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Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute
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Big Improvements Expected for Military Equal Opportunity ODEI Makes Strides to Standardize MEO Across the Services

*Story by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Lance Pounds, DEOMI Public Affairs
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PATRICK SPACE FORCE BASE, Fla.— The Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) hosted a workshop, Aug. 14-18, where key leaders within the Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ODEI) and the Diversity Management Operations Center (DMOC) discussed the future of the Military Equal Opportunity (MEO) Program and other Department of Defense (DoD) programs they facilitate.

The workshop built upon a previous workshop held in July, when ODEI and DMOC leaders came together to analyze collected data and identify ways to standardize the MEO program across the Services and throughout the entire DoD enterprise.

In this workshop, ODEI and DMOC leaders also discussed what new roles and responsibilities ODEI will assume, because of their merger at the end of this fiscal year.

“We are going through an evolution right now,” said Dr. Rachel Castellon, policy director for DoD MEO at ODEI.

Castellon stated synergy was created between ODEI and DMOC, when DMOC stood up in 2018, but it also created some bifurcation and confusion because the two led separate charges—DMOC managed operations and ODEI managed policies.

“That will soon be a thing of the past,” said Castellon. “As we work towards reuniting these efforts.”

“We are going to have one organization—ODEI—that will maintain the policy arm and will now take on the operations piece. We are still working out the details and are very excited to be able to have a greater impact for our Service members,” said Castellon.

On the topic of greater impact, Castellon said one of ODEI’s big areas of concern was with the MEO program and the current, “lack of standardization amongst the Services.”

“The Air Force has a career field of MEO professionals. They are the only one, and the other Services are situated differently,” said Castellon. “Just that alone creates a lot of variation amongst the Services,” she added.

“We’re concerned about standardization of training, ensuring that all service members are receiving the military equal opportunity message that the department intends for them to have,” said Castellon.

According to Castellon, ODEI is currently developing an online case management system that enables Equal Opportunity Advisors (EOA) to process complaints, to include reports of prohibited discrimination, hazing, bullying, harassment, and sexual harassment.

“The case management system will be a game-changer for us. Up to this point, we haven’t had a standardized way of obtaining complaint data and we have congressional requirements to submit that information. By providing a platform that every Service can use, that again provides us with the standardization that we need. And ODEI intends to fund this platform for authorized users throughout the DoD enterprise,” shared Castellon.

She added that DEOMI is an integral part of the process because it is the Center of Excellence for all things MEO, and it only makes sense to leverage DEOMI’s capabilities to train EOAs on how to utilize the new platform.

“We want to provide [EOAs] with the absolute best foundational training and educational training that they need to do their jobs well, because that will give them the confidence and self-assurance that they are handling their jobs well and representing military equal opportunity,” said Castellon.

The DEOMI team is an inclusive force that values and develops all individuals and thrives on their contributions. Since its inception in 1971, then known as the Defense Race Relations Institute, DEOMI has developed and delivered innovative education, training, research, and collaborative solutions to more than 52,000 DEOMI military and civilian graduates.

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