

CHAPTER 22

CANADIAN FORCES PHYSICAL FITNESS PROGRAM

2201 Introduction

2201.1 CF Transformation will make the CF more responsive by enhancing our ability to act quickly in the event of crises, whether in Canada or around the world. The physical fitness of our soldiers, sailors, airmen and airwomen is an essential and critical component of this increased operational readiness and of military duty and leadership in general.

2201.2 Key to attaining the high levels of physical fitness necessary for today's deployed operations is a reaffirmation of a "culture of fitness" across our Canadian Forces. Although we currently benefit from outstanding fitness facilities, professional physical educators, health promotion staff, and well-researched programs, recent fitness and health practices of many of our units and members leaves much to be desired.

2201.3 It is the responsibility of CF leadership to embrace fitness personally, to promote optimum levels of fitness and health for all CF personnel and to facilitate the achievement of those levels. In support of this effort, physical education modules for leadership and training courses have been developed, CF fitness policies have been updated, incentive programs, standards and objectives are being re-examined, sports programs are being revamped, health promotion programs have been implemented, and reporting procedures have been re-introduced.

2201.4 Transforming the physical activity patterns of CF members and achieving the health benefits that are inherent in such changes will take some time. There are no short-term solutions that will produce a lasting impact. However, to produce the desired effect, the active engagement of all CF leaders must begin immediately. I expect my commanding officers to do what is required to enhance levels of fitness by contributing to fitness issue discussions and by actively supporting fitness policy decisions.

2202 Health and Lifestyle Information Study (HLIS)

2202.1 Given the fact that physical fitness is a critical operational readiness issue, the results of the 2004 HLIS are alarming. In the 4 years between the 2000 and the 2004 HLIS surveys, the self-reported activity levels in the general Canadian population improved, while they decreased in the CF. Only 43% of CF members reported living an active lifestyle; 33% reported being inactive. That this occurred in spite of policies and directives that demand mandatory fitness levels, speaks volumes on the depth of the problem we are facing. For annual update see: <http://cmp-cpm.forces.mil.ca/health-sante/pub/hlis-sssv-eng.asp>

2202.2 Adding to that concern is the fact that the number of obese CF members increased between the 2000 and 2004 HLIS surveys. The 2004 version reported 22% of CF males and 13% of CF females who responded to the survey were obese. 81% of CF personnel reported their job requires little or no physical activity and so these people cannot depend on performing their regular duties to keep them fit.

2202.3 The 2000 HLIS also indicated that junior personnel in the CF lacked the motivation to maintain their fitness and senior personnel lacked the time. This is a dangerous combination

because the very folks who are supposed to be leading the troops by example aren't playing this important role because they see themselves as too busy. The 2004 HLIS showed that 75% of CF members recognize that starting to exercise or increasing the amount they exercise will improve their overall health. Therefore, individual motivation levels may be on the rise and we now have the organizational responsibility to convert that motivation into action. Those of us in senior leadership positions need to demonstrate an unshakable will to correct identified fitness shortcomings within our units.

2203 CDS Guidelines on Physical Fitness

2203.1 Consistent leadership is fundamental to our being recognized as an organization that embraces a culture of fitness. The following are some fundamental concepts that I expect to see incorporated in all strategies to promote physical fitness in the CF:

- a. Physical fitness is a leadership issue;
- b. Physical fitness is essential to the operational readiness of all CF personnel;
- c. Physical fitness should be promoted as part of a holistic approach to health and wellness in the CF; and
- d. Strategic physical fitness initiatives must include three key ingredients to be successful: leadership, motivation, and facilitation.

2203.2 Leadership: Provide fitness leadership at every level in your respective units. This must include leading by example, helping subordinates get fit, and enforcing fitness policies.

2203.3 Motivation: Provide all your personnel with a very powerful incentive to achieve and maintain their physical fitness. Focus on providing incentives that reward success instead of punishing failure.

2203.4 Facilitation: Adapt your unit working environment to make it easier for all your members to make the daily choice of improving or maintaining their physical fitness. Recognize that a variety of fitness training regimes can be employed to attain your unit's fitness aims.

2203.5 These fundamental concepts are supported by the following selection of fitness guidelines to establishing a culture of fitness:

- a. It is imperative that the requirement for fitness training at least five times a week is respected and applied. As Commanding Officers you will be in a position to facilitate this requirement for all your personnel.
- b. Seek out every opportunity for CF members to include exercise in their work routines. The mantras of "fitness on your own time" or "we don't have time for fitness" are to be eliminated. Given what we know of the power of daily fitness to increase morale, reduce stress, and improve work performance, it is incumbent upon us to be innovative in our approach when a formal fitness routine is impractical.

- c. Seek out every opportunity to promote and reward healthy physical activities and fitness practices.
- d. Commanding officers' active involvement in fitness programs and their visible success on fitness evaluations is critical to convincing the CF member that physical fitness is a shared value in the organization.
- e. A group fitness programs approach is preferred. Although the merits of individual programs are well known, where possible consider training as a group to derive the benefits of esprit de corps, control, and monitoring.
- f. A group/unit fitness evaluations approach is required. Doing your evaluations as a group/unit has the potential to motivate higher levels of fitness achievement and reduce administration.
- g. Don't focus the entire fitness programs on making the fitness standard but rather emphasize the additional health benefits of living a positive lifestyle. Simple adherence to a minimum physical fitness standard is only a building block in a systematic approach to effecting cultural change.
- h. Seek variety and progression in fitness training programs employing cross training where possible.
- i. Continuous education of staff, leadership and personnel on a healthy lifestyle and fitness practices as well as how to exercise safely is imperative. Consult with local PSP fitness staff for assistance.
- j. Do not turn a blind eye to obesity. Obesity is a valid indicator of current or developing health problems. We have solid evidence-based weight loss programs in the CF, the utilization of which will benefit both our operational readiness and the health of the CF member.
- k. Partner with the available professional organizations and capitalize on their programs. The Canadian Forces Personnel Support Agency's (CFPSA) Personnel Support Program (PSP) and the Directorate of Force Health Protection's (DFHP) Strengthening the Forces program have specifically been put in to place to help service your fitness, health and wellness needs.

2204 Chief of the Defence Staff Direction

2204.1 Let me be clear that our Canadian Forces Physical Fitness Program is not primarily about fitness testing and standards; it is about helping to set the conditions for success in operations. I am convinced that adherence to a physical fitness program will not only increase strength, energy and endurance, but also improve an individual's ability to cope with mental and emotional stresses. This is leadership business; I expect the support of leaders at all levels to ensure the CF is fit to fight.

2205 Responsible Organization

2205.1 The organization responsible for “Physical Fitness Issues and Programs” is Military Personnel Command (MPC).

2206 Office of Primary Interest (OPI) and Subject Matter Expert (SME)

2206.1 OPI/SME for policy is the Director General Personnel Generation Policy (DGPGP) and the OPI/SME for delivery is the Canadian Forces Personnel Support Agency (CFPSA).

2207 Internet Site : www.cfpsa.com

Intranet site : <http://cmp-cpm.forces.mil.ca/dgmp-dgpm/index-eng.asp>