



Command Directed Evaluations (CDE)

Sometimes commanding officers are faced with a service member who clearly has psychological health concerns but refuses to seek help or does not acknowledge there is a problem. Service members should be encouraged to voluntarily seek care if they need it, but there are situations where a commander may direct a service member to undergo an evaluation. Because this is a complicated area with specific guidelines that must be followed, leaders must be familiar with CDE procedures. This fact sheet provides basic information about CDEs.

WHEN IS A CDE APPROPRIATE?

Regulations allow a commanding officer (CO) to direct a service member to undergo a psychological health evaluation in very limited circumstances. A CDE is appropriate if the CO believes that the member's psychological state renders him or her a risk to himself or herself or others or may be affecting his or her ability to carry out the mission. A CDE can provide the CO with information needed to make an appropriate administrative action, potentially answering questions like:

- Does the member have a behavioral health condition that is contributing to their current difficulties?
- What is the potential for the member to return to full duty if given successful treatment?
- Is the member suitable for carrying a weapon at the current time?
- Can the member have access to classified information?
- Is the member qualified for deployment?

Command directed evaluations may be carried out in either a routine (non-emergency) or an emergency basis, depending on the situation.

ROUTINE CDES ARE USED IN CASES WHERE THERE IS NO IMMEDIATE CONCERN FOR A PERSON'S SAFETY

Requesting a routine CDE involves several steps for the CO:

STEP 1

The CO must consult with a privileged mental health provider to determine whether a CDE is appropriate. The mental health provider shall provide advice and recommendations about whether a CDE is appropriate and whether it warrants an emergency CDE. If a routine

CDE is recommended, the CO should forward the mental health provider a letter formally requesting a CDE (see enclosure 3 on DoD Instruction 6490.4 for letter format).

STEP 2

Provide a written letter to the service member at least two business days prior to the evaluation which includes specific information detailed in instructions (see enclosure (4) in DoDI 6490.4).

STEP 3

Forward the request for a CDE to the mental health provider. All available documentation about the service member's problem behaviors should be provided by the commander in order for the mental health provider to conduct the assessment. Examples of relevant documentation are Article 15s, letters of reprimand, letters of counseling, enlisted performance reports and other performance reports.

STEP 4

The mental health provider may need to contact the commander to clarify any issues concerning the process or procedures if he/she feels the evaluation was improperly requested per DoD Directive 6490.1 or DoDD 7050.6 (reference (c)). If the mental health provider finds impropriety within the reporting procedure, he/she must report the evidence through the chain of command of the referring CO.

STEP 5

Once the evaluation is completed by the mental health provider, he/she will provide written and verbal feedback to the service member's CO. Though it may take more than one appointment to complete the evaluation, written feedback should include a diagnosis (if applicable), treatment recommendations and any administrative management recommendations to the CO.



EMERGENCY CDES ARE USED WHEN THERE IS AN IMMEDIATE CONCERN FOR SAFETY

Emergency CDEs are conducted if a mental health provider recommends it during a consultation with the CO or if the CO believes that one of these situations exist:

- The service member has a severe mental or substance use disorder (e.g., hallucinating, delusional).
- There seems to be an intent to seriously harm self or others or by having dangerous behaviors they may inadvertently cause harm to others.
- There is actual, attempted or threatened violence.

The following are the steps that need to be taken when an emergency CDE is determined to be necessary by the CO and mental health provider:

STEP 1

Ensure the service member is accompanied at all times and he/she and all surrounding individuals are free of danger. Depending on the circumstance and timing, consult with a mental health provider before sending the service member for emergency CDE; otherwise, contact the provider as soon as practical. It is also recommended that any intended victims (if applicable) are notified as well.



STEP 2

The service member must be safely transported to the nearest health care provider for care as soon as practical. Security or emergency services may be needed to assist in the transport for the safety of the service member and others.

STEP 3

The service member must be provided a statement of rights and a letter explaining the reason for the emergency evaluation from his/her CO as soon as practical. In cases where a mental health provider was not able to be consulted, the letter must explain why this was not possible.

STEP 4

The CO must provide a letter (as soon as practical) to the mental health provider explaining the reason for the CDE. This letter should be delivered when the service member (but not by the service member) is sent for care to document concerns, circumstances and observations of the service member leading to the emergency CDE. Remember that service members have legal protection from being inappropriately referred for a CDE. The CDE process is not to be used to buy time, as a disciplinary tool or as a means of reprisal for the individual's attempt or intent to make a lawful communication (DoDD 6490.1).

SOURCES:

For more information, see the service-specific website for managing personnel in distress and/or the following documents:

- DoD Directive 6490.1
Mental Health Evaluations of Members of the Armed Forces
- DoD Instruction 6490.4
Requirements for Mental Health Evaluations of Members of the Armed Forces
- DoD Directive 7050.06
Military Whistleblower Protection