wise and trusted advisor, teacher or coach who:

- is a catalyst in the process of discovery and insight;
- sees growth as the primary outcome;
- facilitates power-free interpersonal interactions;
- challenges and pushes others to take risks;
- affirms and celebrates success;
- creates and models a learning organization;
- provides for the continued evolution of the organization; and
- enhances the growth and development of others.

More specifically, the mentor's role involves:

- coaching an employee in enhancing skills and intellectual development;
- passing along organizational information (structure, policies, procedures, personalities);
- providing candid feedback to employees about perceived strengths and developmental needs;
- pointing out opportunities for the employee to develop and demonstrate capabilities (as well as pointing out pitfalls to avoid);
- advising the employee on how to deal with real or perceived roadblocks;
- serving as a sounding board;
- encouraging and motivating the employee;
- building the employee's sense of self and level of self-confidence; and
- linking the employee with others in the organization who can enhance the employee's learning.

Expectations of Mentors

DeCA's mentoring program is based on the assumption that effective learning happens best when it is facilitated by the coaching of experienced, successful mentors.

Effective mentors . . .

- willingly enter into a long-term relationship which enhances the performance of another by sharing observations, knowledge, and skills;
- value DeCA, its charter and its works, and demonstrate their passion for its mission;
- seek and gain the commitment of the organization to allow the time and resources necessary to maximize the mentoring relationship;
- serve as role models who help facilitate and foster the development of an employee through coaching, teaching, and championing;
- help employees acquire leadership skills and understand the expectations and values of the senior leadership;
- exhibit tolerance and are non-judgmental of personal differences, and seek to capitalize on the strengths which exist because of diversity; and
- possess effective coaching and teaching skills, which allow individualization of interactions and sensitivity to personal strengths, weaknesses, and needs.

Such skills include:

- ◆ *Attentive listening*
- ◆ *Asking probing questions*
- ◆ *Providing feedback - both confirmatory and constructive*
- ◆ *Facilitating goal setting*
- ◆ *Employee development planning*
- ◆ *Motivating effective performance and behavior change*

Characteristics of a Good Mentor

The following behavior-related characteristics typify ideal mentors:

- **Supportive** - supports the needs and aspirations of the employee; encourages the employee to accept challenges and overcome difficulties.
- **Patient** - patient and willing to provide adequate time to interact with the employee.
- **Respected** – has earned the respect of people within DeCA; others look to the mentor as a possible role model.
- **People-Oriented** – genuinely interested in people and has a desire to help others; knows how to communicate effectively and actively listen; able to resolve conflict and give appropriate feedback.
- **A Good Motivator** – inspires the employee to do better/stretch potential, through encouraging feedback and challenging work assignments.
- **Respectful of Others** – shows regard for the well being of others; accepts the employee’s minor flaws, just as the employee must accept minor flaws of the mentor.
- **An Effective Teacher** – helps to manage and guide the employee’s learning --this means actively trying to recognize and use teaching/learning opportunities (the opposite of the “sink or swim” approach).
- **Self-Confident** – appreciates an employee’s developmental strengths and abilities, without viewing them as a threat; enjoys being part of an employee’s growth and success.
- **An Achiever** – sets lofty career goals, continually evaluates them and strives to reach them, takes on more responsibility than is required, volunteering for more activities, and climbs the “career ladder” at a quick pace -- and inspires the employee he or she mentors with the same drive for achievement.
- **Values DeCA and Work** – takes pride in DeCA and relishes the everyday challenges that typically arise, understands the mission, vision, and values of the Agency, and supports DeCA’s initiatives -- and can interpret these for the employee.

Who Should be a Mentor

In general, a mentor may be the employee's immediate supervisor, a higher-level supervisor or manager, or a senior non-supervisory employee either in the same organization or in a different unit. From a practical standpoint, however, the employee already has access to the first and second level supervisor and is encouraged to discuss career goals and developmental needs with them on a regular basis. Because of this ready access, the employee may be better served to seek someone else to serve as a mentor. In addition, there may be, at times, reluctance on the part of the employee to discuss some work-related problems or career aspirations in a candid manner with individuals in the immediate chain of command. Such a relationship could also create perceptions of favoritism, which should always be avoided.

Additionally, a mentor generally should not be more than two or three grades above an individual. For example, a sales store checker might be paired with a department manager in the same commissary. A mentor who is very senior to the employee may be too far removed to be able to provide some kinds of very practical guidance on how the employee can get to the next step. Also, while many people would like to select senior leaders as mentors, there usually are not enough to "go around." Employees looking for mentors should be mindful of this, and individuals asked to be mentors should consider their own time limitations before committing to serve as a mentor. Mentors should not hesitate to refer employees elsewhere when they feel they have reached their personal limits.

The optimum ratio of mentor to employee is one-to-one. Although a shortage of mentors may require they work with more than one employee, an employee should be paired with only one mentor at a time. Mentoring relationships serve different purposes over time, and therefore, the mentor/employee pairing may last several years or only several months, depending on the employee's and the organization's needs.

Finding a Mentor

First and foremost, mentors and employees should "self select each other." When looking for a mentor, a person should spend a lot of time thinking about his or her mentoring needs and investigating possible mentors. A good way to do this is by asking around to get feedback about who might be an appropriate mentor for that individual. Good sources of information are first and second level supervisors and others who know the individual and/or prospective mentors. After canvassing the entire workforce, DeCA will establish a directory of individuals interested in serving as mentors. Persons who wish to be mentors will, after receiving appropriate training, be listed as active cadre in the DeCA mentoring program. Before any commitments are made, employees may wish to interview several prospective mentors to discuss such things as career aspirations, what each person expects from the mentoring relationship, and to learn more about each other as individuals.

Employees looking for a mentor should consider work and communication styles that are right for them. They should know what they want from the relationship based on their current situation, considering the skills they would like to develop as well as their career plans. Some important things to consider include:

- What are your career goals and needs?
- Does the mentor have knowledge and experience in related areas, or better, in many areas?
- Is the mentor at the right level of the organization (i.e., two or three grade levels above, not too far up)?
- Is the mentor good at what he or she does?
- Is the mentor an achiever?
- Is the mentor a good role model?
- How well does the organization judge the mentor? Is he or she well respected?
- What is the mentor's ability to develop alliances within the organization?
- Is the mentor supportive and respectful of others?
- Does the mentor value DeCA, enjoy challenges, and understand the vision, mission, and values of the Agency?
- Will the mentor be available for uninterrupted, quality meetings?
- Will you feel comfortable talking with the mentor honestly? Do you trust him or her?
- Will the mentor take a genuine interest in your development? Is he or she enthusiastic about mentoring?
- Will the mentor give you honest feedback about yourself and your developmental needs?
- Can the mentor help you find opportunities to gain visibility/demonstrate your capabilities?
- Will the mentor give you candid information about the organization, and be willing to share knowledge, experience, and insights?
- Is the mentor a good teacher/coach/motivator?
- What do other employees say about the mentor as a mentor?
- What are the mentor's expectations?

The Time Commitment

The amount of time a mentor and employee choose to invest in the relationship varies greatly, based on the needs, expectations, and desires of both parties. The greatest commitment of time is generally in the beginning of the relationship, when the focus is on getting to know each other and developing the initial version of the employee's MAP. Before the mentor connection is even agreed upon, during the "interview" phase, the amount of time each person is expecting and

willing to commit should be discussed. As the relationship evolves, the time spent together will naturally change based on the distinct nature of the relationship.

