

Army CHRA Offers Interactive Tools and Customized Support

by Ms. Katherine Crawford, Staff Writer



On April 3, 2005, the Army Civilian Human Resources Agency (CHRA) became the Human Resources (HR) service provider for the Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA). By choosing a new provider, Air Force Maj. Gen. Darryl A. Scott, DCMA director, hoped “to strengthen and improve overall HR support.” One of the primary methods by which the Army CHRA is achieving this goal is through the many automated tools it offers through

its portal. Army CHRA supports DCMA from two locations: Fort Riley, Kan., which provides services to DCMA Headquarters, Centers, Information Technology and Districts East and International, and Fort Huachuca, Ariz., which provides services to the West and Special Programs Districts. Army CHRA will be realigning their servicing as soon as possible after the DCMA realignment and will provide servicing information changes to managers at that time.

(Above) The Army CHRA's Civilian Personnel Online (CPOL) portal's home page (left) and “Employment” page.

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By pointing their Web browsers to the Army CHRA's Civilian Personnel Online portal (CPOL) located at <http://cpol.army.mil/index.html>, DCMA employees can access a multitude of tools, including:

- **Automated Organization Structure/Position Description Library (FASCLASS)**, the fully automated system for classification with searchable position descriptions
- **Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS)**, which contains employee histories, including the past five performance ratings, and the gatekeeper checklist, which accompanies recruitment actions
- **RPA [Request for Personnel Action] Tracker**, where managers can track the status of RPAs and view employees' past actions. According to Ms. Dianne Peters, DCMA team branch chief, Army CHRA, Fort Riley, the tracker is very popular with their managers, who can “easily see where [the RPA] is, whose inbox it's in, who's working on it and what the status is.” Ms. Angela Bailey, DCMA Human Resources executive director, agrees and anticipates that once DCMA's supervisors are introduced to and provided training for the RPA Tracker, they too will find it invaluable.

“All of this is available with just a click or two,” explained Mr. Ray Mehling, DCMA team branch chief, Army CHRA, Fort Huachuca. “Instead of having different icons on your desktop and trying to figure out where to go to get what, all of the resources are in one location. I think that's just wonderful.” Noted Ms. Bailey, “The Army Benefit Center [online] is a one-stop shop for our employees that they have not experienced before.”

Of all the services available on the Army CHRA CPOL portal, the most widely used among DCMA employees is the Army Benefits Center (ABC). Many people are conducting their health benefits, savings plans and other types of benefits transactions electronically via the ABC Web site. For the period of May – July 2005, the ABC processed over 5,740 transactions from DCMA personnel. Only 1,388 of those were counselor-assisted telephone calls, which means that approximately 76 percent of employees used the automated system to receive benefits information. A significant number of these benefits transactions were retirement-related, due to the fact that the DCMA workforce's average age is 52. “There's no doubt that a lot of DCMA's employees are going to the ABC looking at retirement counseling, getting information and advice on what needs to be done before they retire,” Mr. Mehling stated. For the same May – July period, the ABC prepared over 300 retirement forecasts for DCMA employees.

The CPOL portal will become increasingly useful as more tools and capabilities are added and upgrades are made to existing items. To gain admittance to tools in the “employee portal,” one needs an Army Knowledge Online (AKO) account, and DCMA HR is waiting for a few more upgrades to be completed before giving all employees their AKO account numbers.

(Above) Clockwise, from top: Ms. Mary Rodriguez, regional director, CHRA; Ms. Jeanne Scharch, HR center director, DCMAC-D; Mr. Elias Hernandez, Classification & Workforce Shaping Division director, DCMAC-DC; Mr. Dwayne Bennett, Performance Management Division director, DCMA HR; Air Force Col. Gene Smith, DCMA Military Personnel director/DCMA HR deputy director; Ms. Angela Bailey, DCMA HR; and Ms. Karen Webb, regional director, CHRA, at an on-site meeting at the Army's Civilian Human Resources Agency, Fort Riley, Kan. (Photo courtesy of Army CHRA)

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This portal will allow employees online access to the ABC with additional links to their “My Pay” and Thrift Savings Plan accounts as well as the “Resume Builder & ANSWER” tool and the vacancy announcement board. Future enhancements include access to the “My Biz” accounts, which will allow employees to update personal information such as phone numbers and addresses right into the database. DCMA HR is also interested in adding a capability that would allow DCMA employees to go in and view their Notification of Personnel Actions and RPAs, a feature currently being developed.

In addition to the automated tools, Army CHRA is also providing outstanding support with the “human” aspect of CHRA through its experienced staff members. The ABC is a worldwide mission, but Ms. Peters’ and Mr. Mehling’s staffs are dedicated solely to providing service to DCMA employees. According to Ms. Peters, “The employees really like being able to talk with the DCMA folks, being a little bit of an advisory service and even just talking about how their day is going. It’s not just coming in and doing the paperwork all the time — you get that personal side of it as well.” To foster this interaction between the two agencies, in the future, members of the Army CHRA team are planning more “marketing tours,” where they will “have the opportunity to get out and actually meet with [DCMA] people,” said Ms. Peters. The interaction between DCMA and Army CHRA employees is also very efficient because of the degree to which the ABC in particular is automated. “Everything is tracked; all phone calls [to the ABC] are recorded and everyone knows what’s going on, so if you start with one person and you finish with somebody

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else it’s OK,” noted Ms. Peters. Also, the benefits experts who are available to DCMA employees for advice and counsel have been consolidated in one office, facilitating access and enhancing the knowledge base.

Thus far the collaboration between DCMA and Army CHRA has been extremely positive. In Ms. Peters’ opinion, things are going very well: “We’ve been working with Ms. Bailey’s folks

on a daily basis, and, together, we’re really an HR community.” Ms. Bailey agrees that the DCMA/Army CHRA partnership is off to a very good start. “Naturally there are bumps in the road, such as Army learning our processes and procedures and DCMA adapting to the suite of automated tools,” she added. “But the good working relationship helps to smooth out any issues that arise.” Ms. Bailey is particularly appreciative of the “CPOC’s [Civilian Personnel Operations Center’s] outstanding support during our extensive realignments.” She continued, “Many people are unaware of just how much work goes on behind the scenes in ensuring that these realignments are a success. It is not as simple as moving organization blocks on a PowerPoint®¹ slide ... there are lists of actions that need to be accomplished and coordinated with managers

and payroll systems and such, and without the CPOC’s support at this critical time, these realignments would not have occurred as planned.”

Added Mr. Mehling, “We really, really enjoy working with DCMA’s managers and employees — they’re all just wonderful. [DCMA has] a very positive, intelligent workforce, and we know that this will be a successful partnership.”

¹ Microsoft PowerPoint is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries.