E-PME *Enlisted* PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION

Interpersonal Relationships 4.C.04

Learning Objective(s): DISCUSS the Coast Guard's policies on interpersonal relationships.

Why You Need to Know This

Throughout your career you will develop many professional and personal relationships with other Coast Guard members. The Coast Guard has historically relied upon custom to define the bounds of acceptable relations among its members. Proper social interactions among Coast members have always been encouraged as it enhances unit morale and esprit de corps. However, unduly familiar relationships can undermine the respect for authority which is essential to the Coast Guard's ability to accomplish its mission. The Coast Guard's Core values of honor, respect and devotion to duty anchor our cultural and Service norms, as well as, provide a common foundation for our interpersonal relationships within the Coast Guard.

This lesson provides information you will need to know regarding the Coast Guard's policy on interpersonal relationships.

Topics Covered

This section will cover the following topics:

- Acceptable relationships
- Unacceptable relationships
- Prohibited relationships
- Definition of fraternization
- Resolving unacceptable relationships

At the end of this lesson you will be required to participate in a learning activity. You are encouraged to first review the learning activity and the sign off requirements located in the "**You and Your Supervisor**" section of this lesson. Reviewing this information before you begin the lesson will allow you to take proper notes and focus on key learning points.

Acceptable Personal Relationships

As people work together, different types of relationships arise. Professional relationships sometimes develop into personal relationships. Service custom recognizes that personal relationships, regardless of gender, are acceptable provided they do not, either in actuality or in appearance:

- Jeopardize the members' impartiality
- Undermine the respect for authority inherent in a members' rank or position
- Result in members improperly using the relationship for personal gain or favor
- Violate a punitive article of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ)

Unacceptable Romantic Relationships

Romantic relationships between members are unacceptable when:

- Members have a supervisor and subordinate relationship (including periodic supervision of duty section or watch standing personnel)
- Members are assigned to the same small shore unit (less than 60 members)
- Members are assigned to the same cutter
- The relationship is between chief petty officers (E-7/8/9) and junior enlisted personnel (E-4 and below)
- The relationship is manifested in the work environment in a way which disrupts the effective conduct of daily business

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Prohibited Relationships

Coast Guard policy prohibits the following relationships or conduct, regardless of rank, grade, or position of the persons involved:

- Engaging in sexually intimate behavior aboard any Coast Guard vessel, or in any Coast Guard-controlled work place
- Romantic relationships outside of marriage between commissioned officers and enlisted personnel, this includes Coast Guard Academy cadets and officer candidates (both OCS and ROCI)
- Personal and romantic relationships between instructors at training commands and students

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Fraternization

Fraternization occurs when an officer and enlisted member engage in any relationship that is disruptive to a unit or its mission. In order to maintain good order and discipline, all interpersonal relationships between officer and enlisted personnel must be of a professional manner. Any such relationship that causes disruption to the unit or its mission, may be considered fraternization and the members involved may be punished in accordance with the UCMJ.

Personal Relationships
The custom of the Service accepts personal relationships between officer and enlisted personnel, regardless of gender, so long as they are not disruptive to the unit or its mission.

Romantic Relationships
The custom of the Service prohibits romantic relationships outside of marriage between officer and enlisted personnel. This includes such relationships with members of other military services. Officer and enlisted romantic relationships undermine the respect for authority which is essential for the Coast Guard to accomplish its military mission.

Marriage
The custom of the Service accepts officer and enlisted marriages which occur before the officer receives a commission. Lawful marriage between an officer and enlisted service member does not create a presumption of misconduct or fraternization. However, misconduct, including fraternization, is neither excused nor mitigated by subsequent marriage.

Resolving Unacceptable Relationships and Disciplinary Action

Avoiding unacceptable personal relationships is in the best interest of all concerned.

Avoiding unacceptable and prohibited interpersonal relationships requires that personnel clearly understand Coast Guard policy and its application. The unit training program is an ideal forum to accomplish this.

Early counseling often resolves potential concerns about the characteristics of a relationship and appropriate actions to ensure the relationship develops in a manner consistent with service custom. Counseling may be informal or more formal, including written documentation by administrative remarks, form CG-3307 or an Administrative Letter of Censure. Counseling may include a direct order to terminate a relationship.

Resolving Unacceptable Relationships and Disciplinary Action (continued)

Members may request or a command may recommend reassignment of a member involved in a questionable relationship. However, reassignment is not a preferred option. The Coast Guard is not obligated to reassign personnel due to a members' desires or based solely on a relationship. When reassignment is not an option, members may be directed to end a relationship.

When members do not respond favorably to counseling, comments and marks in officer and enlisted evaluations may be appropriate.

As warranted, commands may recommend separation, removal or withdrawal of advancement recommendations, appointment to another status, or promotions.

