



Unity

February 22, 2026

Are You Prepared? What You Might Need to Know

In my role as FEA-Europe Area Director and as a good friend, I spent a lot of time before and after winter recess helping a seriously ill educator. It is that which prompts me to share this information with all my members so that you and your family/friends, are better prepared. No one wants to think about this, but those left to do the work will appreciate your planning!

PRIORITY: Get the legal basics locked down!

Will

- Have a U.S.-based will drafted. Most bases/posts will assist through their legal offices.
- Clearly name:
 - Executor, Beneficiaries, and who should handle overseas personal effects
- Determine whether you need a host-nation will for assets (i.e. home/banking) located locally

Powers of Attorney

- Durable Power of Attorney (for finances if you're incapacitated)
- Healthcare Power of Attorney / Advance Directive
- Give copies to your trusted person and keep digital copies accessible.

Advance Medical Directive

- Spell out wishes for life support, long-term care, and medical decision-making.
- Especially important overseas where family may not arrive quickly.

Beneficiaries: check them **EVERY** year. Many problems happen because these aren't updated.

Review and confirm beneficiaries for:

- FEGLI (Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance)
- TSP (Thrift Savings Plan)
- NEA Complimentary Life Insurance
- Any private insurance or investment accounts

For your information: Beneficiary forms override wills. Make sure they match your intentions.

Create an "If something happens to me" file. This is one of the most helpful things you can do.

Include:

- Full legal name, SSN (secured), passport number
- Copy of passport, CAC (front/back), visa (if you have one), and orders
- Emergency contacts (locally and in the US)
- Location of will, POAs, Insurance policies
- Bank accounts and how bills are paid
- TSP & FEGLI info
- Contacts for housing and the school

Where to store it:

- One physical copy (secure)
- One digital copy (encrypted cloud or password manager)
- Tell one trusted person exactly where it is and how to access it

More information and a checklist can be found at the end of this publication.

Legal Update

DoDEA Educator Investigations

DoDEA educators serving in host nation countries are especially vulnerable to various forms of investigation for misconduct. While all educators face the risk of false allegations from students, administrators, and parents, DoDEA Educators working overseas encounter even greater risks. This is because, in addition to possible administrative discipline such as Letters of Reprimand, suspension, or removal, they may face federal criminal prosecution from agencies such as: Military Police, OSI, or CID, resulting in arrest and criminal charges for actions taken in the classroom.

Furthermore, DoDEA overseas educators are subject to both federal and host nation laws, making them susceptible to investigation whenever complaints or accusations of misconduct arise. These inquiries are conducted to determine culpability prior to any disciplinary action, so it is crucial for DoDEA educators to understand the investigative process and how to safeguard their rights.

If you are a DoDEA educator under investigation—or believe you might be in the future—now is the time to prepare and protect yourself. Even acting as a witness, rather than the subject of an investigation, requires understanding the process to preserve your rights. It is highly advisable to consult an experienced FEA Attorney to guide you through this complex experience.

DoDEA Administrative Investigations for Misconduct

The most common investigations DoDEA educators face are administrative inquiries into alleged work-related misconduct. These may be initiated for several reasons, including:

- Internal agency investigations for misconduct: Pre-Action Investigations (PAIs) or Management Inquiries
- Office of Inspector General (OIG) investigations into illegal or improper activities, such as fraud
- Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaints about harassment or discrimination
- Office of Special Counsel (OSC) complaints regarding whistleblower retaliation, Hatch Act violations, or other prohibited personnel practices

Potential Criminal Concerns

If wrongdoing constitutes a criminal act, DoDEA educators may face both administrative and criminal investigations. Understanding which type of investigation is underway is essential to knowing your rights and the consequences that may follow.

DoDEA Educators' Rights in the Investigative Process

DoDEA educators have fundamental rights during an investigation, which typically include the right to legal counsel. Sometimes, the educator has the right to understand the investigation's purpose and may choose not to answer questions, especially if a response might be self-incriminating. These rights depend on the type of interview, and in some cases, educators are legally required to answer or face disciplinary action. Therefore, seeking guidance from an FEA attorney before making any statements or answering questions is strongly recommended.

