

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



Manager's

**SURVIVAL
GUIDE**

**to Human
Capital**

Introduction

A Message from Denise Sheehan, Assistant Director, Budget, Planning and Human Capital

I am pleased to offer you the Manager's Survival Guide to Human Capital. My staff and I sincerely hope you find this tool useful and relevant. Its contents include information about a vast array of human capital programs, policies, and procedures—written in plain language—to help you navigate the broad highway of human resources and supervisory issues.

The guide is not intended to cover every inch of human capital management. Furthermore, it does not replace the advice of Service HR staff or diversity and civil rights officers. It is intended to provide managers with a basic framework and help you with the most common human resources issues. However, changes in the human capital program occur regularly. If you have a question about human resources, you should contact a human resources specialist before taking action, provide him or her with all of the relevant facts, and listen to advice as to the course of action to take. Each Service region has a human resources staff that can assist you. Internet and Intranet site references are included at the end of this guide to help you find more detailed information about human resources issues.

Together, we make the Service an Employer of Choice. Together, we manage our most precious resource: our employees. Together, Service employees are working to conserve the nature of America, connect people with nature, and leave a wildlife legacy for future generations. Your human resources staff is proud to help you serve the American people and conserve the wildlife and wild lands that make our nation so incredibly diverse and beautiful.

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Mission, Vision, Priorities, and Conservation Principles

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Mission

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Vision

We will continue to be a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Priorities

National Wildlife Refuge System: Conserving Our Lands and Resources

Landscape Conservation: Working With Others

Migratory Birds: Conservation and Management

Threatened and Endangered Species: Achieving Recovery and Preventing Extinction

Aquatic Species: National Fish Habitat Action Plan and Trust Species

Connecting People with Nature: Ensuring the Future of Conservation

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Conservation Principles

Science—Our work is grounded in thorough, objective science.

Stewardship—Our ethic is to conserve natural resources for future generations.

Service—It is our privilege to serve the American people.

Professionalism—We hold ourselves to the highest ethical standards, strive for excellence, and respect others.

Partnerships—We emphasize creative, innovative partnerships.

People—Our employees are our most valued asset.

Legacy—We ensure the future of natural resource conservation by connecting people with nature.



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SECTION 1

Staffing Your Organization

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Position Management

Position management is an on-going process to organize and structure work to carry out your organization's mission.

Position management involves determining whether a position is required to meet organizational needs; what type of position will best meet those needs (professional, administrative, clerical, or technical; permanent, temporary, or term; full-time or part-time; supervisory or non-supervisory; full performance level or trainee); and what series and grade will attract and retain the best qualified employee.

When considering establishing an organization or position, or changing your current organizational structure, consider these key position management questions:

- Will the organization and the positions identified provide the needed expertise to accomplish expected quantity and quality of work?
- How does the proposed position relate to other positions within the immediate organization and elsewhere within the program or division?
- How does the proposed position relate to the mission of the immediate organization or the overall mission of the broader organization?
- Do the proposed duties and responsibilities overlap or conflict with those described for existing positions?

- Are there any relevant delegations of authority and do they affect the proposed position?
- If more than one person will be assigned to the proposed position, is there enough work to accommodate all employees at the full performance level?
- Will the proposed position exceed the normal career ladder for the occupation? In comparison to similar Service positions, will the proposed position set a new precedent?
- Does the organization include positions for students, trainees, and other intermediate career ladders, if appropriate? Does it plan for back-up coverage of critical work?
- Is the organization unnecessarily split into many small segments?
- Are there too many levels in the supervisory chain?

Your servicing Human Resources (HR) Office can provide advice and guidance on the most effective and efficient uses of your positions and help you structure your organization to accomplish your goals.

Position Classification

Position classification is the analysis of duties and responsibilities of a position, and the determination of the proper pay plan, title, occupational series, and grade based on Office of Personnel Management (OPM) position standards. Supervisors have the primary responsibility to assign work, write the description of that assigned work, and certify the accuracy of that description. The HR Office determines the title, occupational series, and grade level of that work; ensures that the PD is properly documented; writes the evaluation statement documenting the classification decision; and authorizes the pay for that position.

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Developing Position Descriptions

As a supervisor, in order to fulfill the organization's mission, you may need to create a new position or restructure current positions. The first step is writing a position description (PD), which states the major duties and responsibilities of a position. Before taking the time to create a new PD, check the Standard PD (SPD) library. The Service has established a large number of SPDs that are available on the Human Capital website. As long as the grade-controlling duties described in the SPD describe at least 80% of the work performed by the position, you should use the SPD.

A PD may take many forms, depending on the nature of the position and the type of duties. Formats include supervisory or managerial; factor evaluation system; narrative; and federal wage system. If you are unsure which PD format to use for a newly created position, contact your HR Office.

Supervisors are responsible for developing a draft PD if one does not exist, and forwarding the proposed PD to their HR Office for classification. You may need to provide additional information about the duties so the HR Office can accurately determine the grade, title, and series.

Supervisors must write a new PD when creating a new position or when the duties, tasks, and responsibilities of a current position have changed to an extent that the way the job is performed is significantly different from the existing PD.

The most important consideration when writing a PD is to describe the duties as they are expected to be performed in order to achieve your organization's objectives, missions, and functions.

Depending on the nature of the work, you may assign more than one employee to the same PD, referred to as an Identical Additional position, eliminating the need to write several position descriptions when there is an established and classified position. (For this option to

apply, the classified PD must be used without changes or modifications).

You may recruit at a lower grade level than the position's full performance level. This is an effective way to recruit a trainee, provide senior employees in your office with an opportunity to mentor another employee, and begin succession planning. Career ladder, or developmental, positions are developed in cooperation with your HR Office. With the full performance level PD you provide, HR staff can help develop the additional, lower-graded developmental positions. Human Resources staff often use a Statement of Difference to address the distinctions between the full performance PD and the lower graded position. A Statement of Difference describes the difference between the two grades and, along with the fully developed position description, serves as the official description of work for the employee selected at the lower grade level.

Exit Clearance

Service policy requires managers and supervisors to ensure formal exit clearance procedures are followed for separating employees. The exit clearance process includes activities to be completed by the employee, supervisor, and other Service personnel charged with employee separation duties. An employee may separate for many reasons, including resignation, retirement, and transfer from the Service to another Federal agency, end of seasonal employment, termination, or move to another duty station. The process ensures employees who separate from the Service do not retain electronic and physical access to Service information and property. Additionally, employees who are moving to another duty station should retain access only to those information systems relevant to their new duty station.

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Recruitment

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The Service's supervisors, managers and human capital staff work together to identify, attract, and retain a high quality and diverse workforce capable of accomplishing the agency's mission. In doing so, supervisors must apply merit system principles, including the principles of equal opportunity employment. One merit system principle states that you should recruit from among qualified individuals from appropriate sources to achieve a workforce from all segments of society. You should determine selection and advancement solely based on relative ability, knowledge, and skills, after fair and open competition, assuring that all receive equal opportunity.

The Service's Merit Promotion Program (MPP) is used to select candidates for promotions and internal placement and conduct external recruitment. External recruitment is also conducted using the Office of Personnel Management's delegated examining procedures, special employment program non-competitive hiring, veterans's appointment authorities, and direct hire authority.

Diversity Recruitment Programs

Minorities in Higher Education

The Service's Minorities in Higher Education Program has four areas of emphasis: Historically Black Colleges and Universities Program, Hispanic Association of

Colleges and Universities, American Indian/Alaskan Native Higher Education Consortium, and Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. The Service manages programs to support these areas, responding to requirements under the following executive orders:

- Executive Order 13256, President's Board of Advisors on Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), requires agencies to develop and implement an HBCU Program.
- Executive Order 13230, President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, requires agencies to support activities to increase opportunities for Hispanic Americans to participate in and benefit from education programs.
- Executive Order 13270 requires agencies to increase opportunities for Tribal Colleges and Universities, listed with the Office of White House Initiatives on Tribal Colleges and Universities, to participate in federally funded projects and programs.

Complete information about these programs is in the Service's centralized policy library at <http://www.fws.gov/policy/>. You can also contact your servicing Diversity and Civil Rights Office.



Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP)

Statistics show that people with disabilities encounter greater difficulty in obtaining work. The Service is proud to support the Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) for College Students with Disabilities. The WRP is a resource to connect public and private sector employers nationwide with highly motivated post-secondary students and recent graduates with disabilities who are eager to prove their abilities in the workforce, in temporary and permanent positions in a variety of fields.

Disabled Veterans's Recruitment Programs

The **Operation Warfighter (OWF) Program** is a Department of Defense temporary assignment/internship program for military service members convalescing at treatment facilities. The OWF program is free to Federal agencies and is designed to provide recuperating service members with meaningful activity outside of the hospital environment that assists in their wellness and transition back to the military or civilian workforce. The duration the military service member is available is flexible and depends on how long he will be receiving treatment, from 90 days to more than a year. The hours he is available are also flexible and depend on treatment. Military service members are not expected to be available to work 40 hours per week through this program.

The **Non-Paid Work Experience (NPWE) Program** is part of the Department of Veterans Affairs' Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) outreach program and provides eligible veterans with the opportunity to obtain training and practical job experience in a Federal agency. Types of work may include administrative, clerical, professional, technical, or wage grade jobs.

The **Coming Home to Work Program (CHTW)**, part of the VR&E program's early outreach efforts, allows participants to work with a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to obtain temporary, unpaid Federal government experience prior to medical separation from active duty at major military treatment facilities,

with a special emphasis on Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom (OIF/OEF) service members and separated veterans.

Both the NPWE and CHTW programs are free, and employment lasts for 90 days; that period can be extended on a case-by-case basis. Management officials provide position duties and specifics to the Equal Opportunity and Diversity Office or regional Diversity and Civil Rights offices, who coordinate with the VR&E coordinators and counselors to obtain volunteers.

Targeted Recruitment Plans

The Service encourages all managers to develop and use targeted recruitment plans to expand pools of qualified applicants. These plans should include diversity analyses and planned recruitment as part of workforce planning efforts. You are also encouraged to maintain a tracking system for applicant data by race, national origin, sex, disability, and related disposition. Tracking and assessing recruitment activities ensures we focus on improving participation in under-represented and mission-critical occupations and leadership ranks. You may also use targeted recruitment plans for hiring people with disabilities. For more information or to obtain an example of a targeted recruitment plan, contact your servicing Equal Opportunity and Diversity/Diversity and Civil Rights Office.

Internal Recruitment

Merit Promotion Program

The Department of Interior (DOI) Merit Promotion Plan and the Service's Supplemental Guide establish procedures to ensure a systematic means of selection for promotion of permanent employees based on merit system principles. Veterans eligible under the Veterans Equal Opportunity Act (VEOA) may also compete for promotions and employment opportunities when the Service solicits for applications from qualified candidates outside DOI. Permanent Federal employees

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may move competitively or non-competitively from one position to another under merit promotion procedures.

Promotions

Promotion is advancing an employee to a higher grade after open and fair competition. Competition is required for advancement to higher grade levels, and career ladder promotions are approved at the supervisor's discretion.

Reassignments

Reassignment is the noncompetitive movement of an employee to another position for which he qualifies at the same grade level and with an equivalent target grade, if applicable.

A reassignment eligible employee is considered a noncompetitive candidate, or is a noncompetitive referral, because he/she has already competed for and currently holds, or has held, an equivalent position to the one being filled, therefore competition is no longer required. However, reassignments to restructured positions, such as through the Upward Mobility Program, which are targeted above the grade level currently held by the employee, must be processed competitively. This means that all merit promotion rules apply and competition must occur between all merit promotion candidates in the area of consideration.

Reassignments can be "management directed," initiated by management to move an employee laterally to another position within the organization or between organizations. This often occurs when placing employees to avoid reduction-in-force actions or for other reasons when an employee's skills can be better utilized in another equivalent position.

Reassignment candidates may be referred when the selecting official requests to review this recruiting source or at any time along with Merit Promotion candidates. They would be referred with other noncompetitive candidates such as change to lower grade and re-promotion eligibles.

Details

A detail is the temporary assignment of an employee to a different position or set of duties for a specified period with the employee returning to his original position at the end of the detail. There is no formal position change; officially, the employee continues to hold the position from which detailed and keeps the same status and pay. Employees do not need to meet qualification standards to be detailed.

Details are intended for meeting temporary needs when necessary services cannot be provided by other means. Details can be used in situations such as temporary shortage of employees or emergency work situations. Details are carried out in 120-day increments and may be assigned to permanent or temporary employees.

An employee who carries out the duties of the position to which she is permanently assigned and performs some duties of another position for a limited time generally is not considered to be on detail. Details to higher-level positions must be made competitively when the duration will exceed 120 days.



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Temporary Promotions

Temporary promotions are used to non-permanently fill vacant positions, accomplish project work, fill positions temporarily pending reorganization or downsizing, or meet other temporary needs. Promotions of more 120 days must be announced for competition under merit promotion procedures. Temporary promotions can be made in any increment up to a maximum period of five years. You must provide advance written notice of the conditions of the time-limited promotion to the employee.

Change to Lower Grades

A change to lower grade is generally a voluntary request by an employee to take a lower-graded position. This is not considered an adverse action if it is voluntarily requested by the employee.

Reinstatement

Reinstatement is hiring a former Federal employee who had permanent competitive status or was serving probation when she resigned, retired, or was otherwise separated from Federal service.

Transfers

A transfer is moving an employee with a permanent competitive service appointment from a position in one agency to a permanent competitive service position in another agency without a break in service

Veterans Employment Opportunities Act Appointment

The Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA) gives eligible veterans access to jobs that otherwise would have only been available or announced to status employees. Under merit promotion procedures, VEOA applicants are not accorded preference; they must meet the minimum qualifications for the position and compete with other status candidates for the promotion. Agencies may appoint VEOA eligibles who have competed under agency merit promotion announcements when recruiting from outside their workforce. A VEOA eligible who is

selected will be given a career or career-conditional appointment.

External Recruitment

The Service utilizes various recruitment sources and OPM appointment authorities and employment programs to conduct external recruitment from a diverse and dispersed population.

Delegated Examining Authority

Our interagency agreement with OPM contains a delegation of examining authority and establishes terms and conditions for using OPM-developed examining instruments. The agreement allows us to examine applicants for positions within the Service as a Delegated Examining Unit (DEU). Through DEU, the Service conducts external recruitment to solicit applications from applicants from outside the Federal workforce; Federal employees who do not have competitive service status; and Federal employees with competitive service status.

The Service fills permanent (career/career conditional), term, and temporary positions. HR offices work with and advise supervisors and managers on using the traditional Rule of Three and/or Category Rating Process to fill permanent and temporary positions.

Rule of Three

When you use the Rule of Three, you must select from among the top three candidates. Veteran's preference applies and you may not select a non-preference veteran over a similarly ranked or higher ranking veteran with preference. Veterans with a compensable disability float to the top of the certificate if the position is administrative, clerical or technical.

Category Rating Procedures

Category rating is an optional alternative for ranking and selection. Under category rating, applicants who meet basic minimum qualification requirements for the position and whose job-related competencies or

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knowledge, skills and abilities have been assessed are ranked by being placed in one of two or more predefined quality categories instead of being ranked numerically. Veterans' preference eligibles are placed within the ranking categories ahead of non-veterans.

Types of Appointments under DEU:

1) Career/Career Conditional Employment

You may ask your HR Office to conduct external recruitment to fill permanent positions in the competitive service. This type of request should only be made when it has been determined that a sufficient number of best qualified candidates are not available under MPP or other authorities. The Rule-of-Three or category rating procedures process may be used. The candidate(s) selected will be hired under a career/career conditional appointment and in most cases will be subject to a one-year probationary period (see "Performance Management and Awards" section for more information).

2) Temporary-Limited Appointments

A temporary-limited appointment is a non-status appointment to a competitive service position for a specified period not to exceed one calendar year. The appointment may be extended up to a maximum of one additional calendar year (24 months of total service). Temporary workers may be exempt from the service limit if they work less than six months (1,040 hours) in a year.

3) Term Employment

A term appointment is a non-status appointment to a competitive service position for a specified period over one year but not more than four years. Term appointments are used to complete project-related work that is expected to continue longer than one year but is not permanent work.

Direct-Hire Authority

Direct-Hire Authority allows agencies to hire individuals to positions without regard to sections 5 U.S.C. 3309—3318. Direct-Hire Authority requires public notice

and adherence to career transition assistance program requirements (CTAP/ICTAP). However, it does not require rating or ranking of applicants.

OPM approves Direct-Hire for severe shortage and critical need, such as when agencies need to fill positions quickly because of an emergency or a new initiative or mandate. OPM may grant government-wide or agency-specific Direct-Hire authority by occupation, grade level, geographic location, or any combination. Justification for severe shortage of candidates can be made using such sources of information as demonstrated recruitment efforts; employment trends; labor market data; workforce planning analyses; use of other available appointment authorities; and availability and quality of candidates.

Special Hiring Authorities

The Federal government uses several non-competitive Special Hiring Authorities for hiring individuals. Following is an overview of some of the Special Hiring Authorities that Service supervisors can consider. The Service solicits applications from candidates eligible under these authorities when conducting recruitment outside the DOI applicant pool.

Persons with Disabilities—People with disabilities can be hired noncompetitively using excepted service appointing authorities, which provide an opportunity for disabled individuals to show that they can do the job and to circumvent attitudinal barriers of managers and supervisors. Candidates must be fully qualified and able to perform the essential functions of the position with or without reasonable accommodation.

Veterans Readjustment Authority—The Veterans Readjustment Authority (VRA) Program is intended to meet the unique needs of veterans in the labor market and enable Federal agencies to hire needed talent quickly. The Service can use the VRA to fill jobs through GS-11 and equivalent. When hiring under VRA, supervisors must give preferential consideration to applicants with veterans’ preference over applicants without preference.

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VRA appointees are hired initially for a two-year period in the excepted service. During the two-year period, VRAs continue to be eligible for noncompetitive consideration under the Service's Merit Promotion Program and if selected they are given another noncompetitive VRA appointment. The VRA employee serves a one-year trial where performance and conduct are closely monitored. Upon successful completion of the two-year excepted service period, and upon the supervisor's recommendation, the employee is converted to the competitive service. A formal VRA training plan is required for employees with less than 15 years of formal education.

Thirty Percent or More Compensable Veteran—

Veterans with an approved compensable disability rating of thirty percent or more, if qualified, may be non-competitively appointed to positions without going through OPM. Compensable veterans also have priority consideration for hiring from competitive recruitment sources such as OPM certificates, delegated examining authorities, or direct-hire authorities.

Thirty percent or more compensable disabled veterans are initially given a temporary appointment; duration may vary depending on the type of disability and position requirements. This provides supervisors with time to evaluate whether the disability impairs performance of the full range of duties of a position. Once you certify that the disabled veteran is successful in the position, you may convert her to a career-conditional appointment.

Other Noncompetitive Hiring Authorities—An agency may noncompetitively appoint an employee covered by an interchange agreement to a career or career-conditional appointment. The interchange agreement between OPM and the entity specifies conditions a candidate must meet to be eligible for the non-competitive appointment. The HR Office determines whether the candidate is eligible for the non-competitive appointment. The candidate must also meet the qualifications requirements of the position.

The following are additional non-competitive appointment authorities the Service may use to conduct external recruitment:

- Peace Corps
- Postal Rate Commission employees
- Government Accountability Office employees
- Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts employees

Special Employment Programs

Student Employment Programs

To be eligible, a student must be at least 16 years of age and a U.S. Citizen, and maintain a good academic standing in school. Students may work part-time or full-time at any time during the year and are eligible for promotion and sick and annual leave. The student can be pursuing a high school degree or GED, a vocational/technical certificate, or an Associate, Baccalaureate, graduate or professional degree. The student must periodically provide a transcript to the Division of Human Capital.

There are two types of student programs managers can use to help build a diverse workforce.

1) Student Career Experience Program (SCEP)

Student Career Experience Program students are hired to work in their academic field. Students appointed under this authority may be noncompetitively converted to a career or career-conditional appointment within 120 days of completing their academic program. Tuition assistance may be available for all or part of the training expenses. The student may be required to sign a written training agreement to continue employment for a specified period of time before accepting tuition assistance. Students are eligible for conversion to a permanent position after completing at least 640 hours of work experience and coursework leading to diploma, certificate, or degree.

SCEP students are eligible for retirement and the Thrift Savings Plan, holidays, and annual and sick

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leave. They may be eligible for health benefits and life insurance. These positions are assigned to the appropriate occupation series with the position ending in 99. Managers should plan for a student's conversion when allocating resources, although conversion is not guaranteed.

The SCEP program requires a formal written agreement between the agency, student, and school.

2) Student Temporary Employment Program

The Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) provides flexibility to appoint students on a temporary basis (not to exceed one year) to jobs that may or may not be related to the student's academic field. The student's appointment may be extended at management's discretion as long as she remains in student status.

The STEP student is *not* eligible for retirement, life insurance, or Thrift Savings Plan and can be eligible to receive health benefits after one year of continuous employment, but must pay both the government and employee share of the premium. Students are not eligible for non-competitive conversion to a term, career, or career-conditional appointment although they can be converted to a SCEP appointment. No school agreement is required for a STEP appointment.

Federal Career Intern Program (FCIP)

The Federal Career Intern Program (FCIP) is used to fill entry-level positions. It is not a student program. Individuals are appointed for two years and complete formal training. Each employee is required to have an Individual Development Plan for the duration of the program; however, they do not have to go on rotational assignments. Appointments through the FCIP are made at the GS-5, 7, or 9 level in a two-grade interval occupational series. There is no limit to the promotion potential that may be assigned to the positions. The recruitment process is streamlined, allowing applicants to apply directly to Federal agencies. Although vacancy announcements must be advertised, they do not have to be posted on USAJobs, and can be advertised on college career center websites, centralized career websites such as monster.com or careerbuilder.com, or classified advertisements in local newspapers.

Selected interns, who must meet OPM qualifications requirements, are hired under a two-year excepted service appointment and are eligible for conversion to a career or career-conditional appointment. Career/career conditional employees selected from within an agency for this program have a right to return to a competitive position. The FCIP is attractive to managers because the employee is in the excepted service for two years, effectively a two-year probationary period. Employees in the FCIP are eligible for awards, training, promotions, and all Federal benefits.

Presidential Management Fellow (PMF) Program

The Presidential Management Fellow program attracts individuals of exceptional management potential to Federal service from a wide variety of academic disciplines. To be eligible, the candidate must complete a course of study at an accredited college or university; be nominated by the dean or an academic program director; complete an assessment process administered by OPM; and be selected by OPM as a PMF finalist.

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OPM is responsible for the management of the PMF program, including nationwide recruitment, orientation training, and a graduation program. The Department of the Interior is the liaison with OPM Program Office and coordinates the PMF program by establishing the policies, procedures, and activities across DOI. OPM requires a reimbursement fee to cover costs associated with managing the program.

A PMF appointment is an initial two-year excepted service appointment. Based on the PMF qualifications, the initial appointment may be made at the GS-9, 11, or 12 levels. Supervisors must have an approved full-time position at the time a selection is made. The establishment of an Individual Development Plan is required and rigorous training requirements include four to six months of developmental assignments, a 30-day rotational assignment, and 80 hours of formal classroom training in each of the two years of the PMF appointment. The decision to convert PMFs to permanent appointments in the competitive service is based on satisfactory completion of the program and certification by the DOI Executive Review Board.

Qualification and Candidate Evaluation

Qualifications

Employees must have the appropriate competencies and knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) to perform the duties of their positions. To ensure candidates meet the minimum requirements, OPM established a set of qualification standards for General Schedule positions and Trades and Labor Occupations.

OPM standards outline the basic qualification requirements for a particular occupation or a group of occupations. The standards specify the minimum quality level and amount of experience and education required, and when education may be substituted for experience. Qualification requirements may include one or a combination of the following:

- General and/or specialized experience;

- High school education;
- Vocational/technical training;
- Degrees and coursework completed in an accredited university or college;
- Specific major fields or courses of study completed in an accredited university or college;
- Specific registrations, licensure, or certifications;
- Other selective placement factors.

Human resources specialists use OPM qualification standards to evaluate internal and external candidates' qualifications for positions. Candidates who do not meet the minimum qualification standards for the position are ineligible for further consideration.

Job Analysis

A job analysis entails gathering, documenting, and analyzing information about the content, context, and the requirements of a job to demonstrate the clear connection between job tasks and the competencies necessary to perform those tasks. To develop a job analysis, you must identify:

- The major job requirements (MJRs), which are the most important duties and responsibilities of the position to be filled. They are the main purpose or primary reasons the position exists. The primary source of MJRs is usually the most current official position description.
- Competencies/KSAs required for performance, resources used during performance, and the context (or environment) in which performance occurs.
- The percentage of time of the incumbent will spend performing the MJRs.

Conducting a job analysis involves collecting information from a subject matter expert (SME) who has direct, up-to-date experience with a job and is familiar with all of its tasks, such as the person who currently holds or supervises the job. SMEs should rate the job tasks and competencies for importance to successful job performance. Critical incidents (i.e., examples of

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particularly effective or ineffective work behaviors) are also developed in some cases to describe essential job functions. Documentation of the job analysis process and the links between job tasks, competencies, and selection tool content are essential to ensure an assessment strategy meets legal and professional guidelines.

If you are developing an automated occupational questionnaire using an automated staffing system, a job analysis is essential to:

- Provide documentation establishing the content validity (job relatedness) of the questionnaire;
- Justify the factors, task statements, and point values used;
- Document that the factors and task statements target the most important aspects of the job; and
- Describe the competencies/KSAs required to successfully perform the functions of the position

When developing Crediting Plans/Rating Schedule, the job analysis is essential for determining ranking factors and benchmark performance levels, as well as ranking applicants.

Crediting Plans are used to rank applicants to determine the best-qualified candidates when positions are advertised using a manual process (non-automated staffing system).

Crediting Plan

A Crediting Plan is used to rate applications and distinguish highly qualified candidates from minimally qualified candidates. Based on a thorough job analysis, crediting plans identify the KSAs required for successful performance in a position, and indicate performance levels that are used as benchmarks in rating applicants. The Crediting Plan usually contains four to five KSAs with three benchmark levels, and is used to rank applicants on the quality of their experience, education, training, or other job-related factors considered in the evaluation process.

When preparing to advertise vacant positions and create vacancy announcements, work with your HR Office to develop a job analysis of the position to be filled, and use that job analysis to create a Crediting Plan identifying the major job requirements and KSAs.

Automated Occupational Questionnaire

An Automated Occupational Questionnaire is used as the Crediting Plan to rate and rank candidates when the position is advertised using an automated staffing system.

The occupational assessment questionnaire is a self-rated, multiple-choice instrument used within an automated recruiting system to assess an applicant's training and experience in relation to the tasks and competencies required for the position.

A quality assessment questionnaire maximizes the quality of the supervisor's hiring decisions. Based on an approved job analysis, the assessment questionnaire contains four to eight competencies/KSAs with four to five items or task statements for each that measure the applicant's training and experience in that specific competency/KSA. Work with your HR specialists to develop quality questionnaires that can serve as effective screening instruments.

Vacancy Announcements and the Application Process

USA Staffing

The Service uses OPM's web-based system, USA Staffing, as its automated recruitment and staffing system. The software provides an effective tool for completely automating the recruitment, assessment, referral, and notification processes.

The Service uses USA Staffing to perform the following functions in an automated environment:

- Generate vacancy announcements;
- Post vacancy announcements on USAJOBS;
- Accept applications via Internet, phone, or fax;

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- Analyze applicant competencies and qualifications;
- Rate and rank job applicants;
- Cover available hiring flexibilities;
- Produce and update certificates;
- Notify applicants; and
- Manage applicant records.

Paid Advertisements

Paid advertisements may be used for recruiting purposes to enhance the Federal government's image as an employer or to support equal opportunity objectives. Advertisements may be placed in any media to convey messages about Federal job opportunities, either for specific vacancies or future possibilities.

Interview and Selection Process

The interview and selection process is the final and one of the most important steps in the hiring process. You are encouraged to use this opportunity to engage in a face-to-face discussion to ask the candidate(s) job-related questions. Use information gathered during the interview to evaluate further a candidate's readiness to perform the work of the position. You should also conduct previous employment reference checks to verify the candidate's experience.

Our ability to assist the Service in accomplishing its mission is substantially affected by who is hired. Supervisors and managers must select people who possess characteristics required for the job. The interview is an effective way of determining who has these job-related attributes and therefore, right for a job.

Interview

Interviews are typically used for one of two purposes: as part of the formal selection process in which candidates are screened or ranked based on their scores, or to verify candidates' qualifications for a job after they have been rated using other assessment methods, but prior to making a hiring decision.

Interview questions should focus on the candidate's experience or training as relates to the position.

Answers should provide evidence of whether the candidate possesses competencies/KSAs necessary for the job. For example, you may look at the KSA of "ability to give oral presentations to large groups." A good interview question might be: "What experience have you had in giving oral presentations to large groups?" You could ask about the size of the group addressed, whether audiences addressed were hostile, and to what extent the candidate participated in preparing the presentation. This type of question is objective; it does not "lead" the candidate to an answer. Rather, it seeks to find enough information for you to make a decision and is job related. Avoid Yes or No questions such as "Do you have trouble speaking before large groups?" or "Can you speak well?."

Do not formulate hypothetical cases and ask the candidate to provide possible solutions.

For example, typically found in supervisory positions is the KSA the "ability to delegate work." You might ask: "What experience do you have in delegating work? What was the workload? How many subordinates did you supervise? What were the situations?." Do not ask:



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“What would you do in the following situation: You have 1,000 cartons of widgets to deliver. Your clerk is on leave; how do you get the cartons delivered?” This type of questions is not objective and there are no right answers.

Do not ask questions that have an obvious answer and provide no means for distinguishing among candidates.

The question “Do you like working with people?” has an obvious response. A question such as “What experience have you had that would show you can effectively deal with the public?” would be more appropriate.

Some questions have been included in so many interviews that candidates may expect them.

An example of this type of question is “Why do you want this job?” There is no right answer. Candidates tend to have prepared answers for these kinds of questions aimed at what they think interviewers want to hear. This type of question adds nothing to the interview.

The vocabulary used in interview questions should be geared to the level of the candidate.

Do not use specialized terminology, organizational abbreviations, or acronyms, which may intimidate or confuse the candidate.

Some areas are sensitive and should not be part of the interview.

Be aware of legal and illegal subjects that may be addressed in the interview in a tactful manner that is appropriate for the job to be filled.

Talk to your HR Office to ensure interview questions are job-related and that you do not ask inappropriate questions.

Reference Checks

Reference checks are a key component in the employee selection process. Reference checks verify an applicant’s qualifications, skills, and suitability for a position. As a supervisor, you should conduct appropriate reference checks before you recommend

selection of a candidate. Most recommending supervisors conduct the checks themselves. It is a good idea to use business references and check with at least two previous employers.

When conducting reference checks, contact the applicant's current and former supervisors listed on the resume or application. The most expedient way of conducting a reference check is by phone; this also allows you to follow up on any questions that may arise. Keep these key points in mind when conducting reference checks:

- Be consistent. Ask the people you contact the same questions.
- Avoid questions that may appear culturally or racially motivated. Focus only on the job requirements and the applicant's performance in previous jobs.
- Avoid any questions about the applicant's personal life. Do not ask about marital status, children, hobbies, financial status, etc.

Selection

When filling a position, be sure to follow the approval process when recommending and selecting candidates. In most cases, if you are a first-level supervisor of the position being filled, your selection must be approved by a second-level or higher supervisor.

When recommending or selecting an applicant to fill a position, supervisors should take a number of factors into consideration. Besides the applicant's experience and skill level, supervisors also consider:

- Ability to work alone or in a team (as appropriate);
- Willingness to take responsibility;
- Communication skills;
- Attention to detail;
- Organizational skills;
- Ability to be self-motivated; and
- Attitude toward customer service.

SECTION 3

Pay Administration

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Locality Pay and Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA)

The continental United States is divided into 32 locality pay areas based on central urban areas as defined by the U.S. Census. Surrounding counties are connected to the urban areas to create the locality pay areas. Locality pay equalizes salary payments across the country. Salary for employees in the continental U.S. includes a base rate and the locality pay. Federal employees stationed outside of the continental United States receive a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) if they are stationed in Alaska, Hawaii, Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, or the U.S. Virgin Islands. COLA rates are determined based on a survey of the prices of over 300 items in each area.

