GENERAL

da 4187 compassionate reassignment example

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Introduction

Imagine a career path that is suddenly disrupted by a life changing event—perhaps the sudden illness of a spouse, the need to care for a child with special needs, or the loss of a loved one. For many federal employees, such circumstances can create an overwhelming sense of uncertainty about their future at work. The Department of the Army's policy, known as **DA 4187**, addresses these challenges by offering a structured framework for what is commonly referred to as a **compassionate reassignment**. This article delves into the intricacies of DA 4187, explains the compassionate reassignment process, and walks you through a detailed example that illustrates how the policy can be applied in real life. Whether you are a federal employee navigating personal hardships or an HR professional looking to support your workforce, understanding this policy can make a profound difference.

Understanding DA 4187: A Brief Overview

DA 4187 is a directive issued by the Department of the Army that governs the management of federal employee benefits related to compassionate reassignment. It builds on the broader federal framework set by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the Veterans Affairs (VA) regulations, but it tailors the approach to the unique needs of Army personnel. The directive provides a clear definition of compassionate reassignment, outlines eligibility criteria, and sets forth procedural guidelines for requesting and approving transfers.

At its core, DA 4187 seeks to balance two critical objectives: ensuring that employees who face significant personal or family challenges have the flexibility to adjust their work environment, and maintaining the operational readiness and staffing continuity of Army units. By offering a standardized pathway for reassignment, the directive reduces the administrative burden on both employees and supervisors, while also promoting a culture of empathy and support within the organization.

What Is Compassionate Reassignment?

Compassionate reassignment is a formal mechanism that allows federal employees to request a transfer to a different position or location due to a compassionate reason. These reasons may include:

- Illness or disability of a spouse or partner
- Caregiving responsibilities for a dependent with special needs
- Death or severe illness of a close family member
- Significant changes in personal circumstances that affect job performance

The reassignment can be temporary or permanent, depending on the nature of the employee's situation and the needs of the organization. Unlike a standard transfer, compassionate reassignment is specifically designed to provide relief and flexibility, ensuring that employees can maintain their employment while addressing personal obligations.

Eligibility Criteria Under DA 4187

DA 4187 establishes a set of eligibility guidelines that employees must meet to qualify for compassionate

reassignment. These criteria help ensure that the policy is applied fairly and consistently across the Army workforce.

1. Length of Service: Employees typically must have completed at least 12 months of continuous service with the Army.
2. Reason for Reassignment: The employee must demonstrate a compelling compassionate reason, supported by documentation such as medical records, death certificates, or other official documents.
3. Impact on Job Performance: The employee's personal circumstances must materially affect their ability to perform their current job duties or require them to be in a different geographic location.
4. Availability of Suitable Positions: The requested reassignment must align with an available position that matches the employee's qualifications and experience.
5. No Violation of Other Policies: The request must not conflict with other federal or Army policies, such as those related to security clearances or conflict of interest.

Meeting these criteria does not guarantee approval; rather, they establish a baseline for the review process. Supervisors and HR personnel evaluate each case on its merits, ensuring that the reassignment serves both the employee's needs and the organization's mission.

Step by Step Application Process

Applying for compassionate reassignment under DA 4187 involves several key steps. Following the correct procedure increases the likelihood of a successful outcome and minimizes administrative delays.

1. Gather Documentation: Collect all necessary documents that substantiate the compassionate reason. This may include medical records, court orders, or letters from healthcare providers.
2. Submit a Formal Request: Use the Army's electronic personnel system (such as the Army Human Resources Management System) to submit a formal request. Attach all supporting documents and ensure that the request is clearly labeled as a compassionate reassignment.
3. Supervisor Review: The employee's immediate supervisor reviews the request for completeness and preliminary feasibility. The supervisor may also provide a recommendation to the HR office.
4. HR Evaluation: Human Resources evaluates the request against DA 4187 criteria, verifies the authenticity of the documentation, and checks for position availability.
5. Approval or Denial: The HR office communicates the decision. If approved, the employee receives a formal notice outlining the new position, effective date, and any additional conditions.
6. Transition Planning: Once approved, the employee and the receiving unit collaborate on a transition plan, ensuring a smooth handover of responsibilities.