Investigative Interviews

Most educators first learn of an investigation when contacted to schedule an interview. This process can be stressful, and each question-and-answer matters. Preparation is key and consulting an FEA attorney before the interview is essential. FEA attorneys can provide guidance and help educators prepare for these interviews, represent employees during interviews and/or assist with preparation.

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Interview Preparation

FEA attorneys can help members organize their thoughts, anticipate questions and clarify what/if anything they know about the incident.

Types of Investigative Interviews

There are two interview types: compelled and voluntary. Voluntary interviews, such as those conducted by the Family Advocacy assessors, allow employees to choose whether to participate. Compelled interviews require participation or risk disciplinary consequences. Understanding which category the interview falls into is crucial. FEA attorneys can explain the difference between the two and advise accordingly.

At the beginning of the interview, or beforehand, investigators may provide a notice of rights and a warning. The warning indicates whether the interview is voluntary or compelled.

Garrity and Kalkines Warnings

- Garrity warning: Employees are free to remain silent and refuse to answer questions without disciplinary action. This is a voluntary interview, but statements may be used for criminal prosecution.
- Kalkines warning: Employees are advised that statements cannot be used against them in criminal court, but they must answer truthfully or face discipline. This is a compelled interview. Overseas DoDEA educators face a particular problem with a Kalkines Warning: although a US government investigator may be able to bind the government to the terms of a Kalkines warning, they cannot bind the host nation authorities to such an agreement absent a specific enforceable document. FEA Attorneys can explain this complicated issue.

Unclear Warnings

Warnings are sometimes not clear, leading to confusion about whether participation is voluntary or required. Agencies can use information from compelled interviews in adverse actions, including termination. FEA attorneys can clarify your situation and help you understand your rights and risks.

Issues to Consider During Investigations

DoDEA Educators involved in investigations should consider these questions:

- Am I a witness, or the subject of the investigation?
- Do I have the right to consult with an attorney?
- Do I have the right to know what is being investigated?
- Must I answer the investigator's questions?
- Do I have to respond immediately?
- Could my answers expose me to self-incrimination or disciplinary action?

Knowing the answers to these questions is critical for protecting your rights. An FEA attorney can guide you through these considerations and help you prepare.

Representation During Performance Meetings

DoDEA educators may be entitled to have a union representative attend a meeting with them on issues relating to performance under certain circumstances. Weingarten Rights to have a union representative apply when an educator attends an investigative meeting with management and they have a reasonable belief that disciplinary action could be taken. If, during the course of a meeting, management indicates that there are concerns regarding an educator's performance, and asks the educator questions relating to their performance, the educator should invoke their Weingarten Right and request a union representative for the meeting.

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Contact Us

Typically, DoDEA educators do not have an absolute right to know all the details of an investigation at the outset. However, they are entitled to understand the nature of the inquiry and the allegations—especially when giving testimony or participating in interviews.

What You Have a Right to Know

- The nature of the investigation: You may understand what misconduct is being investigated and the general allegations.
- Voluntary or compelled interview: You have the right to know which type of interview you are participating in and the consequences of declining.
- Potential disciplinary actions: You should be informed about possible actions if misconduct is found.
- Union representation: Members of a bargaining unit have the Weingarten right to representation during interviews if disciplinary action could result.
- Access to information (limited): You may access documentation used to build the case and inquire about the investigation's progress.

What You Might Not Have the Right to

- Specific details of evidence: DoDEA Educators may not see all evidence before or during an investigation.
- Full scope disclosure: DoDEA might not reveal the investigation's extent or all witness names until later.

Important Considerations

- Consult with an FEA attorney
- Cooperation is expected: Federal employees are generally expected to cooperate with investigations. Refusal or dishonesty can result in disciplinary action, including termination.
- Garrity/Kalkines warnings: Inspector General interviews may include these specific warnings regarding self-incrimination or immunity.
- FOIA requests: After investigations close, the Freedom of Information Act may allow access to certain records.