The Employee's Role

The employee must be an active participant in the mentoring relationship. In particular, employees must:

- **Prepare** – do the appropriate “homework” for meetings with the mentor.
- **Develop** – work to achieve targeted knowledges, skills, and abilities.
- **Be Flexible** – listen attentively to the mentor and consider new options which may be proposed.
- **Take Initiative** – seek the mentor's advice when needed.
- **Focus on the Goal** – do not get lost in the process. If it is not clear, ask the mentor to explain how the process leads to the goal.

Expectations of Employees

Contrary to what is sometimes believed, the responsibility for the success of mentoring lies primarily with the individual being mentored. The employee knows what he or she wants from the relationship and thereby shoulders the burden of choosing an appropriate mentor and getting things off to a good start.

Accordingly, here are some characteristics of someone ready to be mentored and who will get the most out of the experience. An employee needs to be:

- An assertive learner in order to maximize the contact with the mentor.
An assertive learner is someone who knows what they don't know, wants to acquire it -- even if it means unlearning, taking risks, or confronting issues that are uncomfortable.
- Clear about his or her expectations of a mentor and willing to create a "contract" with that person, that reflects the needs and wants of both parties.

This contract should incorporate specific learning objectives, a desired timeframe for achieving them, how the two parties will work together and how often, and what each of them expects from the experience.

- Open to and constantly seeking feedback and capable of utilizing it constructively, whatever its form.

Helping an employee see him or herself more accurately is a major aspect of mentoring. The people who benefit most from mentoring are those who continually seek out such fuller pictures of themselves, without regard to how the feedback is packaged. They know feedback is only data, not who they are, and yet it is the path to becoming who they want to be.

- Committed to stretch goals.

Significant development does not come through small, incremental steps taken along a familiar path. Participants in mentoring programs owe it to themselves, their mentors, and their organizations to strive for big, audacious goals while they have the benefit of this experience.

- Comfortable asking for help.

The employee who waits for the mentor to inquire how things are going, to provide feedback, or to share their wisdom is not taking responsibility for his or her own learning, and therefore is less likely to fulfill his or her potential.

- Honest about themselves.

Development begins when we see our strengths and areas for growth with the same degree of clarity. It accelerates when we admit what we do not know or what we could have done better.

The Supervisor's Role

In all likelihood, an employee's supervisor will not function as his or her mentor. Supervisors have a very important, but challenging role. Like mentors, they provide advice, feedback, and support. They should work closely with the employee in putting together a MAP and identifying and supporting specific developmental activities. The supervisor should provide the employee with candid feedback on what he or she observes to be the employee's strengths and developmental needs and should help the employee reflect upon and learn from the employee's on-the-job experiences.

Unlike mentors, supervisors are the ones faced with the immediate need of getting the job done when employees are participating in developmental activities; adhering to the budget constraints of their unit; and ensuring equitable access to developmental activities for all work unit employees. While a supervisor may want to support the employee's developmental activities, and is expected to do so, the supervisor must balance this with these other considerations. The supervisor is the authority to approve participation in developmental activities, or deny participation for workload, budgetary, or other appropriate considerations. It is important for the employee and the supervisor to discuss each other's expectations.

It is a good idea for an employee's mentor and supervisor to communicate with each other occasionally. This can facilitate the identification of appropriate developmental activities and prevent problems associated with differing needs, perspectives, and priorities.

What a Mentor is Not Able to Do

A mentor should never be used to bypass normal and appropriate procedures or chains of command, or to exert pressure or influence on an individual, such as the employee's supervisor, who is the appropriate decision authority. For example, if an employee's supervisor denies a particular request for training or a rotational assignment, the employee should not request or expect the mentor to intervene. In such a case, the employee, if dissatisfied, should discuss the matter with his or her supervisor—perhaps offering alternatives that would meet both the

individual's and the organization's needs. If still displeased, the employee should pursue the issue through the appropriate chain of command.

A mentor clearly cannot guarantee promotions. Similarly, when providing assistance for developmental activities, a mentor must be careful not to give any unfair advantage to the employees they mentor. As always, mentors must keep in mind not only the procedures but also the spirit of the Merit System Principles.

Mentors should apply the same standards of behavior in dealing with employees they are mentoring that they would follow in dealing with employees who report to them. While personal rapport and candid feedback are both characteristics of good mentoring relationships, advice should be career related. Mentors should take care to always respect the private lives of those they mentor, particularly when it comes to giving advice.

Signs of a Successful Mentoring Relationship

Some signs that a mentoring relationship is successful are:

- The mentored employee is open to change and transition, to exploring possibilities, helping others, and learning from others.
- Both parties are inspired by the relationship and gain a great deal of satisfaction from it.
- There is a commitment to understanding and growing, and to confronting and working toward solutions to problems that may arise.
- The employee feels a bond or connection with the mentor, experiencing the relationship as one of value in which mutual interest, respect, and straightforward communication are constants.
- The employee is comfortable going to the mentor when counsel and support is desired. The employee takes responsibility for meeting his/her own needs in the relationship.
- The mentor shows the employee new aspects of his or her potential, helping the employee learn about him or herself.
- The mentor has established a comfortable environment for learning and discussion, and enjoys watching the employee grow.
- When it comes time to separate, the relationship is on equal footing and the employee regards the mentor as a friend or peer he or she can seek for advice in the future. Because of the relationship, the employee has increased self-knowledge, self-acceptance, and self-confidence.

Types of Mentoring Activities

Formal training is just one, small part of leadership development. When thinking about appropriate developmental activities for employees, mentors should be creative. Some things to consider in terms of developmental assignments include:

- Reading books, articles, journals, Government/DoD news publications, etc.;
- Trying new projects/special assignments;
- Covering for employees who are on TDY/detail/leave;
- Temporary details (rotational assignments) to other positions;
- Giving presentations or briefings;
- Assuming lead person responsibilities;
- Joining or chairing Focus Groups or Project Teams;
- Involvement in corporate projects/task forces/organizational change efforts;
- Representing the supervisor at meetings;
- Switching jobs with a coworker for a short period of time;
- Professional society participation;
- Attending conferences/symposiums;
- Activity presentations/special events;
- Authoring professional publications;
- Teaching subject matter courses;
- Mentoring a junior employee;
- Observation experience (then practicing desired skills);
- Informational interviews;
- Participation on selection panels; and
- Community service.

Ending the Mentoring Relationship

Good mentoring relationships may end when the employee has outgrown the need for the mentor's guidance and direction. At this point, the relationship generally evolves into a strong friendship, in which the two see each other as peers.

Other mentoring relationships end because they fail to become productive and comfortable. The mentor and employee may never establish rapport, or one or both parties may not commit adequate time or effort. There may be a failure to communicate goals, needs, intentions, or expectations. The likelihood of this happening is greatest when employees and mentors are "matched" by a third party, or agree to the relationship without much consideration and discussion about needs and expectations.

The relationship may also end if either the mentor or employee relocates to another area or leaves the organization. While it is not necessary for the relationship to end in these instances, it sometimes becomes difficult to communicate regularly or, for the mentor to give knowledgeable advice about organizational issues.

