



SECRETARY OF THE ARMY
WASHINGTON

18 MAY 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: Army Directive 2021-21 (Use of Prescribed Controlled Medications)

1. References.

a. Department of Defense (DoD) Instruction 1010.16 (Technical Procedures for the Military Personnel Drug Abuse Testing Program), 15 June 2020

b. Army Regulation 600–85 (The Army Substance Abuse Program), 23 July 2020

2. Purpose. To limit prescription drug abuse, this directive clarifies that the use of a prescription controlled substance will be considered illegitimate if 6 months past the most recent date of filling, as indicated on the prescription label, and may subject offenders to adverse disciplinary action.

3. Applicability. The provisions of this directive apply to the Regular Army, Army National Guard/Army National Guard of the United States, and U.S. Army Reserve.

4. Policy. This policy supports the Army's priority of deterring the abuse of controlled substances that can be prescribed by medical personnel, including opioids, benzodiazepine, and other drugs included in schedules II–V of Title 21, United States Code, section 812 (21 U.S.C. 812). Commanders will enforce this policy to deter abuse and educate Soldiers about the dangers of using controlled substance prescription medications without current medical supervision and about the need to properly dispose of these medications.

a. A patient's prescription for controlled medication is valid only for the patient and only for the period as written by the prescribing authority. Absent an otherwise specified date from the prescriber, use of prescription substances defined as schedules II–V in 21 U.S.C. 812 will be considered expired and illegitimate for use 6 months after the most recent date of fill, as indicated on the prescription label. The time frame for illegitimate use is based on the dispensing date, not the labeled expiration date of the medication itself.

b. Defining the use of controlled substances with expired prescriptions as illegitimate use in the Army Drug and Alcohol Management Information System represents a significant change in Army policy. The use of expired prescription medications for substances defined as schedules II–V in 21 U.S.C. 812 will no longer be

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adjudicated by medical review officers on an individual basis. Soldiers who test positive on a urinalysis for such substances as a result of the use of an expired prescription, as defined in paragraph 4a of this directive, will be subject to judicial, non-judicial, or administrative actions as determined by commanders in consultation with judge advocates.

c. The provisions of this directive take precedence over policy in reference 1b, paragraph 4–2, for the use of controlled prescribed medications without a current prescription written specifically for the Soldier, and paragraph 4–14, to preclude the need for medical review officers to determine illegitimate use in cases where a positive test has resulted from the use of expired prescription medications for substances defined as schedules II–V in 21 U.S.C. 812.

d. This policy does not apply to otherwise lawfully used prescription controlled substances, such as those that are within 6 months of their last fill date, or for those prescriptions that are expired but are not controlled substances.

5. Proponent. The Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1 is the proponent of this policy, responsible for incorporating the provisions of this directive into Army Regulation 600–85 within 2 years of the date of this directive.

6. Duration. This directive is rescinded on publication of the revised regulation.



John E. Whitley
Acting

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