

SUBJECT: VCSA SENDS: COMMANDER AND LEADER RESPONSIBILITIES – HELPING OUR SOLDIERS AND ENFORCING STANDARDS

1. REFERENCE.

A. THE ARMY CAMPAIGN PLAN FOR HEALTH PROMOTION, RISK REDUCTION AND SUICIDE PREVENTION (ACPHP), 16 APR 09.

B. AR 600-85, ARMY SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROGRAM, 2 FEB 09.

C. MEDCOM MEMORANDUM, SUBJECT: CRITICAL STAFFING SHORTAGES IN THE ARMY SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROGRAM, 2 APR 09.

2. WE ALL AGREE THAT THE INCREASED SUICIDE RATE IN OUR ARMY REPRESENTS AN UNACCEPTABLE LOSS TO THE ARMY AND OUR NATION. IN MY RECENT VISITS TO MANY OF YOU AT YOUR INSTALLATIONS, I CAME TO REALIZE THAT COMBATING SUICIDE MEANS MORE THAN PREVENTION – IT REQUIRES PROMOTING A HOLISTIC APPROACH BY ADDRESSING THE PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND SPIRITUAL ASPECTS OF TAKING CARE OF SOLDIERS, THEIR FAMILIES, CIVILIANS AND COMMUNITIES.

3. ONE OF THE LARGEST CHALLENGES IN MAINTAINING HEALTH IS ADDRESSING THE ISSUES OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE BY OUR SOLDIERS. ARMY POLICY SETS CLEAR STANDARDS FOR LEADERS ON THIS ISSUE, WHICH I REITERATED TO YOU IN ANNEX D OF THE ACPHP. THESE STANDARDS INCLUDE REFERRAL OF SOLDIERS WITH SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROBLEMS TO THE ARMY SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROGRAM (ASAP) AND, WHERE NECESSARY, INITIATING SEPARATION PROCEEDINGS.

4. THERE IS A GROWING POPULATION OF SOLDIERS WITH SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROBLEMS, AS INDICATED BY MULTIPLE POSITIVE URINALYSIS RESULTS AND ALCOHOL-RELATED ACTIONS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN REFERRED TO ASAP BY THEIR COMMANDERS. ARMY REGULATION 600-85, PARAGRAPH 7-9B REQUIRES THAT THE UNIT COMMANDER WILL REFER INDIVIDUALS SUSPECTED OR IDENTIFIED AS ALCOHOL AND/OR OTHER DRUG ABUSERS, INCLUDING THOSE IDENTIFIED THROUGH DRUG TESTING, AND/OR BLOOD ALCOHOL TESTS, TO THE ASAP COUNSELING CENTER FOR SCREENING. COMMANDERS WILL COMPLY WITH THIS REQUIREMENT.

5. THE SHORTAGE OF QUALIFIED ASAP COUNSELORS AT THE INSTALLATION LEVEL IS AN ISSUE THAT NEEDS TO BE RECTIFIED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. COMMANDERS, I NEED YOUR SUPPORT TO EXPEDITE THE HIRING OF ADDITIONAL ASAP COUNSELORS IAW REFERENCE C. OUR SOLDIERS NEED THIS RESOURCE AND I EXPECT YOU TO PROVIDE IT FOR THEM.

6. INSTALLATIONS REPORT HUNDREDS OF SOLDIERS WHO HAVE ENGAGED IN SUBSTANCE ABUSE-RELATED MISCONDUCT (INCLUDING MULTIPLE POSITIVE URINALYSES) BUT HAVE NOT BEEN PROCESSED FOR ADMINISTRATIVE SEPARATION. AR 600-85, PARAGRAPH 10-6C(1), STATES THAT ALL SOLDIERS

TO INCLUDE USAR SOLDIERS, IDENTIFIED AS ILLEGALLY ABUSING DRUGS OR EXHIBIT DRUG OR ALCOHOL-RELATED MISCONDUCT WILL BE PROCESSED FOR ADMINISTRATIVE SEPARATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH APPROPRIATE ENLISTED OR OFFICER SEPARATION REGULATIONS. SEE AR 600-85, AR 635-200, AR 600-8-4, AR 135-175, AND AR 135-178.

7. IN MY VIEW, LEADER ENGAGEMENT IS CRUCIAL TO COMBATING THE INCREASED RATE OF SUICIDES IN OUR ARMY. I AM ASKING YOU TO ENSURE THAT SOLDIERS ARE PROVIDED THE HELP THAT THEY NEED WHEN THEY NEED IT, AND THAT REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS REGARDING THE REFERRAL AND INITIATION OF SEPARATION PROCESSING OF SUBSTANCE ABUSERS ARE ENFORCED.