Both mentors and employees should feel free to end mentoring relationships that are not meeting expectations. In most cases, if one party feels it is not working, the other feels the same. At this point, the employee should be encouraged to find a new mentor.

The Mentoring Process

This Guide will help mentors and employees set achievable goals and assess areas where growth and development are needed. The Area Assessments at Appendix D contain questions intended to help stimulate thinking and guide the discussion about the employee's development needs and career goals.

We do not expect mentors to be experts on every subject that may be important in career planning. Therefore, the Guide includes a "toolbox" at Appendix E that provides comprehensive resource information on a variety of subjects.

In general, the mentoring process includes the following steps:

- **Assess.** Determine where you want to focus. Go through the Area Assessments at Appendix D with your mentor and decide on which topics you want to concentrate. These assessments contain questions in three major areas: *Professional Development, Job Knowledge and Performance, and Personal Growth*. They are intended to stimulate individual reflection and discussion between you and your mentor, and are not simply a checklist of things to do. Depending on your particular situation, some of the topics listed may not be applicable to you. You do not have to address every area, or every topic or question within any area.
- **Set Goals.** Work with your mentor to develop annual growth and improvement goals based on the results of the assessment phase. Use the appropriate sections of the toolbox in Appendix E to help you understand each topic better and to determine what types of things you should try to accomplish.
- **Plan.** Document your goals in a signed Mentoring Assessment Plan (MAP). A copy of the MAP form is contained in Appendix F. The MAP should serve as an agreement between you, your mentor, and your immediate supervisor and will be the focus of your efforts each year to grow and improve. Limit the plan to what is feasible and achievable, and do not let it expand beyond what can reasonably be accomplished. Both your supervisor and your mentor should keep a copy of the MAP to use in helping you attain your goals.
- **Take Action.** Commit to making your plan happen. Do the necessary things throughout the year to reach your MAP objectives. Your mentor and your supervisor will be there to help you.
- **Follow Up.** Review the progress on your MAP regularly with both your mentor and your supervisor. Periodically, update the plan and its goals to account for accomplishments, and update the mentoring assessments to reflect goals successfully completed.

Conducting Mentoring Sessions

The following steps can help mentors prepare for and conduct productive sessions with their employees.

1. Schedule a two-hour, uninterrupted session with the employee. Explain that the purpose of this meeting will be to discuss personal growth objectives and to help them construct an individual mentoring assessment action plan. Employees should be asked to bring any personal records relating to their career to the initial mentoring session.
2. Read and be familiar with this Guide before any mentoring sessions.
3. Obtain any necessary personnel records (e.g., position description, performance plan, individual development plan, training records, etc.) for the employee from the individual's immediate supervisor.
4. Make sure that the employee knows that the information discussed during the mentoring session will be documented in an appropriate manner and a copy provided at the conclusion of the session.
5. Go over the mentoring assessments for each area. The employee should select the particular assessments he or she would like to cover. Discuss the selected areas one at a time.
6. Help the employee develop goals based on the results of the assessments. Encourage the employee to establish goals that you both are willing to commit to and that can be feasibly accomplished within a year's time.
7. Document the employee's goals on the MAP. Understand that the responsibility for achieving the MAP's objectives is a shared one among you, the employee, and the employee's immediate supervisor.
8. Give the employee the notes documenting the counseling session and a copy of their MAP.
9. Set a tentative date for the next quarterly mentoring session. Establish a suspense date to check on the status of the employee's progress 30 and 60 days after each mentoring session.

APPENDIX A

Background of Mentoring

In the corporate world, management has used traditional mentoring for many years to enhance the potential of subordinates. A senior employee developed an interest in the career of a junior or less experienced employee based on potential for higher-level management or executive positions. There may have been no prescribed form and the mentoring may have not been formally structured. Such efforts are based in part on the concept that inexperienced managers more quickly acquire skills and knowledge that enhance their effectiveness and usefulness if they learn from an experienced, senior member of the organization. By learning from the senior manager or executive, the employee more quickly masters the formal and informal structures of the organization, learns the practical uses of authority, and acquires skills that improve their own prospects for success.

Mentoring in DeCA is based on the premise that many employees who have the basic abilities and skills to advance to leadership positions within the Agency are unaware of opportunities, or need specific collateral skills, knowledges, or abilities which would help them advance. For example, they may not have clarified their own goals and ambitions, or they may be insufficiently aware of how the formal career systems and informal networks within the Government operate. For their most effective job performance, they may require enhanced skills or abilities, such as in written or oral communication.

Although formal classroom training is the main forum for teaching new supervisors and managers the skills and knowledge they need to effectively direct the work of others, some of the managerial skills are acquired through interaction with other managers and executives. Leadership is less science than art, and as an art can best be learned by studying the artists -- the successful managers and executives.

There are few tasks more important to an organization than preparing for the future. It is evident that one of the most important tasks for a manager or executive is to help prepare subordinates to assume managerial and executive level responsibilities in the future. Some of the ways for managers and executives to carry out this task are as follows:

- a. Effective performance management.
- b. Use of the individual development plan.
- c. Formal counseling sessions with subordinates.
- d. Mentoring.

Mentoring is a broad effort that looks to both the career goals of the employee and the future needs of the organization.

Advantages of Mentoring

Studies suggest that mentoring has a positive effect on employees. Employees with mentors rated themselves as having more influence, power, and access to important individuals than employees without mentors. They also report having more influence within the organization regardless of their gender, race, age, or organizational position. Mentors can assist the employee in mastering additional skills, knowledges, or abilities in specific areas, which enhance their prospects for success. Mentoring also builds confidence and encourages the employee to grow beyond the usual experiences.

Although the primary intent of mentoring is to benefit the employee, there are substantial benefits that accrue to the mentor as well. Among these are the following:

- a. Developing greater insights into the employee's line of work and organization.
- b. Using the employee as a sounding board for ideas.
- c. Obtaining feedback on cross-generational, cross gender, and cross-functional issues.
- d. Growth in counseling and guidance skills,
- e. General sense of satisfaction that comes from helping another person to grow and develop.

It is also important to note that mentoring is not only an aid to career advancement and promotion, but is also an excellent mechanism for helping an employee to develop other skills, knowledges, and abilities to enhance performance in their current position.

Effective mentoring can provide the opportunity for experienced managers and executives to pass on their practical expertise and professional knowledge to employees who are committed to advancement and success.

Mentoring provides an effective means of assisting employees to achieve career goals, and of meeting future needs of the organization.

APPENDIX B

Relationship of Mentors and Employees

Establishing the Relationship

Regardless of the circumstances of meeting, mentors and employees must establish their own professional relationship. The formal mentoring relationship involves a complex set of circumstances: two individuals, each with their own personalities, agendas, priorities, and preoccupations, who are expected to interact successfully to accomplish the shared purpose of furthering the career potential of one.