Pay Update

At least 90 percent of alleged debts are invalid in some way.

Even **IF** you owe money, the question is always how much. The DoDEA Pay System is among the most complicated there is. For example, the entitlement to Post Allowance is based on SF 1190 submissions which DoDEA frequently loses. Post Allowance can change as often as every two weeks, depending on the legal interpretation of the Department of State Standardized Regulations (DSSR's). LQA is also based on SF 1190 submissions which DoDEA frequently loses. LQA changes every two weeks in accordance with the legal interpretation of the DSSR's. The least complicated is Regular Pay. But it is increased retroactively every spring with a retro payment that FEA won for you. A debt collection for Regular Pay is the simplest of all. But Federal Law prohibits DoDEA from adjusting for the taxes you paid on even a "valid" overpayment if they do not discover it soon enough. I have seen countless cases where DoDEA demands and collects the full amount even though the educator previously paid taxes of up to 33 percent.

Goodbye Grievances are critical. That is the only reason FEA could address those who have left FEA Overseas Members' problems. Keep the Pay Problem Package in your personal email account. Use only the updated 25-26 version. It contains all the information to deal with a pay problem. Follow directions CAREFULLY! Make sure to file and elevate a GOODBYE GRIEVANCE before you retire, separate, transfer to DDESS or Europe South. There is no statute of limitations on collecting debts.

Like-Minded Educators

NEA Caucuses You Might Not Know About

by DiAnna Martinez, Europe HCRC

If you're new to the union, or even if you've been a member for years, you might be surprised by the number of caucuses within the National Education Association (NEA). I certainly was. It wasn't until I attended the Representative Assembly that I realized just how many opportunities existed for members to connect, advocate, and amplify their voices.

NEA caucuses function as internal interest groups, each working to bring attention to specific issues that matter to educators and the communities they serve. Some are expected, others are delightfully unexpected (yes, there really is a Beer Caucus), but many play a vital role in advancing equity and representation.

Among these groups, four caucuses stand out for their commitment to supporting ethnically diverse educators and students. Each welcomes members and allies alike—so even if you don't identify with a particular ethnic group, you can still join and contribute to meaningful change.

The American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) Caucus advocates for Native students and educators by promoting culturally responsive teaching, supporting tribal sovereignty, and increasing Indigenous representation. [Membership Link](#)

The Asian Pacific Islander Caucus (APIC) works to strengthen the rights, visibility, and leadership of AAPI educators and students while combating anti-Asian racism and promoting equity. [Membership Link](#)

The NEA Black Caucus focuses on developing leaders, informing policy, and supporting Black educators, with an emphasis on equitable, high-quality public education. [Membership Link](#)

The NEA Hispanic Caucus advocates for Hispanic educators, students, and families by addressing bias, promoting human rights, and supporting leadership and professional growth. [Membership Link](#)

These caucuses are more than affinity groups; they are powerful spaces for advocacy, community, and systemic change. If you're looking for a way to get involved, elevate your voice, or support colleagues and students from historically underrepresented communities, consider joining one (or more).

The mission of the NEA LGBTQ+ Caucus, in order to eliminate institutional discrimination and anti-LGBTQ+ bias, monitors and participates in the development of NEA policies and activities, provides resources and fosters better communication among educators, students, and communities. [Membership Link](#)

Along with Identity & Minority Caucuses, NEA has Professional and Special Interest Caucuses, like NEA Multi-Lingual Learners Caucus, Vocational, Career & Technical Education Caucus, and NEA-NBCT Caucus, to name just a few.

NEA also recognizes role-based caucuses such as School Nurses' Caucus or Special Educators' Caucus. More information can be found about caucuses at the National Education Association [website](#).

Your participation strengthens the union and helps ensure that every educator and student is seen, heard, and valued.