Non-judicial punishment or courts-martial may address fraternization or other unlawful or prohibited relationships or conduct.

Learning Activity

To successfully complete this requirement you must complete the **four scenarios** found at the end of this lesson, answer the questions at the end of each scenario and then discuss your answers with your supervisor.

For You and Your Supervisor

In order to meet the sign-off requirement for this lesson **YOU** must perform the following:

1. Prior to meeting with your supervisor, review the contents of this lesson, including review of the four scenarios, and organize your thoughts.
2. Print the scenarios and discuss your answers with your supervisor for sign-off.

Before signing off on this requirement your **SUPERVISOR** must:

1. Make sure the member understands the CG's policy regarding acceptable and unacceptable relationships and fraternization contained in each scenario along with the correct course of action. Note: The answers for all five scenarios can be found on the last page of this lesson.
2. Provide the member with corrective feedback and answer any questions they may have related to this topic.
3. Sign-off the check-off sheet on the Record of Enlisted Professional Military Education (E-PME) Performance Requirements.

References

The references used to develop this lesson can be found at CG Directives(CG-612), www.uscg.mil/directives:

- Coast Guard Personnel Manual COMDTINST M1000.6(series)

Scenario #1

ENS Jones is married to BM1 Smith. They have been married for six years. ENS Jones is a former MK1 who just completed Officer's Candidate School (OCS).

Is this an example of an appropriate or inappropriate relationship? Explain your answer.

Scenario #2

LT Williams is a female department head. YN2 Dawson, a female, is assigned to another Coast Guard command. At a local 5K race, LT Williams meets YN2 Dawson and they engage in a friendly conversation. This conversation reveals that both members share an interest in hiking. The two begin taking weekly hiking trips. These trips continue over an extended period of time. More often than not, LT Williams and YN2 Dawson are the only two individuals on the trip.

Is this an example of an appropriate or inappropriate relationship? Explain your answer.

Scenario #3

OSC Johnson is the OPSEC Coordinator for Sector San Francisco. OS2 Bove reports for duty and is assigned to OSC Johnson's division. During check in, he discovers that Petty Officer Bove is qualified to take the First Class exam during the upcoming exam cycle. OS2 Bove reveals she is having trouble studying and OSC Johnson volunteers to help during off duty hours in the base library. One night after a study session, OSC Johnson suggests they go for some food and drinks. A few months pass and the studying sessions continue. One night, OSC Johnson informs OS2 Bove that he is expecting an important phone call and asks if she minds studying at his apartment.

Is this an example of an appropriate or inappropriate relationship? Explain your answer.

Scenario #4

ET1 Nichols and BM2 Long are assigned to the CGC Hamilton. ET1 Nichols and BM2 long work are in different departments, each with a different division officer. They are partners in a small off-duty electronics repair shop. ET1 Nichols is selected as one of three duty section supervisors. He will be responsible for setting up the duty schedule for approximately 93 members attached to the CGC Hamilton. BM2 Long is assigned to ET1 Nichols's duty section. ET1 Nichols informs his division officer of the business partnership. The division officer works out a swap for another second-class petty officer to get BM2 Long into another duty section.

Is this an example of an appropriate or inappropriate relationship? Explain your answer.

Scenario #1 Answer

In this scenario, the relationship is **acceptable.** The members were both enlisted, and married before ENS Jones attended OCS. The custom of the Service accepts officer and enlisted marriages which occur before the officer receives a commission. Lawful marriage between an officer and enlisted service member does not create a presumption of misconduct or fraternization.

Scenario #2 Answer

This personal relationship between an officer member and an enlisted member is **inappropriate.** They have a senior-subordinate relationship by virtue of their officer and enlisted status. While participation in sporting events/outings generally does not constitute fraternization, the one-on-one nature of this off duty activity does constitute fraternization. The fact that the two are assigned to different commands does not have an effect on the case being fraternization.

Scenario #3 Answer

The relationship is **unduly familiar** and does not respect differences in grade between E-7 and an E-5. Their relationship is presumed to be prejudicial to good order and discipline. Although there are no facts that the two were involved in any type of illicit affair, there still may be a perception that OS2 Bove received preferential treatment from OSC Johnson based on the fact that they were involved outside of work.

Scenario #4 Answer

If ET1 Nichols and BM2 Long share a senior-subordinate relationship, a business partnership would constitute a prohibited relationship; however, their primary duties do not involve a senior-subordinate relationship. Additionally, removing BM2 Long from ET1 Nichols's duty section prevents a senior-subordinate relationship from developing in the duty section. It also eliminates the possibility
others would perceive that BM2 Long was receiving preferential treatment by ET1 Nichols because of their commercial connection

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