Throughout this process, open communication between the employee, supervisor, and HR is vital. Employees should feel comfortable asking questions and seeking guidance to navigate the procedural steps confidently.

DA 4187 Compassionate Reassignment Example: A Case Study

To illustrate how DA 4187 operates in practice, let's walk through a detailed example involving a fictional Army employee named **Sarah Thompson**.

Background

Sarah serves as a Logistics Officer in the Army's 3rd Infantry Division, stationed at Fort Bragg. She has been with the Army for 5 years and has consistently received positive performance evaluations. Recently, Sarah's husband was diagnosed with a progressive neurological disorder that requires intensive care and constant supervision.

Initial Challenges

Sarah's husband's condition has escalated to a point where he can no longer leave the home unattended. This situation directly impacts Sarah's ability to maintain her current schedule, which involves frequent deployments and long hours at the base. Sarah is concerned about her future in the Army and her ability to balance caregiving responsibilities.

Application for Compassionate Reassignment

Sarah follows the DA 4187 process:

1. Documentation: She obtains a letter from her husband's neurologist, a copy of the diagnosis, and a care plan outlining the required support.
2. Submission: Sarah submits a formal request via the Army's personnel system, attaching the medical documents and a brief statement explaining her situation.
3. Supervisor Review: Her immediate supervisor, Captain Martinez, reviews the request and recommends approval, noting Sarah's excellent record and the urgent nature of her circumstances.
4. HR Evaluation: The HR office verifies the documentation, confirms that Sarah meets the eligibility criteria, and checks for available positions. They identify a suitable role as a Supply Chain Analyst within the Army Corps of Engineers, located in the same region as Sarah's home.
5. Approval: Sarah receives an official notice approving her reassignment, effective from the next pay period.

Transition and Outcome

Sarah transitions to her new role with minimal disruption. She is able to maintain her employment while providing the necessary care for her husband. The Army benefits from retaining an experienced officer, and Sarah experiences less stress and improved work-life balance.

This case study demonstrates how DA 4187's compassionate reassignment process can adapt to individual needs, preserve employee talent, and uphold mission readiness.

Benefits and Impacts of Compassionate Reassignment

When implemented effectively, compassionate reassignment offers a range of benefits for both employees and the organization:

- Employee Retention: By addressing personal hardships, the Army reduces turnover and preserves valuable experience.
- Work Life Balance: Employees can manage caregiving responsibilities without sacrificing their careers.
- Operational Continuity: The organization maintains staffing levels by reassigning rather than terminating employees.
- Positive Employer Brand: Demonstrating empathy enhances the Army's reputation as a caring employer.
- Legal Compliance: The policy aligns with federal disability and family leave laws, mitigating potential legal risks.

Common Challenges and How to Overcome Them

Despite its advantages, the compassionate reassignment process can encounter obstacles:

- Limited Position Availability: Not every unit has a vacant role that matches an employee's qualifications.
- Administrative Delays: Paperwork and verification steps can slow the process.
- Perceived Inequity: Some employees may feel that the policy is applied unevenly.
- Transition Stress: Moving to a new role or location can be stressful for both the employee and the receiving

unit.

To mitigate these challenges, HR and supervisors should:

- Maintain a real time database of available positions.
- Streamline documentation requirements through digital tools.
- Communicate clearly about eligibility and decision criteria.
- Provide transition support such as mentorship and orientation sessions.

Best Practices for a Successful Reassignment

Adhering to proven best practices increases the likelihood of a smooth reassignment experience:

1. Early Planning: Employees should initiate the request as soon as they recognize a compassionate need.
2. Comprehensive Documentation: Provide thorough, verifiable evidence to support the request.
3. Open Dialogue: Maintain transparent communication with supervisors and HR.
4. Flexibility: Be willing to consider alternative roles or locations if the preferred option is unavailable.
5. Follow up: After approval, track the transition progress and address any emerging issues promptly.

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