2026 Elections

FEA Constitutional Amendment Change

During the 2025 election cycle, voters approved suggested changes to voting. If there are an equal number of nominees to vacancies, then an election does not have to take place and the nominee is elected by acclamation.

For example, when schools run FRS elections, if only one person steps up to run for the position, then they are declared the FRS by acclamation. Below you will find FEA leaders elected by acclamation. Going forward, ALL elections will be held electronically and run by FEA Washington.

NEA Representative Assembly Delegates

There were five candidates nominated for five positions to the NEA Representative Assembly. The delegates elected by acclamation are:

Adrian Crawford- Netzaberg MS

DiAnna Martinez- Vogelweh ES

Melissa Miles- Ansbach ES

Olga Sims- Stuttgart HS

Jessica Yucel- Spangdahlem HS

Local Associations are *strongly encouraged* to elect additional delegates to attend the FEA Annual Meeting and NEA RA. The amount of financial support provided is determined by the local. Local officers can reach out to FEA.Europe.AD@gmail.com for additional information.

The 2027 NEA Representative Assembly will be in Indianapolis, IN. It's not too early to plan to run!

District/Area Representation

Human & Civil Rights Coordinators:

Europe: DiAnna Martinez, Vogelweh Elementary School - fea.eu.hcrc@gmail.com

Europe Central: Angela Bradeen, Vogelweh Elementary School

Europe East: Olga Sims, Stuttgart High School

Europe West: vacant (If you are in Europe West, and interested, contact DiAnna Martinez.)

District Representatives:

Europe Central: Chris Bradeen - Landstuhl Elementary School- fea.europe.central.dr@gmail.com

Europe East: Stephen James - Netzaberg Middle School - SJames@nea.org

Europe West: Jessica Yucel - Spangdahlem High School - fea.europe.west@gmail.com

Area Director:

Anita Lang - Lakenheath High School - fea.europe.ad@gmail.com

Local Leadership

It is never too early to think about running for **FRS** or **local officers**. Schools start by forming an election committee. If you are willing to run that election committee locally, reach out to your district representative or area director for guidelines.

Schools use past practice to elect or appoint FRs and FR-HCRs. These are important roles to support the FRS and be another set of eyes and ears. We are not individuals! We are a UNION; an Association of people with common interests or purpose.

Schools will need to give FEA **at least three weeks' notice** if an election needs to be held as all voting now is electronic and run by FEA-Washington.

General Information

Social Media

DoDEA educators are no strangers to social media. When browsing different social media platforms, educators ask each other for advice and past experiences. While some of these answers may be accurate, some may not, and there are many situations that are unique to the individual.

Some of the messages say things like, what's the union doing about it? Please know that just because you don't know does not mean we are not doing anything. Strategy is important, and not for general dissemination. If you want to be in the know, run for an office and be a part of the decision-making team.

When dealing with allowances and entitlements, DoDEA needs to provide final decisions. It does no good for FEA to provide an opinion on these. BUT, once you have a decision, if you disagree, ask for the regulation covering their decision and then bring it to FEA for next steps. Send a message to your District Representative or Area Director for guidance.

Graphic of the Week



New Director, Paul Craft

By now, I'm sure many of you have seen the announcement that Dr. Narvaez is leaving and that Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness Tata has named former Superintendent, from Ohio as the new Director.

In times like these, our strength lies in our unity. Let's continue to support one another and remember that we are stronger together than alone. The work is important, but so are the lives we lead beyond it. As we move forward, may we remain guided by both our professional responsibilities and the personal values that define us.

Are You Prepared? -continued-

Pick a trusted “point person”

Choose one person (family member or very close friend) who will:

- Coordinate with DoDEA, through your administrator or District Chief of Staff
- Talk to HR, housing, and other necessary services
- Help other family members navigate things

Tell them explicitly: “If something happens to me, you’re the point person.” This prevents confusion and emotional overload for your family.