Within-Grade Increases

General Schedule Employees—Permanent and term employees in a position not limited to one year or less are eligible for within-grade increases provided their performance is at least Fully Successful, the employee completes the required waiting period, and they have

not received an equivalent increase during the waiting period. Temporary GS employees whose employment is limited to one year or less are not eligible to receive within-grade increases. Waiting periods for within-grade increases for all GS grades are as follows:

- Up to Step 3 . . . 52 calendar weeks;
- Steps 4–6 104 calendar weeks;
- Steps 7–10 156 calendar weeks.

Federal Wage System—Employees paid under the Federal Wage System also receive within-grade increases, though the waiting periods are different than those for employees under the General Schedule. Waiting periods for within grade increases for all Federal Wage System grades are:

- Steps 1–2 26 calendar weeks of creditable service;
- Steps 2–3 78 calendar weeks of creditable service;
- Steps 3–5 104 calendar weeks of creditable service.

Premium Pay

Premium pay is additional pay for overtime, night, Sunday, or holiday work; standby duty; administratively uncontrollable overtime work; or availability duty.

It is the supervisor's responsibility to ensure that an employee's regularly scheduled workweek reflects actual work requirements, including any overtime hours. In most cases, overtime must be approved before the overtime is worked.

Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)

The FLSA establishes minimum wage, overtime pay, recordkeeping, and youth employment standards. Overtime pay varies for exempt and nonexempt employees. Be aware of your employees' exempt or nonexempt status (indicated on the employee's position description and SF-50) and the overtime requirements for each status. Employees are presumed to be nonexempt and the agency has the burden to prove whether they meet one of the exemption tests, which include

Executive, Administrative, and Professional (Learned and Creative). Based on the duties described in the PD, HR staff analyze the position to determine whether it is exempt or nonexempt. For more information on the exemption tests or the status of any of your employee's positions, contact your HR Office.

Overtime for Exempt Employees

Full-time exempt employees are entitled to compensation (in the form of overtime pay or compensatory time off) for officially ordered or approved work in excess of the employee's regularly scheduled tour of duty. If any employee—exempt or nonexempt—earns compensatory time off and is unable to use it within 26 pay periods after it was earned, it will be forfeited unless the employee was unable to use the compensatory time due to an exigency of the service beyond his control.

For FLSA-exempt employees with a rate of basic pay equal to or less than a GS-10, step 1, the overtime hourly rate is the employee's hourly rate of basic pay multiplied by 1.5.

For FLSA-exempt employees with a rate of basic pay greater than a GS-10, step 1, the overtime hourly rate is the greater of the hourly rate of basic pay for GS-10, step 1, multiplied by 1.5 or the employee's hourly rate of basic pay.

Overtime for Non Exempt Employees

Full-time, non-exempt employees are entitled to overtime compensation for all time worked in excess of the employee's regularly scheduled tour of duty. The overtime hourly rate is the employee's hourly rate of basic pay multiplied by 1.5. Supervisors should limit the amount of overtime pay by ensuring that employees do not work through lunch and go home at the end of their scheduled work day.

Compensatory Time for Travel

Employees are compensated for time spent in official travel status, including the time spent traveling between the official and temporary duty stations, along with usual

waiting time that precedes or interrupts travel. Both exempt and non-exempt employees are eligible to earn comp time off for travel.

Time is not compensable if the employee is free to rest, sleep, or otherwise use the time for her own purposes. An employee's time in travel status ends when she arrives at the temporary worksite or temporary lodgings. Time in travel status is subject to a deduction for normal commuting time. Employees must use earned compensatory time off for travel within 26 pay periods after the pay period during it was earned or it will be forfeited. Under no circumstances may an employee receive payment for unused compensatory time off for travel.

If an employee separates or leaves to perform duty in the uniformed services and later returns to service through the exercise of a reemployment right or separates or goes on leave without pay due to an on-the-job injury with entitlement to injury compensation, the unused compensatory time off for travel is held in abeyance. The employee must use all of the compensatory time off for travel held in abeyance by the end of the 26th pay period following the pay period in which the employee returns to duty, or the time off is forfeited.

If an employee fails to use her accrued compensatory time off for travel due to an exigency of the service

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beyond her control, the Director may extend the time limit for up to an additional 26 pay periods. Failure to use the earned compensatory time off for travel during the additional 26 pay periods results in forfeiture of the compensatory time off for travel. Supervisors should monitor and approve employee travel arrangements to lessen the impact of this entitlement, such as travel within normal business hours.

Recruitment, Relocation and Retention Incentives

Recruitment, relocation, and retention incentives are authorized by the Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act of 1990 and require advanced written approval as well as a minimum of a one-year service agreement.

Contact your servicing HR Office for specific criteria for these incentives.

Recruitment incentive is a cash incentive of up to 25 percent of a prospective employee's rate of basic pay per year, not to exceed four years (100 percent). A recruitment incentive is used as a management tool to encourage a candidate to accept a Federal job in situations in which an agency would have difficulty filling a position without offering the incentive.

Relocation incentive is a cash incentive of up to 25 percent of a current employee's rate of basic pay per year, not to exceed four years (100 percent). It is used to encourage a current Federal employee to accept a position that requires relocating to a new commuting area. This incentive may be paid only when the agency has determined that in the absence of the incentive, filling the position would be difficult.

Retention incentive is a payment of up to 25 percent of the employee's rate of basic pay, used to retain the services of a current employee who possesses unusually exceptional qualifications or is essential to a critical agency need. The agency must determine that, without the incentive, the employee would be likely to leave the Federal government. A retention incentive

may also be paid to groups, up to 10 percent of each employee's basic rate of pay.

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Student Loan Repayment

Student loan repayment is used to recruit highly qualified candidates from outside the Federal government or retain highly qualified employees. In the absence of the incentive, the agency would either encounter difficulty in filling the position with a highly qualified candidate or retaining a current employee who is likely to leave the agency for employment outside the federal government and it is essential to retain the individual due to his/her high or unique qualifications or based on a special need of the agency. Under this program, the calendar year limit per employee is \$10,000 with a lifetime loan repayment limit per employee of \$60,000.

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Quicktime

The Service uses an automated, on-line system called Quicktime to record and approve employees' time and attendance. Before a timesheet can be forwarded to payroll, it must be approved by a certifier, who examines timesheets to ensure they are correct. Supervisors are certifiers for their employees.

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As a certifier, you are responsible for the accuracy of the time and attendance information recorded by each of your employees in Quicktime. When you certify a timesheet, you must verify that all pay and leave hours recorded are correct and comply with regulations and policies.

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Corrections to certified Time and Attendance are submitted on an amended timesheet in Quicktime. Timekeepers can make changes to timesheets prior to certification.

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For procedures and general information regarding payroll rules, regulations, and procedures, contact your Quicktime coordinator. For detailed information on pay and/or leave regulations, contact your HR Office.

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SECTION 4

Benefits and Work/Life Programs

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Retirement

In general, all permanent employees and employees whose appointments are for more than one year are eligible for retirement coverage. The Federal government has two retirement systems: the Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS), and the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS). All new Federal employees are automatically covered under FERS. Both retirement programs provide for retirement, disability, and survivor benefits. Each system has different eligibility requirements and retirement options. Supervisors should have a basic understanding of the retirement system and an awareness of how the programs can assist with recruiting and retaining highly qualified employees.

Thrift Savings Plan

The Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) is a retirement savings and investment plan for Federal employees. The purpose of the TSP is to provide additional retirement income. The TSP offers the same type of savings and tax benefits that many private corporations offer under 401(k) plans. The TSP is a defined contribution plan; the retirement income employees receive from their TSP account will depend on how much they (and the government, for FERS employees) have contributed to the plan during their working years and the earnings on those contributions. Contributions are voluntary and are separate from contributions to the FERS Basic Annuity or CSRS annuity.