Evaluation of Success

Whether a mentor and employee relationship is successful may depend on several criteria. For example, the personalities of the mentor and employee may be compatible and they may develop a comfortable rapport, but the employee may gain little that is useful to the organization or the employee's career goals. Alternatively, at the opposite extreme, the mentor may have excellent ideas for the employee's development, but personality problems may interfere with their ability to work as a team. The relationship between mentor and employee must be considered at several levels to determine whether the match is successful. Some questions that should be asked periodically throughout the duration of the mentoring relationship are--

- a. Are the goals and objectives of the employee being met?
- b. Is the employee acquiring new skills and knowledge useful to his or her career and to the organization?
- c. Are both professionally satisfied with progress? That is, does the mentor feel that the employee is gaining from mentoring and that the time of the mentor is therefore being well spent? Does the employee feel that he or she is getting the kind of advice, guidance, and support that will improve career potential?
- d. Are both satisfied with the relationship?

Contacts

Contacts, which may include telephone contacts, between mentor and employee should occur not less than quarterly. More frequent contacts are encouraged. The purpose of these contacts is to assess employee progress, to provide the employee an opportunity to obtain mentor feedback, and to consider other career matters.

Mentoring Relationship Phases

There are several phases to a mentor-employee relationship. Being aware that these exist may help to ward off potential problems of each phase and to enhance the positive.

- a. The introductory phase.

(1) In the initial stage of the mentor/employee relationship, they become acquainted, share information concerning their backgrounds, professional qualifications, and experiences. The mentor must gain an understanding of the employee's career goals and potential. The employee should be receptive to the direction and guidance of the mentor. The employee must be willing to discuss his or her professional goals, strengths, and weaknesses so they can design an effective strategy.

(2) As in any new relationship, mentors and employees both initially wish to please each other. Employees may accept uncritically much of what the mentor says, and mentors may shy away from being critical when the employee does not meet the mentor's expectations. However, this is an important beginning to the relationship.

(3) Both must establish their professional acceptability to each other during this time. The employee must convince the mentor that he or she is right for the mentoring relationship, and must persuade the mentor that time devoted to the employee is being well spent.

b. The developmental phase. During this phase, both mentor and employee are busy establishing the following ground rules for the professional relationship:

- (1) How they will relate to each other.
- (2) When and under what circumstances they will meet,
- (3) How their relationship in other places (social or professional) will function.
- (4) How advice will be given, and how acted upon.

c. The implementation phase. During this period, the employee systematically acquires the skills, knowledge, and abilities that are the focus of the mentoring experience. Throughout this phase, the employee may participate in a variety of experiences including "shadowing" of the mentor throughout a day or longer period, seminars, training and developmental assignments, discussions with the mentor, or other experiences which contribute to professional development.

d. The post-developmental phase. At some point, the mentor and employee will begin to realize that there is little left for the mentor to share with the employee at this stage of the employee's career, and the process of ending the relationship will begin. This has been called by some the "disillusionment" phase when the employee begins to question the mentor's continued usefulness in providing guidance. The employee begins to show more independence from the mentor and may begin to question the mentor directly concerning advice or guidance. This is a healthy sign because it means that the employee is, much like a student to a teacher, beginning to assert an independence from the mentor.

e. Termination phase. The final phase in the mentor-employee relationship is ending it. This can result in complete separation, as when the employee moves on to another organization and location and severs any contacts, or in some form of continued contacts. It is not unusual that after the professional mentor-employee relationship ends, the two individuals will remain in contact as friends or close acquaintances. The important thing is that the

professional mentoring relationship be clearly terminated so that the employee may continue his or her professional career independently, to seek other mentors, and perhaps to begin mentoring others. This may be one of the more important of the role model examples that the mentor will give the employee.

Employee Expectations of Mentors

When employees are asked what they want or expect from a mentor, typical responses include:

- Encouragement;
- Support;
- Honesty;
- Candid Information & Advice;
- “Big Picture” View;
- Guidance;
- Suggestions;
- Honest Appraisal of Capabilities;
- Help with “Vision”;
- Assistance in Making “Good” Choices;
- Information on Opportunities Available/Possible and Help in Defining & Reaching Goals;
- Benefit of Mentor’s Experiences: What Did and Did Not Work;
- An Effort to Really Understand Employee’s Abilities & Concerns;
- Help in Setting Up Rotational Assignments;
- Availability, without Interruptions;
- Non-Attribution, Honest Discussions about Tough Issues;
- Assistance in Formulating a Cohesive Plan;
- Help Developing a “Network” - Introduction to “Key Players”; and
- Idea Stimulation, Insight to Career Paths.

APPENDIX C

Potential Pitfalls of Mentoring Relationships

As with any relationship, there are potential pitfalls in mentoring. Most are organizational or administrative and can be resolved through the application of accepted management practices and ordinary problem-solving techniques. Some arise substantially out of the relationship of mentor to employee.

Typical Situations and Resolutions

Some typical situations and suggested methods of resolution are described as follows:

a. Resentment or jealousy. Resentment or jealousy by other employees not selected for mentoring or those who chose not to participate. Although difficult to resolve, the key to such problems is in stressing the professional nature of the mentoring relationship with colleagues, supervisors, and managers. Mentors and employees alike must be very careful not to allow their relationship to show or appear to be showing favoritism. For example, training or developmental opportunities must continue to be offered to employees based on normal considerations such as mission and organizational requirements and individual development plans.

b. Nonprofessional appearance. Mentoring may create the appearance of other than a professional relationship. The relationship between mentor and employee is a professional one. Maintaining this professional relationship visibly and consistently can reduce, if not eliminate, perceptions that the relationships have any other purpose. This is particularly important when the relationship is cross-gender. Mentors and employees must ensure that their meetings are for clear purposes related to mentoring, that there is visible progress by the employee toward legitimate mentoring goals, and that office relationships between the mentor and employee remain professional.

c. Supervisory and mentor/employee conflicts. The supervisor of the employee may resent the influence of the mentor, may not wish to approve necessary time away from the job to accomplish mentoring goals, or may have priorities which conflict with goals for the employee. Mentoring efforts that will affect the workplace environment must always be developed in cooperation with the employee's immediate supervisor so that there is no conflict with the supervisor's work plans for the employee.

d. The mentor must be careful to communicate regularly with the supervisor and be especially cautious when suggesting tasks that require time away from the employee's worksite. The mentor should seek advice and guidance from the supervisor to demonstrate his or her concern that development of the employee be a joint effort.

e. Selecting mentors. It is important to select an employee and mentor who can be expected to remain in their current positions for a sufficient amount of time for substantive mentoring to take place. Although benefits can accrue from even relatively short associations, short periods are less likely to be useful to an employee's development. This may also cause instability by involving the employee in a series of short term mentoring relationships. Mentors

and employees should plan for mentoring tasks that can be completed in a timeframe that is reasonable given a known or anticipated departure date of the mentor or employee.

f. Terminating the relationship. The employee will, at some point, have benefited from a particular mentoring relationship to the extent possible at a given stage of career development. When this occurs, mentors must be able to gracefully remove themselves from the relationship. The employee may initiate the termination of the relationship. Ideally, the mentor should have been alert to the progress of the employee, and should suggest that the employee seek another mentor for a continuing stage of development. Employees should understand that the contact with the mentor and with those other managers and executives met through the mentor are an important part of the networking essential in any career. They should also make the effort to retain the mentor as a trusted colleague.