Overseas- Remains & personal effects

- Know what DoDEA provides vs. what family may need to handle
- Consider whether you want:
 - Burial overseas
 - Repatriation to the U.S.
- Put preferences in writing

Consular awareness

- Understand that in the event of death:
 - The U.S. Embassy/Consulate may be involved
 - Host-nation laws may affect timelines and procedures
- Your family should know which country you’re in and under what SOFA status

Vehicle(s)

- Vehicle location and registration info recorded
- Written plan for sale, storage, or shipment
- Keys and documents accessible to point person

Pets

- If you have pets, name a caregiver, Include vet records, decide what should happen if transport isn’t possible

Financial decisions are yours. Potentially consider:

- Consolidating accounts where possible
- Use automatic payments
 - Keep a list of debts, subscriptions, bills, other recurring payments
- Consider a password manager with emergency access

Communicate: A simple conversation helps a lot.

“I’m fine, but since I live overseas, I’ve put plans in place just in case. Here’s who to contact and where everything is.”

This reduces panic and guilt if something does happen.

Revisit annually (or with life changes)

Review everything if you:

- PCS
- Change beneficiaries
- Experience illness
- Buy property
- Lose or gain close family relationships

Put a calendar reminder once a year.

Overseas educator to overseas educator:

You’re not being morbid—you’re being responsible, independent, and deeply considerate. When tragedy has reared it’s ugly head in my family, the hardest part hasn’t been the loss itself, but the confusion afterward. What you’re doing removes that burden. This is especially important for single educators. Someone needs to know your wishes so they are respected.

Are You Prepared - Checklist

LEGAL DOCUMENTS (U.S. + HOST NATION)

- U.S.-based Will (executor named; overseas personal effects addressed)
- Ask attorney whether a host-nation supplemental will is advisable
- Durable Power of Attorney (financial decisions)
- Healthcare Power of Attorney
- Advance Medical Directive / Living Will
- Copies stored securely (physical + encrypted digital)
- Trusted person knows exact location and access method

BENEFICIARIES (CRITICAL – REVIEW ANNUALLY)

- FEGLI beneficiary designation confirmed
- TSP beneficiary designation confirmed
- Any private insurance or investments reviewed
- Beneficiary forms match intent (override wills)

“IF SOMETHING HAPPENS TO ME” FILE

- Full legal name, DOB, SSN (secured)
- Copies of Passport, CAC, visa, PCS Orders
- Emergency contacts (U.S.-based)
- Location of all legal documents
- Bank accounts and bill payment info
- TSP & FEGLI account details
- DoDEA-Europe HR contact
- School principal & district office contact
- Housing Office (base or local)
- Transportation Office (Personal Property/HHG)
- Nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate

DESIGNATED POINT PERSON (HIGHLY RECOMMENDED)

- One primary coordinator designated
- Person understands they will:
Communicate with DoDEA-Europe HR
Coordinate housing and HHG disposition
Serve as liaison for family

DODEA-EUROPE-SPECIFIC PLANNING

- Understand DoDEA procedures for serious illness or death in-service
- Written preference for:
Repatriation of remains to U.S. or burial overseas
- Awareness that:
Host-nation laws affect timelines. U.S. Embassy/Consulate may be involved

HOUSEHOLD GOODS & HOUSING

- Written instruction for disposition of:
HHG (ship to U.S., storage, disposal)
Unaccompanied baggage
- Housing termination process understood
- Important personal items identified for family

VEHICLE (IF APPLICABLE)

- Vehicle location and registration info recorded
- Written plan for:
Sale
Storage
Shipment
- Keys and documents accessible to point person

PETS (IF APPLICABLE)

- Caregiver identified (on or off base)
- Vaccination records & pet passport accessible
- Written plan if emergency transport not possible

FINANCIAL ORGANIZATION

- Accounts consolidated where possible
- Automatic bill payments set up
- List of debts and subscriptions prepared
- Password manager with emergency access enabled

FAMILY COMMUNICATION

- Family informed plans are in place
- Point person identified to family
- Embassy and DoDEA involvement explained

MAINTENANCE

- Annual review scheduled
- Update after PCS, school change, illness, or major life events