Health Insurance

Permanent employees and employees whose appointments are for more than one year are eligible for health insurance benefits. The Federal government's health insurance programs provide agency contributions and group rates. Normally, the employee's portion of the premiums is paid with pre-tax funds. Federal employees, retirees and their survivors can choose from among Consumer-Driven and High-Deductible plans that offer catastrophic risk protection with higher deductibles, health savings/reimbursable accounts and lower premiums; or Fee-for-Service plans, Preferred Provider Organizations, or Health Maintenance Organizations. You should encourage your employees to compare the costs, benefits, and features of different plans and to consider the total benefit package when choosing a health plan. Each year during the Federal Benefits Open Season (November/December) employees may make changes to their health insurance. In certain situations, called qualifying life events, employees can make changes outside the Open Season. Examples of qualifying life events include a change in marital status, a new baby, or the loss of insurance from another source. Employees should contact their HR Office for more information.

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Dental and Vision Insurance

Federal employees eligible for FEHB coverage (whether or not actually enrolled) and retirees (regardless of FEHB status) are eligible to enroll in a dental and/or vision plan. The Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) provides comprehensive dental and vision insurance at competitive group rates. There are seven dental plans and three vision plans from which to choose. FEDVIP offers three types of enrollments: Self Only, which covers only the enrolled employee or retiree; Self Plus One, which covers the enrolled employee or retiree plus one eligible family member specified by the enrollee; and Self and Family, which covers the enrolled employee or retiree and all eligible family members.

The employee is responsible for the entire premium, with no government contribution.

Employees may enroll on the Internet at www.BENEFEDS.com or by calling 877-888-FEDS (1-877-888-3337—TTY, 1-877-889-5680). Enrollment in a FEDVIP cannot be made using the Health Benefits Election Form (SF 2809) or through Employee Express. FEDVIP coverage continues each year and you do not need to reenroll each year. FEDVIP is part of the annual Federal Benefits Open Season. Similar to FEHB, employees may make changes outside of the annual Open Season if they experience a qualifying life event (see above).



Joe Millmoe / USFWS

Flexible Spending Accounts

Employees may elect to participate in the Federal Flexible Spending Account Program (FSAFEDS).

FSAFEDS offers two flexible spending accounts: a health care flexible spending account and a dependent care flexible spending account. Eligible employees can enroll in FSAFEDS during the Federal Benefits Open Season (the November/December timeframe) and enrollment is effective January 1 of the following year. Current enrollees must enroll each year to continue participating in FSAFEDS because enrollment does NOT carry forward year to year. New and newly eligible employees who wish to enroll in this program must do so within 60 days after they become eligible, but before October 1 of the calendar year.

Life Insurance

Permanent employees and employees whose appointments are for more than one year are eligible for life insurance benefits through the Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) Program. FEGLI provides group term life insurance that does not build up any cash value or paid-up value. It consists of Basic life insurance coverage and three options. In most cases, a new employee is automatically covered by Basic life insurance and the payroll office deducts premiums from an employee's paycheck unless they waive the coverage. The employee pays two thirds of the total cost of Basic insurance and the government pays one third. An employee's age does not affect the cost of Basic insurance.

The employee pays the full cost of Optional insurance, which depends on the employee's age. The Office of Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance, a private entity that has a contract with the Federal government, processes and pays claims. FEGLI does not have regularly scheduled open season. Employees interested in making changes to the life insurance elections, should contact their HR Office.

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Long Term Care Insurance

The Federal Long-Term Care Health Insurance Program (FLTCIP) offers insurance that helps cover the costs of certain long-term care services, defined as assistance in performing activities of daily living—such as bathing or dressing—or supervision received because of a severe cognitive impairment. Long-term care may be provided in a facility such as a nursing home, but is most often provided at home.

Most Federal employees are eligible to apply for coverage; those who are not eligible usually have limited appointments of short duration, or work sporadically only during certain seasons or when needed by their agency. Employees eligible for the FEHB Program are eligible to apply for FLTCIP coverage even if they are not enrolled in the FEHB Program.

Employees apply for FLTCIP by completing an application, found at www.ltcfeds.com, or by calling 1-800-LTCFEDS. The applicant must pass a medical screening; certain medical conditions, or combinations of conditions, will prevent some people from being approved for coverage. New or newly eligible employees (and their spouse, if applicable) have 60 days to apply using the abbreviated application, which asks fewer questions about their health. Newly married spouses of employees also have 60 days to apply using the abbreviated application.

Open season for the FLTCIP is infrequent, but employees do not have to wait for an Open Season; they may apply anytime using the full underwriting application.

Death of an Employee

When an employee dies, whether expectedly or unexpectedly, the family will need guidance about benefits and processes. This may also be true if an employee loses a family member. Various claim forms need to be filed in order for benefits to be paid.

Usually, the first contact for a family of a deceased employee is with the employee's office. As a supervisor

you may be also approached by an employee who is faced with a terminal illness and wants to discuss survivor benefits.

If a family member contacts you to report a death of an employee, or if an employee tells you she wants to discuss survivor benefits, provide her with the phone number of the HR Office. You may offer to call on behalf of the family and request that HR contact the family directly. If the family wants to contact HR directly, please call and let HR know to expect the family's call so that records can be pulled and preparation of the case may begin. To report the death of an employee or for more information on death benefits, contact your HR Office.

A condolence letter from the Director can be requested for the family of a deceased employee. Contact your HR Office for more information.

Benefits for Temporary Employees

Temporary employees (e.g., appointments for one year or less) are not entitled to health and life insurance but are eligible for other benefits, such as annual and sick leave. If a temporary employee completes one year of employment and is converted to another temporary appointment for one year or less, he is eligible to enroll in the Federal Employee's Health Benefits program. However, he must pay the full cost of the insurance. If the temporary employee is converted to a permanent appointment, benefits would then become available with agency contributions toward the premium. Be aware of any benefit options (or lack thereof) when hiring temporary employees, as well as the impact of converting the temporary employee to permanent status.

Employee Express

Employee Express is an electronic system that empowers Federal employees to manage their own discretionary payroll and personnel transactions and view their leave and earnings statements. The system is accessible at www.employeeexpress.com or by calling

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888-353-9450. Employee Express facilitates actions related to:

- Federal Tax Withholding
- State Tax Withholding
- Financial Allotments
- Home and Check Mailing Address
- Direct Deposit
- Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB)
- FEHB Pre-Tax Waiver
- Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)
- Savings Bonds
- Combined Federal Campaign (with automated pledge reports)
- Personal Identification Number changes and validation
- Earnings and Leave Statement, and Online W-2

Work Life Programs

The Service strives to be an employer of choice. We offer a variety of exciting programs to promote work/life issues for employees. Programs available to employees include:

Telework—Allows employees to work at an alternative work site. Telework is approved at management's discretion and the decision to approve a telework agreement should be made with the best interest of the Service in mind.

Fitness Center Reimbursement Program—The Service will reimburse permanent employees up to 50 percent of individual membership fee for a commercial, non-Federally sponsored fitness center, up to \$300 per year. Supervisors must approve an employee's application to join the program before the employee is officially enrolled. To be eligible, the fitness center must offer a full complement of exercise equipment and programs for cardiovascular and body strengthening, and the center cannot restrict membership and access to facilities based on sex, race, national origin, color, religion, age, disability, or sexual orientation.

Financial Planning Reimbursement Program—The Service will reimburse 50 percent of a permanent employee's financial planning services expenses up to \$200 every three years. Employees must use a certified financial planner of their own choice; the Service does not endorse or recommend financial planning service providers, nor are we responsible for any decisions employees make based on their advice. Employees may receive this benefit once every three years, or if retiring or voluntarily separating from the Service, within 12 months of retirement or separation.

Professional Liability Insurance Reimbursement Program—The Service will reimburse 50 percent of the annual cost of professional liability insurance, up to \$150 per year for law enforcement officers, supervisors, and management officials. (See "Liability of the Federal Supervisor" section)

Transportation Subsidy Program—Provides employees with a set amount each month for public and mass transit. In addition to completing the required forms, employees are also required to complete Transit Benefit Integrity Training.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)—The EAP is a comprehensive program that helps employees resolve personal problems that may adversely affect their work performance, conduct, health or well-being. The EAP addresses problems in the quickest, least restrictive, and most convenient manner while minimizing cost and protecting confidentiality. Employees may be granted excused absence to attend sessions, up to six hours annually. The EAP can assist with issues related to:

- Emotional;
- Relationship;
- Family;
- Alcohol;
- Job Concerns;
- Financial/Financial Planning; and
- Legal.