APPENDIX D
Area Assessments for Career Planning
Professional Development

Knowledge of DeCA

1. Have you read DeCA's Strategic Plan?
2. Do you understand DeCA's mission, strategic goals, and strategic objectives?
3. Do you understand the roles and functions carried out by the various organizational elements that support DeCA's commissaries, such as:
 - Business Areas at DeCA Headquarters and Regions
 - Marketing Business Unit
 - Accounts Control Sections
 - Central Distribution Centers
4. Do you understand how your organization and job fit into the DeCA "big picture"?
5. Are you familiar with the full range of jobs and functions that exist in DeCA?
6. Do you understand the concept of "unit cost" and what it means to reduce unit cost per output?
7. Do you understand the concept of "multi-functional" jobs and what it means for you as you plan your career development?

Career Planning, Personal Development, and Education

1. Have you thought about your career plans and established career goals and objectives?
2. Do you have an up-to-date résumé?
3. Have you considered what other positions or jobs you would like to progress to within the DeCA organization?
4. Are you interested in acquiring new job skills in more than one area, and if so, which areas appeal to you? (Some areas to consider, for example, include programming, budget, acquisition, store operations, buying, and category management.)
5. Have you worked in more than one function and organization within DeCA?
6. Are you geographically and organizationally mobile?

7. Are you interested in performing more than one job function in the Agency, and if so, which additional functions appeal to you?
8. Are you interested in performing work assignments involving greater use of technology and new processes?
9. Are you proficient in the use of personal computers and the software applications currently available for use in DeCA?
10. Have you talked with your supervisor or with other advisors about career guidance and direction?
11. Have you asked your supervisor for cross training or other developmental experiences?
12. Have you taken the initiative to further your own growth and development by taking college courses or correspondence courses?
13. Have you made a habit of reading for development such items as management books, DeCA publications, or trade journals?
14. Do you have a college degree?
15. If you are taking college courses, do you know the requirements for degree completion?
16. Do you know about DeCA's educational tuition assistance program and the procedures for applying for this assistance?
17. Do you know what educational benefits are available to you at the installation where you are working?
18. Do you know how and where to receive counseling on educational opportunities?
19. Are you a member of an acquisition career field?
20. If so, do you understand how the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) of 1990 affects your career?
21. Are you certified to the appropriate level in your career field?
22. Are you familiar with the Commissary Career Program (CCP)?
23. Do you understand that the CCP is not just one program but includes a number of programs such as:

- Commissary Successor Development Program (CSDP);
- Department Manager Development Program (Upward Mobility Program);
- Commissary Career Intern Program;
- Candidate evaluation, referral and selection system for 1144 series positions.

24. Do you have the skills you need to advance to the positions you would prefer in DeCA?

Job Knowledge & Performance

☐ Job Knowledge and Training

1. Do you know whom to ask for specific information or assistance in performing your job?
2. Do you have the appropriate tools, supplies, and equipment to complete your job tasks satisfactorily?
3. Do you believe that you have the necessary training and are equipped with the knowledge, skill, and abilities to perform your current job effectively?
4. Do you believe that you need specific on-the-job training to improve your job performance, and if so, in what specific areas?
5. Do you believe that you require additional off-site training in any of the areas that are applicable to your job?
6. Do you know how to use the computer, the Internet, and appropriate software required to perform your current duties?
7. Do you have a current training Individual Development Plan (IDP)?
8. Are you aware that DeCA has established specific occupational training plans for each major job function within the Agency? Have you reviewed the pertinent ones in DeCAH 50-5 with your supervisor in preparing your IDP?
9. Do you know how to enroll in correspondence courses?
10. Are you aware of the other training methods commonly used in DeCA including: (1) on-the-job training, (2) off-site training, (3) long-term training, (4) self-development, and (5) attendance at professional meetings, conferences, and symposia?
11. Do you know how to request participation in the training methods listed above?

12. Do you know how training is requested and approved?
13. Are you aware that tuition assistance may be available for mission related college courses?
14. What steps have you taken to prepare yourself for future career advancement through continuing education, self-development, or rotational assignments?

Performance Management & Awards

1. Do you have a current performance plan that covers all aspects of your position?
2. Does your performance plan contain performance elements and standards that are linked to DeCA's strategic business plan?
3. Do you know and understand what your position's responsibilities are?
4. Do your performance standards clearly define what results are expected in the completion of your job assignments?
5. Do you know when your next performance appraisal is due?
6. Do you periodically record job accomplishments to help your rater complete your performance report or appraisal?
7. Have you told your supervisor about any customer feedback you have received and any accomplishments you have made?
8. Have you told your supervisor about off-duty activities and interests such as volunteer work, hobbies, and community service?
9. Have you ever received any incentive awards or decorations?
10. Are you aware of the various awards and decorations that can be used to recognize employee accomplishments that exceed expectations or performance requirements?

Personal Growth

Health and Wellness

1. Do you have an exercise or personal fitness program?

2. Do you feel the need to personally participate in efforts such as tobacco cessation classes or stress reduction or management programs?
3. Have you had a physical/dental examination within the last three years?
4. Do you practice safety in the workplace and take action to report all unsafe conditions promptly to either your supervisor or to the proper safety authority?

Ethical Behavior and Outside Interests

1. Are you aware of the Code of Ethics for Government Service and what it requires of Federal employees?
2. Are you familiar with DeCA's ethics guidance and policies?
3. Are you aware of the conditions under which you may engage in private employment outside your Federal employment, acquire, or retain private business, professional, or other interests or enterprises?

Retirement Planning

1. Do you plan to retire within the next 3 to 5 years and have you made appropriate plans for retirement?
2. Have you attended a retirement planning seminar?
3. Do you participate in the Thrift Savings Plan and are you familiar with the features that it offers in planning for your retirement?

APPENDIX E

Tools for Career Planning

Professional Development

Career Planning, Personal Development, and Education

If you plan to spend a significant amount of your working life in DeCA and advance in grade and responsibility at the same time, it is important that you give some thought to how you would like your career to progress. This thinking should be reflected in some type of long-term plan reflecting your ultimate career goals. You should be flexible to opportunities that arise after outlining your plan, because quite often careers can take paths that we do not expect and lead to opportunities and experience we had never considered before. By having a direction you want to follow, you can translate it into short-term goals to help you achieve your long-range objectives. Your mentor, supervisor, and higher-level managers are invaluable sources of information in developing your career plans. They can offer the “real world” perspective on how to think about your career and how to pursue your goals. They can also provide you with insight into future job opportunities within the Agency.

Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) and Acquisition Certification

If you are pursuing a career in acquisition, you must understand and plan for how DAWIA affects you. DAWIA was enacted to ensure the quality and professionalism of the DoD Acquisition Workforce. You must adhere to the requirements of DAWIA in filling any DoD acquisition position. The act defined 15 categories of acquisition positions and mandated the establishment of prerequisite education, training, and experience standards for every position. Positions of higher authority and responsibility have more stringent standards. Critical acquisition positions can only be filled by civilian employees in grades GS-14 or higher (or military grades of O-5 and above). These high-level positions have additional statutory qualification requirements. DAWIA established 11 acquisition career fields. Employees demonstrate that they meet the education, training, and experience standards for a given position by becoming certified to one of three levels within one of these 11 career fields. The certification levels are: Level I—Basic or Entry; Level II—Intermediate or Journeyman; and Level III—Advanced or Senior. The Defense Acquisition University has defined the standards for each certification level within each career field. You can visit their web site (www.acq.osd.mil/dau/appc.html) to review these requirements, and factor achieving them into your career plan. It is possible to become certified in more than one career field.

