



The Arizona Correctional Peace Officers Association
Check and Mate Newsletter

No. 3

*A bi-weekly
newsletter to
inform Union
members on
important
grievance results,
trends, procedures
and important
information
relevant to a better
quality of work life.*

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Esprit de Corps: Is it dead within A.D.O.C.?

So, what is esprit de corps?

In a nutshell:

“A feeling of pride, fellowship, and common loyalty shared by the members of a particular group.”

Well, the question has been posed by more than one staff member in the department of corrections so let's answer it lest I be responsible for further spreading this contagious disease.

So, is esprit de corps really dead within A.D.O.C.?

The answer: Absolutely and positively not!

Not even close.

Let's get this out of the way Ricki-tik! We are all responsible for team morale and all it takes is just one person with a bad attitude to infect the rest. A person with a bad attitude is worse than an I.E.D.! You can steer around an I.E.D. and even diffuse it but a staff member infected with a bad attitude can explode no matter what, spreading shrapnel that can affect staff within the immediate area and even those who aren't even in the vicinity!

Dreadful!

This topic is discussed frequently amongst staff so I thought I share my view on the matter.

I have worked and met with amazing human beings in my career as an employee of A.D.O.C., both as a line staff and as a supervisor. I still frequent my weekends surrounded by friends who are still serving in the department

and therefore have chance to engage in conversations involving topics that are going to be the subject of discussion no matter how much time goes by. Some things just don't change and the topic of morale is a frequent flyer.

A few weeks back, I was engaged in a game of Dominoes with a brother in arms, whom I had the privilege of serving with during my last 5 years with A.D.O.C.

We reminisced about the crazy ways of inmates and the amazing teamwork our shift shared and he lamented that he had seen a decline in staff morale and teamwork in recent times.

This particular staff member is a highly professional, motivated and vested officer who has served, besides as line staff, in the Tactical Support Unit as a sniper and as a tracker for a CHASE Team.

His name is Correctional Officer A. Soto from Perryville Complex and unfortunately, he is a better officer than a Dominos player because at that moment, he was getting pommelled worse than Rhonda Rousey during, well, you know, that one fight.

As he reminisced, he brought up the esprit de corps that he felt in C.O.T.A. and when we worked in specialized units such as the Lumley Unit in A.S.P.C. Perryville where close custody and condemned row inmates presented a special challenge.

It made me realize and reflect upon the reasons for the decline in morale are, to me, in part is simply this:

It is we, as an individual, that help morale decline. Morale by itself is nothing but a motivational word, as is the term "esprit de corps."

The reason C.O.T.A. and Lumley unit seemed to be teeming with an abundance of morale was because he, Correctional Soto, was there.

He was, and is still, a highly motivated individual and that motivation, like a bad attitude, is highly contagious and spreads quickly.

While it is true that incompetent leadership, complacent security measures and a shortage of staff contribute to the decline of morale, the plain truth is that these conditions are not aboriginal to our times and have

been a problem since Clint Eastwood escaped from Alcatraz.

We will continue, more now than ever, to try to solve these morale killers and improve conditions but in the meantime, let us place a motivational band-aid over these gaping wounds with personal motivation. The problem grows worse only if we help foster and feed this demon of law enforcement.

Let's remember what Leonidas told Ephialtes in 300. He told him to "raise his shield" because Spartans fought as a single and impenetrable unit because that was the source of their strength. Every Spartan protects the man to his left. A single weak spot and the team would shatter!

Words to live by.



The Art of responding to an Administrative Inquiry

Recent headlines read:

"Administrative Inquiries fly rampant in the department of Corrections."

That's a fact jack!

Most are well deserved and a necessity to make clear otherwise hazy situations that arise during the course of events that have many facets to them but it is also a fact that many of them are plain, If I may speak candidly, garbage and unnecessary and stem from many factors that include lack of knowledge, laziness and yes, even spite.

Nevertheless, they are a reality in this career and no matter how careful you may tread, you will eventually be faced having to answer one and if you are prepared for them, it's really no big deal so read on.

Answering an Inquiry: Must I participate?

Yes! Yes, you have to.

There are still employees who believe that they don't have to participate in

the inquiry process and we get calls periodically concerning this fact.

I've said the following before but it merits repeating: "Knowledge is power and lack of it will kill you faster than a bullet!"

Take a moment to read through D.O. 601. It is lengthy and you don't have to commit all of it to memory but even a cursory read is better than none at all.

Here is an important section to remember and albeit a short blurb, contains the seeds needed for tactical thinking that can be deployed when answering an inquiry:

601.01.1.5 GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES

All employees are expected to respond fully and truthfully throughout any investigative process, as is consistent with professional and ethical conduct standards. If it is determined that an employee was dishonest during an investigative process, sanctions shall be aggravated as outlined in Attachment

"Answering an inquiry is indeed an "Art" because how you express yourself and structure your thoughts have a direct impact on the mind of the person reading your response."

Read the above once again because it is of utmost importance.

Answering an inquiry with a foul attitude and with minimum effort and information is the same as zapping a good steak in the microwave for 2 minutes and expect it to rival one cooked by Chef Ramsay.

So, let's run down a quick checklist before answering any inquiry at any stage of the investigation, shall we?

Firstly- Get with your Union representative before answering anything on paper to include an Information report. That's right: we'll assist you with that gladly. You pay union dues for a good reason and representation ranks high up there for us so take advantage of it. We have experience on cutting edge response formats that are to your advantage.

Secondly- Tell the truth. Really. It's that simple. If you lie, you will be discovered because lies need even more lies to sustain the original lie and eventually, you run out of lies.

Don't do it!

With that said, if it is something that you did wrong, there is a right

way to document it and a wrong way to do it.

Again, Union representatives can help you in this area.

A few “don’ts”:

-Don’t respond in your own writing please: Use a computer. Its 2018 so take advantage of technology. Its faster, cleaner and more professional.

-Don’t come across like you don’t care. Being that you’re using a computer, spell check please. There’s nothing worse than simple grammatical and spelling errors to make the reviewer think less of you. That’s reality.

-Don’t be lazy and leave out details. The document should, at the very least, have the who, what, when, where, why, and how of basic report writing. Anything less and you’ll come across like an amateur and will more than possible, escalate the matter

because further questions will then be necessary. Be complete.

“Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How”

A few “dos” are also in order:

-Do be passionate when you tell your story. There’s nothing wrong with expressing yourself assertively when needed as long as it remains professional.

-Do include supporting documentation and exhibits if it strengthens your position.

-Do get with your Union representative. We will ground guide you through any situation.

In closing, remember that inquiry’s can be intimidating to the uninitiated so the more you familiarize yourself with D.O. 601 and any policy in general, the more level headed and clearer your responses will be.

Yours in Solidarity,

Carlos Garcia

Executive Grievance

Coordinator

Deeds not words!