Employees can contact the EAP by calling 800-222-0364.

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Liability of the Federal Supervisor

You should be aware of your liabilities as a supervisor in the Federal government in the criminal, civil and administrative areas.

At any time, a supervisor can be held liable in one or all of these areas depending on the situation. The most important factor in liability relates to whether or not you were acting within the “scope of your employment.” In other words, were you doing what you were supposed to be doing (and how you were supposed to be doing it) as called for in your position description? If you depart from that scope of employment, you significantly increase your own personal liability and the government may no longer represent you or assume responsibility for your actions.

The Service offers a professional liability insurance reimbursement program (see section above). Contact your HR Office for additional information.

Work Schedules and Leave

Types of work schedules for full- and part-time employees include a traditional fixed schedule, flexible work schedule, and a compressed work schedule

Within Service requirements, supervisors have several options available when determining the type of schedule their employees can work. In addition, supervisors are responsible for scheduling their employees to provide adequate staff coverage and ensuring the Service's mission is accomplished.

Some Regions and offices are not able to offer all work schedules. Please check with you servicing HR office for more details.

Full-Time

Full-time employees must account for 80 hours in a two-week period. The 80 hours may include actual hours worked, holidays, and leave taken.

Part-Time

Part-time employees work 32 or fewer hours per week or fewer than 64 hours a pay period. Employees cannot be on a work schedule of 33 to 39 hours.

Traditional Schedule

A traditional schedule is a fixed work schedule consisting of five eight-hour days per week, usually Monday through Friday, with a set start and stop time each day. An employee's lunch period is not included in the eight-hour period.

Alternative Work Schedules (AWS)

Alternative Work Schedules (AWS) include *flexible work schedules* and *compressed work schedules*. All Service AWS have a core time of 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. During this core time employees must be present for work, absent on approved leave, or at a lunch period.

Flexible Work Schedules

Flexible schedules require full-time employees to work an eight-hour, non-overtime workday composed of core time and flexible times. The flexible time (starting and stopping times) may be selected or varied by the employee within limits established by regulation and his supervisor, who determines the number of

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hours a part-time employee must work in a week by establishing flexible and core hours appropriate to the part-time schedule. Under certain conditions, with prior supervisory approval, employees on flexible schedules may elect to work hours in excess of their basic work requirement to vary the length of a work day or work week. These excess hours are known as “credit hours.” Limits apply to the number of credit hours that can be earned and maintained by an employee. All flexible schedules must begin no earlier than 6 a.m. and end no later than 6 p.m. Examples of this schedule include:

Flexi-tour—The employee selects specific starting and stopping times and adheres to those times.

Gliding Schedule—The full-time employee with a basic work requirement of eight hours each day and 40 hours each week may change the arrival time daily as long as it is within the established flexible hours.

Maxi-flex Schedule—This schedule contains core hours on fewer than 10 workdays in the pay period, during which a full-time employee has a basic work requirement of 80 hours for the pay period. An employee may vary the number of hours worked on a given day or the number of hours each week within the limits established for the office. Employees may fulfill their basic work requirements in less than 10 days during the pay period.

Compressed Schedules

A compressed schedule allows the employee to fulfill her basic work requirements in fewer than 10 days during the pay period. Compressed work schedules are fixed; employees on these schedules generally cannot vary their start or stop times. Additionally, employees on compressed schedules cannot earn credit hours.

There are two types of compressed schedules:

5-4/9 Schedule—When working a 5-4/9 schedule, the employee works five days one week and four days the other week of a pay period. The employee must fulfill a basic 80-hour bi-weekly work requirement. Over a 10-day period, an employee works eight nine-hour days, one eight-hour day, and has one day off. On this

schedule, both the eight-hour workday and the day off are fixed. An employee will be credited with the same number of hours on a holiday as they are regularly scheduled to work.

4-10 Schedule—An employee working a 4-10 schedule works four days each week, for 10 hours each day. The employee must fulfill a basic 40-hour workweek and an 80-hour bi-weekly requirement, and work a fixed schedule of 10 hours per day. The day off each week is also fixed. An employee on the 4-10 schedule who takes one day of leave will be charged 10 hours. Similarly, holiday pay would be 10 hours.

Types of Leave

Many types of leave are available to Service employees. Supervisors must understand the similarities and differences in the types of leave to approve leave requests and timesheets properly.

You are responsible for complying with Service policy and procedures relating to the approval, use, and restoration of forfeited annual leave and ensuring that administration of leave within your organizations is legal, justifiable, and equitable.

Annual Leave

Employees earn annual leave based on length of service with the Federal government. Annual leave is usually requested in advance. It accumulates and is carried over year to year up to 240 hours. Part-time employees earn a pro-rated amount of leave.

Supervisors and employees have a joint responsibility to ensure that annual leave is used before the end of the leave year to avoid forfeiture.

Regional and Assistant Directors can approve advanced annual leave up to the amount of annual leave the employee will accrue during the current leave year.

Sick Leave

Full time employees earn four hours of sick leave each pay period regardless of length of service. There is no

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limit on the balance an employee can carry over year to year. Part-time employees earn a pro-rated amount of sick leave.

Sick leave may be used under the following circumstances:

- When the employee is incapacitated by physical or mental illness, injury, pregnancy, or childbirth;
- To receive medical, dental, or optical examination or treatment;
- When the employee would, because of exposure to a communicable disease, jeopardize the health of others by his presence on the job; or,
- When the employee must be absent from work for adoption-related activities.

A limited amount of sick leave (104 hours annually) may also be used to provide care for a family member as the result of physical or mental illness; injury, pregnancy, childbirth; medical, dental, or optical examination or treatment; or to make arrangements necessitated by the death of a family member or attend the funeral of a family member. This leave is considered “family friendly” leave, but is charged against an employee’s sick leave balance. This type of leave should be coded as family friendly leave in the Quicktime system. Assistant and Regional Directors can approve up to 240 hours of advanced sick leave annually.

Family and Medical Leave (FMLA)

Employees are entitled to 12 administrative workweeks of unpaid leave during any 12-month period for the birth and care of a newborn child; placement of a child with an employee for adoption or foster care; care of a spouse, son, daughter, or parent of the employee with a serious health condition; or a serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the essential functions of his position. Employees may substitute annual leave or sick leave for the unpaid leave under certain conditions. FMLA leave should be coded as such in the Quicktime system.

Leave for Bone-Marrow or Organ Donation

Federal employees are entitled to seven days of paid leave each calendar year (in addition to annual and sick leave) to serve as a bone-marrow or organ donor.

Leave Share/Transfer

The leave transfer program allows employees to donate annual leave to other federal employees who have medical emergencies and who have exhausted their own leave. Supervisors are responsible for understanding the concepts of this program and recommending approval or disapproval of leave recipient applications. Consult with your HR Office for leave recipient and donor forms.

Absent Without Leave (AWOL)

AWOL is not a form of leave; it is any absence from duty that is not authorized by the proper leave-approving official and may be the basis for disciplinary action. You must fully document all instances of AWOL and you are encouraged to discuss all AWOL issues with your HR Office as soon as possible after they occur.

Court Leave

Court leave is an excused absence for jury duty or for testifying in a non-official capacity as a witness in certain circumstances in a state or Federal court. Proper documentation from the court system should be provided when court leave is used.

Military Leave

Military leave is an authorized absence to perform active duty, active duty for training, or law enforcement. Military leave is not authorized for inactive duty training (usually weekend drills).

Leave Without Pay

Leave without pay (LWOP) is an approved absence from duty without pay. LWOP can influence an employee's waiting period for within-grade increases, as well as health benefits, life insurance, and accrual of annual and sick leave. Generally, LWOP must be approved by

a Regional or Assistant Director and is granted in the amounts detailed below. It should only be granted when the employee is expected to return to work after the LWOP ends.