Commissary Career Program (CCP)

Many positions in DeCA are in the commissary management, GS-1144, career field. If you decide to pursue a career in the commissary management field, you must know about the CCP. The CCP is not just a program for the referral of candidates for GS-1144 vacancies. It is a

comprehensive program designed to recruit, develop, advance, train, and retain a cadre of well-qualified, highly skilled individuals to fill positions at all levels in the agency. Since you are currently a DeCA employee, you may be interested in the Commissary Career Intern Program, The Department Manager Development Program (Upward Mobility Program), and the candidate evaluation and referral process. Since a great number of GS-1144 positions are located at store level, mobility is a key part of the CCP. The more mobile you are, the greater the opportunities to broaden your career and advance to your potential. If becoming a commissary manager is your goal, a mentor who is presently a GS-1144 is the best choice. A Store Director will be able to provide specific advice to help you enhance your qualifications through additional education, developmental assignments, and other career broadening experiences to prepare yourself for store management positions. To learn more about the programs included in the CCP and how to apply for CCP positions, you may want to review DeCA Directive 50-18, Commissary Career Program. For those who are currently in the GS-1144 series, you may want to consider the opportunities for growth and advancement that are provided through participation in the Commissary Successor Development Program (CSDP). This competitive training and development program is focused on developing the future leaders of DeCA. Intake for the CSDP is through a competitive announcement and is limited to GS-1144 employees at grades GS-12, 13, and 14. A more thorough explanation of the CSDP is in the DeCA Directive 50-18.

Job Knowledge and Performance

Job Knowledge and Training

Having the right resources and skills is vital to effective job performance. Typically, the employee is in the best position to know what is needed to do the job better. Supervisors should discuss job roles and responsibilities with each employee to ensure that they have the necessary tools not only to accomplish the assigned tasks, but also to improve job performance continuously.

Training and Development

The point of contact for more information on the following *training and development* topics is the HQ DeCA Directorate of Human Resources and Workforce Management (RMH) and/or Activity Training Coordinators at various DeCA organizations.

Graduation from high school or college does not mark the end of our need for education. Today's fast-paced high-technology work environment demands that training and development be a continuous process. There are numerous reasons why employees must be trained. New employees need to acquire the skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary to proficiently perform their jobs. Even seasoned employees will need training as work methods and procedures change, new responsibilities are assumed, workplace equipment and technology is updated, and new philosophies and programs are introduced. As DeCA evolves to meet future challenges, employees will need to develop multi-functional skills to meet those challenges.

Do a self-assessment of the areas where you think you need additional training, and work with your supervisor, and perhaps your co-workers, to amplify these ideas and identify potential training sources. Take advantage of any local or on-the-job training resources and opportunities that may be available at your work site or installation. Make sure that you identify training needs early in the fiscal year to allow you to schedule and complete the desired training if it is approved.

Planning Training and Development Activities

A properly trained and developed employee seldom occurs by accident. Both short and long-term planning is essential. One of the primary tools used to determine needs is the Individual Development Plan (IDP). The IDP, DeCA form 50-53, traditionally is considered a record of the training and development needed by an employee primarily for his or her current position. In contrast, the Mentoring Assessment Plan focuses on long-term, long-range career developmental goals. The IDP should be based on an agreement between the employee and supervisor as to what training and development is needed to bridge the gap through current knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) and the KSAs needed for performing present and future job requirements. DeCA HQ requires organizations to turn in IDPs for all their employees once a year, so that an overall agency training plan can be made. Organizations can use the IDPs as a guide for resourcing and procuring the training needed for an employee. You should ensure that you and your supervisor complete/update your specifically tailored IDP at least annually.

DeCA has also established specific Occupational Training Plans (OTPs) for each job function within the Agency. These can serve as excellent references when developing IDPs. Each OTP identifies the critical KSAs in the targeted occupation and then outlines the required training needs as well as the job-specific training and the developmental training needs. The OTP even lists the preferred training sources and methods and the time frame for accomplishing the training for the various types of jobs within the occupational area.

Although the current OTPs focus on individual, i.e., stovepipe, occupational series, e.g. Store Worker, WG-6914, and Personnel Management Specialist, GS-201, more comprehensive training plans and guides will soon be developed to cover DeCA's emerging multi-functional jobs. See DeCA Handbook 50-5 for a comprehensive list of the available OTPs.

Methods/Sources of Training

Just as there are numerous reasons for training, there are also numerous methods and sources available to accomplish training and development needs. Among the more commonly used means in DeCA are:

On-the-Job Training (OJT). The primary purpose of OJT is to aid management in developing and progressing individual employees. Most often, OJT is used to achieve three major goals: orientation, job proficiency training, and upgrade training. OJT can be a low-cost method for new employees to acquire skills and learn organizational procedures. OJT is most effective when a supervisor or experienced worker serves as a trainer or "mentor" for the new employee.

Rotational assignments can become another form of OJT for employees to increase their job skills.

Off-Site Training. Whenever training needs cannot be met through job sites resources, there are a wide variety of off-site training opportunities available. Many DoD courses can be attended with little or no tuition charges; however, the organization will usually have to pay the associated travel and per diem costs. Courses conducted by private vendors, to include colleges and universities, may be the only alternative to meet some highly technical and specific training needs.

Correspondence Courses Correspondence courses on a wide range of subjects are available to all employees. The agency encourages the use of correspondence courses when the content is pertinent to DeCA's mission, functions, and activities; and when it is evident that developmental benefits (e.g., improvements in the conduct, supervision, or management of work activities) will result from employee participation. Moreover, this type of training is particularly cost-effective since it involves no travel and per diem expenses.

Long-Term Training. There are many professional and long-term (more than 120 work days) training programs in which employees may be enrolled on a full-time basis. Funding and selection for these extended training programs is at DeCA HQ level, and the training will be off-site. Participation in long-term training is limited to current full-time DeCA employees with career or career-conditional appointments and more than one year of continuous service with the Agency.

Self Development. One way to improve your abilities and enhance career potential is through developmental activities you elect to do on your own. Among the various options available are:

- a. Professional Development. All employees are encouraged to stay abreast of the latest trends and developments within their occupation. This can be accomplished through a variety of means to include use of professional journals and publications (many of which are available in libraries) and membership in professional societies and organizations.
- b. Continuing Education. Colleges and universities bring a variety of degree programs to Federal agencies and installations. The HQ DeCA Human Resources Directorate and/or Activity Training Coordinators can provide information on what is available.

Attendance at Professional Meetings, Conferences, and Symposia

Under the proper circumstances, DeCA policy permits the use of training funds to cover the costs associated with employees attending professional meetings, conferences, and symposia. Such events can provide important opportunities for exchanging information relevant to the conduct or management of Agency programs. It is DeCA's policy to sponsor an employee's attendance at meetings, conferences, and symposia when the primary purpose of the event is training or development; the content is pertinent to DeCA's mission, functions, and activities; and attendance will result in improvements in the conduct, supervision, or management of work services.

Tuition Assistance

It is DeCA's policy to provide tuition assistance for employees taking mission-related courses through state-accredited institutions of higher learning. However, Federal law prohibits the Agency from providing tuition assistance to employees for the sole purpose of obtaining an academic degree. Employees will use DD Form 1556 to apply for tuition assistance and route it as required for approval and funding certification.

Training Attendance

Before most types of training can be attended, formal approval is needed. DD Form 1556 (Request, Authorization, Agreement, Certification of Training and Reimbursement) is the vehicle for requesting, approving, and authorizing payment for civilian training. If tuition, fees, or TDY expenses are required for the training, organizational resource managers should be consulted to ensure adequate funding is available. Anytime you are scheduled for training and circumstances arise which will prevent your attendance, you should immediately notify your supervisor and/or training coordinator.

Computer Applications

The desktop computer, the DeCA computer network and its associated software applications, and the Internet have become important tools in the performance of many of our jobs within DeCA. To the extent that this is true in your job, you must be comfortable with the relevant hardware and software applications. If you need help in using your computer or in correcting a problem, your first stop should be your supervisor or your peers in your work unit. Technical assistance is also available from the staff that maintains DeCA's computer systems and network. If you need training on specific hardware or software topics, work with your supervisor to identify and request appropriate training courses.

Performance Management and Awards

The point of contact for more information on the following *performance management and awards* is your servicing Human Resources Specialist.

Performance Plans and Feedback

Understanding your job responsibilities and your supervisor's expectations, and how well you are meeting them, is a critical part of maintaining a high level of job performance. Employee performance plans are the mechanism used in DeCA to identify expectations and track performance. Performance plans should be linked to DeCA's strategic plan and strategic objectives. A performance appraisal is the result of a supervisor's continuous process of observation and evaluation of an employee's performance and the results achieved. It should reveal how well the employee actually performs in comparison to the requirements of the job outlined in the performance standards. It may indicate that the employee so exceeds the job requirements as to deserve special recognition, or it may disclose that a portion of the employee's

work needs improvement. It is important that you have regular feedback sessions with your supervisor so that you can evaluate how well you are doing and make adjustments as necessary. The feedback meeting should be conducted one-on-one between the supervisor and the employee, and the discussion should focus on duties and job requirements in addition to performance expectations.

Informal discussions between the employee and supervisor are considered a normal part of supervision. They should be frequent enough to ensure mutual understanding of expectations, accomplishments, and any changing job requirements that may occur. They also offer an opportunity for employees to discuss any problems they may have encountered in work assignments. It is critical that you provide your supervisor with accurate, concise information about your performance accomplishments during the rating cycle. This material can be used to supplement observations made by the supervisor to document your total job performance. The annual performance appraisal should not come as a surprise if all performance feedback or planning has been accomplished throughout the rating cycle.

Awards

Proper recognition of outstanding performance is vital in maintaining morale and encouraging improved performance. There are a variety of awards that can be used to recognize employee accomplishments that exceed expectations or performance requirements. See DeCAD 50-8 for information on types of awards used in DeCA.

Awards should be granted as a motivational tool to recognize the accomplishments of a particular employee or group of employees, and to motivate others to achieve the same level of excellence. Supervisors have discretion in deciding when an award is appropriate and the level and/or amount that should be recommended. However, most organizations have awards program goals that include restrictions on the total amount of money available for cash awards.

Personal Growth

Health and Wellness

Regular exercise, proper diet and weight control, and a healthy life style are key factors in maintaining strong physical and mental health and contribute to a positive attitude. Smoking, substance abuse, lack of exercise or proper diet, and failure to deal with life's stresses can be very debilitating to the individual, their family, and the organization.

For exercise to be effective, you need to maintain a routine. One of the best ways to do that is to develop and follow a personal fitness program. The program will document your fitness goals and allow you to track your progress. It will also help you establish an exercise routine. A comprehensive program will include both aerobic and anaerobic (weight) workouts. Professional trainers can provide assistance in identifying fitness goals and developing a fitness program. Check with the available health and wellness facilities at your installation to determine what services are available to civilian employees. As an alternative, local area private sector

health clubs usually include the services of a professional trainer when you become a member of the facility.

The use of tobacco products represents the single most damaging threat to a person's health. Tobacco temporarily elevates blood pressure, makes the heart work harder, and is a significant risk factor for heart disease, lung cancer, and other serious health problems. Tobacco cessation classes are available at many Federal installations as well as from private sector health system providers.

Safety

Employees must assume responsibility for safety in two areas. The first has to do with your own safety. Machines are guarded as effectively as their practical use will permit. However, machines cannot think and cannot by their own volition keep out of your way. Horseplay, thoughtlessness, loose clothing, and improper use of machines are the most frequent causes of injury and death to workers. Your second responsibility has to do with the safety of others. Keep in mind the fact that you and the other fellow do not always have a second chance. It is your duty to obey safety rules and regulations and take every reasonable precaution to avoid injury to yourself and others. Any on-the-job injury, regardless of how small, should be reported to your supervisor as soon as possible. Any unsafe working condition should likewise be immediately reported to your supervisor or to an appropriate safety official.

Ethical Behavior and Outside Interests

The point of contact for more information on the following *ethical behavior and outside interest* topics is DeCA General Counsel.

Code of Ethics for Government Service

The following general principles apply to every employee.

- Public service is a public trust, requiring employees to place loyalty to the Constitution, the laws and ethical principles above private gain.
- Employees shall not hold financial interests that conflict with the conscientious performance of duty.
- Employees shall not engage in financial transactions using non-public Government information or allow the improper use of such information to further any private interest.
- An employee shall not solicit or accept any gift or other item of monetary value from any person or entity seeking official action from, doing business with, or conducting activities regulated by the employee's agency, or whose interests may be substantially affected by the performance or nonperformance of the employee's duties.

Outside Employment and Interests

You may engage in private employment and acquire or retain private business, professional, or other interests or enterprises provided:

- There is no interference with your efficiency in your government position.
- There is no conflict with the interests of the government.
- There would not reasonably arise any criticism or suspicion of conflicts of interest or duties.
- There is no solicitation for the sale of any commodity or service to any employee by an appropriated/nonappropriated fund employee on the installation where you are employed.

Retirement Planning

The Point of Contact for more information on the following *Retirement and Thrift Savings Plan* topics is DeCA Human Resources Operations Division.

Retirement

If you plan to retire in the next 3 - 5 years, you should attend a Retirement Planning Seminar. Permanent employees are generally covered by one of two federal retirement plans:

a. The Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) covers most permanent employees hired before 1984. Employees pay 7 percent of their salary into this retirement system and the government contributes an equal amount. CSRS employees do not pay into Social Security; however, they do pay an additional 1.45 percent of their salary into Medicare.

(1) Retirement eligibility is attained at:

- Age 55 with 30 years service;
- Age 60 with 20 years service; or
- Age 62 with 5 years service.

You may obtain an estimate of your retirement annuity by using the Internet. The web site for obtaining a retirement annuity estimate is www.seniors.gov/fedcalc/html.

b. The Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) covers most permanent and term employees first hired after 1983. Federal Employees Retirement System is a 3-part program that includes a basic retirement annuity plan (employees contribute .8 percent of salary into basic retirement), plus Social Security (employees contribute 7.65 percent of salary into Social Security), plus a Thrift Savings Plan (see details in the Thrift Savings Plan section). New employees are furnished a pamphlet entitled "FERS, Federal Employees Retirement System" (publication number RI 90-1), which provides details about the retirement system.

(1) Retirement eligibility is attained at:

- Age 60 with 20 years service;
- Age 62 with 5 years service; or
- The "minimum retirement age" (MRA) with 30 years service. The MRA is age 55 until the year 2002, when it begins to rise by 2 months per year until it reaches age 57 in the year 2027.

(2) Reduced retirement benefits are also available to employees who have reached the MRA and have at least 10 years of creditable service. The reduction in annuity is 5 percent per year for each year the employee is under age 62.

c. Disability Retirement benefits are available to CSRS and FERS employees who become unable to continue work in their federal positions because of disability. To be eligible for disability retirement, CSRS employees must have completed at least 5 years of civilian service and FERS employees must have completed at least 18 months of creditable civilian service. The employee must also have become totally disabled for continued work in their current position or any other vacant position at the same grade level for which the employee is qualified.

d. Federal Benefits (i.e., health and life insurance) may be continued after retirement in most circumstances. To be eligible to retain government health insurance in retirement, the employee must have been continuously enrolled under Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) for 5 years immediately preceding the start date of a retirement annuity, or have been continuously enrolled since the employee's first opportunity to enroll if the first opportunity was less than 5 years.

Thrift Savings Plan.

The Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) is a tax-deferred retirement savings plan similar to a 401K plan in private industry. Thrift Savings Plan participation is voluntary and open to employees covered by FERS or CSRS (see section on retirement). It offers all participants:

- Tax deferral on contributions of up to 10 percent of basic pay for employees covered by FERS or 5 percent of basic pay for employees covered by CSRS
- A choice of three investments funds
- A loan program
- Portable benefits if you leave Government service
- A choice of withdrawal options

If you are covered by FERS, you also receive:

- An agency automatic contribution of 1 percent of your basic pay to your TSP account, whether you contribute your own money or not
- Agency matching contributions on your own contributions (on up to 5 percent of your basic pay each pay period)

For more details, see the booklet, "Summary of the Thrift Savings Plan for Federal Employees" which is furnished to eligible employees.

APPENDIX F

Mentoring Assessment Plan

Name:
Position:

Organization:
Location:

Professional Development	Completion Goal
1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.	
Job Knowledge & Performance	Completion Goal
1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.	
Personal Growth	Completion Goal
1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.	

Employee Date

Mentor Date

Supervisor Date

APPENDIX G

Reading List for Self-Development

- *Leading Change*, John P. Kotter
- *Raving Fans*, Kenneth Blanchard & Sheldon Bowles
- *Cost and Effect: Using Integrated Cost Systems to Drive Profitability and Performance*, Robert S. Kaplan & Robin Cooper
- *Who Moved My Cheese?: An Amazing Way to Deal With Change in Your Work and In Your Life*, Spencer Johnson & Kenneth H. Blanchard
- *High Five!: The Magic of Working Together*, Kenneth H. Blanchard, et.al.
- *Fish!: A Remarkable Way to Boost Morale and Improve Results*, Steven C. Lundin, et.al.
- *First, Break All the Rules: What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently*, Marcus Buckingham & Curt Coffman
- *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow These and People Will Follow You*, John C. Maxwell
- *Failing Forward: Turning Mistakes Into Stepping Stones for Success*, John C. Maxwell
- *Sacred Cows Make the Best Burgers: Developing Change Ready People and Organizations*, Robert J. Kriegel & David Brandt
- *Life Strategies: Doing What Works, Doing What Matters*, Phillip C. McGraw
- *The Life Strategies Workbook: Exercises and Self Tests to Help You and Your Life*, Phillip C. McGraw
- *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff at Work: Simple Ways to Minimize Stress and Conflict While Bringing Out the Best in Yourself and Others*, Richard Carlson
- *Results-Based Leadership*, David Ulrich, Jack Zenger & Norman Smallwood
- *We Were Soldiers Once...And Young*, Lt. Gen. Harold C. Moore (Ret.) & Joseph Galloway

APPENDIX H

Mentoring Program Forms

DeCA MENTORING PROGRAM
Memorandum of Understanding

Participant

I have received an overview of the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) Mentoring Program and understand its content. As a participant, I agree to, but am not limited to the following commitments:

1. I will be an assertive learner and regularly interact with my mentor and others. I will develop and seek to improve my skills, as I pursue my self-development. I will be receptive to feedback, coaching and counseling.
2. I will take responsibility for my own development. I will actively seek challenges and greater responsibility. I will take the initiative to take classes, enroll in programs, and request or volunteer for developmental assignments that will enhance my career.
3. I will seek and consider the guidance and advice of my mentor and other advisors. I will participate in regular discussions to share ideas and experiences and to seek guidance, feedback and expertise.
4. I will watch others and learn from their successes and failures. I will be honest about myself and be comfortable asking for help and feedback.

I have read and understand this document and realize that I am consenting to participate in the DeCA Mentoring Program. I understand that my immediate supervisor is the ultimate person that I will report to and he/she will approve all training and developmental assignments.

Mentee's Name _____ /Title _____

Signature _____ /Date _____

Location/Address _____

Home Address _____

Work No. _____ /Home No. _____
(Commercial/DSN)

Supervisor's Name _____

Mentor's Name _____

DeCA MENTORING PROGRAM
Memorandum of Understanding

Mentor

This is to certify that I have agreed to serve as a mentor for _____, a participant in the Defense Commissary Agency Mentoring Program. In so doing, I am obligated to but not limited to, the following:

1. I commit to a long-term relationship and will set aside specific time to mentor the participant.
2. I will keep abreast of the latest training concepts in the mentoring field. I also promise to be available for mentorship training sessions as they are scheduled.
3. I will, to the best of my ability, use my position and expertise to assist the participant in fulfilling his/her training plan. I will also assist the participant with career goals as well as short and long term career planning.
4. I will serve as liaison between the parties involved (the participant and the supervisor) to facilitate the communication necessary for the participant's development and career growth.

I have read and understand this document, and realize that I am consenting to serve as a mentor to this participant. I further understand that serving as a mentor in this program will require me to be available on a regular basis to discuss career goals, training needs, and developmental assignments with the participant.

Mentor's Name _____/Title _____

Mentor's Signature _____/Date _____

Location/Address _____

Home Address _____

Work No. _____/Home No. _____
(Commercial/DSN)

Mentee's Name _____

Supervisor's Name _____

DeCA MENTORING PROGRAM
Memorandum of Understanding

Immediate Supervisor

As the supervisor of _____, I hereby certify that I have been fully informed of the Defense Commissary Agency's Mentoring Program in which this individual wishes to participate, and am aware of the commitment it requires of the participants.

I understand and approve that this participant: (1) will be required to communicate with his/her mentor on a regular basis; and (2) will be expected to work on objectives, training, and skills that will enhance career goals.

I have reviewed the participant's Individual Development Plan/Mentoring Plan and fully agree to this level of participation, and anticipate no work related situations interfering with the program. Further, I will support and encourage the participant's efforts to pursue career growth and development.

The participant has my full approval and support.

Supervisor's Name _____/Title _____

Supervisor's Signature _____/Date _____

Location/Address _____

Work Phone No. _____/Home No. _____
(Commercial/DSN)

Employee's Name _____

Mentor's Name _____