The following are examples of situations where extended LWOP would be appropriate, and the maximum amount of time that should be approved:

- One year for illness or disability;
- One year for educational purposes for any employee who wishes to undertake career-related education when it is in the interest of the Service and they expect to return to the Service at the end of the period of leave;
- One year for an employee elected or appointed to a union office that requires all or part of her work time to conduct union business directly concerned with the functions of the Service;
- Six months for service with a non-Federal public or quasi public organization; and
- Three months, depending on the merits of the case, to attend to parental or family responsibilities.

Excused Absence/Administrative Leave

An excused absence is absence from duty without loss of pay or charge to leave. Excused absence is often referred to as “administrative leave.” Within the Service, excused absence is granted in very limited circumstances and must directly relate to the Service’s mission; enhance the professional development or skills of the employee in his current position; or be officially sponsored or sanctioned by the Director, the Secretary of the Interior, or the Office of Personnel Management. Granting excused absence is not an employee right; rather it is at manager’s discretion.

Funeral Leave

Funeral leave, not to exceed three workdays, may be granted to an employee whose immediate relative dies as a result of wounds, disease, or injury incurred as a member of the Armed Forces in a combat zone. Law enforcement officers and firefighters may also

be excused from duty to attend the funeral of a fellow Federal law enforcement officer or firefighter killed in the line of duty. The employee will be considered to be in official duty status while attending such services and will not be charged leave for this period.

Worker's Compensation and On-the-Job Injuries

The Federal Employees' Compensation Act provides monetary compensation for wage loss and medical expenses due to occupational diseases or on-the-job traumatic injuries that result from employment with the Federal government. Traumatic injuries are defined as wounds or other conditions caused by external force, including stress or strain. They must be caused by a specific event or incident or series of events or incidents within a single day or work shift. Examples are cuts, sprains, or broken bones suffered as a result of a fall in the office. Occupational diseases are conditions that develop over a period of time, such as repetitive action injuries.

The Department of Labor's Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) processes and adjudicates Workers' Compensation claims. All Service employees, students, and volunteers are covered by the OWCP. A claim should be filed if an employee/volunteer sustains an injury or develops an occupational illness. All injuries should be reported, since a seemingly minor injury could result in additional issues in the future. You are responsible for completing the managerial portion of the claim in a timely manner, reviewing the employee's statement for accuracy, and providing a complete response to the claim. All injuries should be reported through the Department's on-line reporting system, at <https://www.smis.doi.gov>. Additionally, as a supervisor you are responsible for maintaining contact with the injured employee and finding light/limited duty, when work restrictions are required, to facilitate the employee's return to duty.

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SECTION 5

Performance Management and Awards

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Performance Management

Supervisors use the Service's Performance Management System to define expected performance, evaluate and appraise employee and organizational performance, and make decisions concerning training, within-grade increases, promotions, and other performance-related actions.

As a supervisor, you have a number of performance management responsibilities for your employees. You should work with employees to develop, implement, and update performance plans; monitor employees' performance; and conduct progress reviews. You are also responsible for conducting annual appraisals and rewarding, recognizing, or taking corrective actions as appropriate. Specifically, supervisors are responsible for:

- Identifying elements and performance standards for each employee;
- Observing and documenting the employee's performance throughout the year and conducting one formal mid-year review and one formal end-of-the-year review;
- Providing feedback and coaching for employees;
- Completing the performance appraisal by comparing the employee's performance to the performance standards identified in the performance plan; and,
- Recognizing good performance throughout the year by using appropriate awards or developing performance improvement strategies for poor performance.

Employee Performance Appraisal Plans

Plans should be established and put in place within 60 days of the beginning of the appraisal period, the employee's entrance on duty, the assignment of an employee to a detail or temporary promotion scheduled to exceed 120 days, the assignment of an employee to a new position, or the assignment to a new or a different supervisory position. The annual appraisal period may be extended for up to a maximum of 90 days past the end of the appraisal period to allow for rating of employees who have not been in the same position, under the same supervisor, or under a written performance plan for the full 90 days at the end of the appraisal period.

Performance-Based Actions

Performance-based actions are initiated at any time during the performance appraisal cycle when your employee's performance is less than Fully Successful (i.e., at the overall rating 1 or 2). If an employee's performance is rated at a level one, consult with your HR Office to develop a Performance Improvement Plan to help the employee achieve and maintain acceptable performance, or failing that, to enable you to take other appropriate action.

Early intervention is critical to resolving performance problems. Contact your HR Office as soon as you identify



a performance problem. You must also discuss the performance problem with the employee.

Denial of Within-Grade Increases

An employee's current rating of record must be at a fully successful level (level 3) or higher in order to receive a within-grade increase in pay. An employee who has a current rating of record of less than Fully Successful will not be granted a within-grade increase until performance improves to the Fully Successful level.

Awards

The two main purposes of the Service's Awards Program are to allow flexibility in recognizing individual and group achievements and to acknowledge contributions that lead to results. Program objectives are to encourage all employees to actively share in improving Service operations, enhance productivity and creativity, and optimize personal job satisfaction. Achievements should be recognized at the time of accomplishment.

As a supervisor, you play a key role in the Service's Awards Program. Through daily contact with employees, supervisors are in an ideal position to ensure that employee contributions are recognized in a timely manner.

All awards require a completed form DI-451, Department of the Interior Award Certification.

Monetary awards

Monetary awards are used to recognize an individual or team of Service employees for achieving results; customer service; displaying exemplary behavior, dedication, innovation, and/or cooperation; fostering partnerships; promoting diversity; ensuring workplace safety; or, sustained exceptional service.

The Service offers the following types of monetary awards:

Special Thanks for Achieving Results (STAR) Award—

The award amount should be proportional to the value of the individual team accomplishment, considering the

overall benefit to the Federal government. Second-level supervisors may approve STAR awards up to \$1,000. STAR awards from \$1,000 to \$4,000 are approved by Assistant or Regional Directors and awards of more than \$4,000 are approved by the Director.

Performance Awards—Supervisors can grant rating based (performance) awards for employees who receive a rating of record of Superior (level 4) or Exceptional (level 5). Specifically, employees who receive an Exceptional rating are eligible and must be considered for a 3 to 5 percent cash award, a quality step increase, a time-off award (40 hours or less), or a combination of these. Employees who receive a Superior rating are eligible and must be considered for a 1 to 3 percent cash award, a time-off award (40 hours or less), a non-monetary award, or a combination of these. Second level supervisors can approve monetary awards up to \$2,000. Assistant and Regional Directors must approve all awards over \$2,000.

Quality Step Increase

A Quality Step Increase (QSI) is recognition based on an evaluation of an employee's performance that clearly shows a high level of performance for six months or more. A QSI raises the employee's base pay. An employee cannot receive more than one QSI within any 52-week period. You should submit a recommendation for a QSI as soon as possible, but no later than 60 days after completion of the period of performance being rewarded so that the award will be timely. QSIs must be approved by Assistant Director or Regional Director. Only employees who receive an Exceptional (level 5) performance rating are eligible for a QSI.

Non-Monetary Awards

Non-monetary recognition and informal honors are granted to employees for superior accomplishment of regular duties; exceptional achievement of project goals; noteworthy accomplishments over a sustained period of time; or, specific contributions to the Service mission.

Examples of Non-monetary awards include:

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- Items of *nominal value* such as coffee cups, key chains, or similar gifts under a \$50 cash value;
- Items of *significant value* such as pen-and pencil sets, clocks, or similar gifts with a \$51 to \$250 cash value. (Note: Use care in selecting appropriate items for non-monetary recognition to avoid the appearance of misusing government funds).
- Informal honors such as Letters of Commendation, certificates, or thank-you notes; and,
- Time-off awards (minimum of one hour). Employees may receive up to 40 hours for a single accomplishment and no more than 80 hours during the year.

Honor Awards

Honor awards are the most prestigious recognition granted by the Department of the Interior for career accomplishments, exceptional support of the Department's mission, or heroism. Honor awards are given for progressive career recognition and should be awarded at successive career milestones.

Superior Service Awards—Awards presented to career employees who have made significant contribution(s) to the Service. Superior Service Awards are signed by the Director and presented at a local ceremony. Recipients receive a citation and a certificate.

Meritorious Service Awards—Awards for career employees, typically in mid-career, who have made exceptional continuing contributions to the Department or Service mission. Typically, the employee has received one or more Superior Service Awards. Meritorious Service Awards are signed by the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks and presented at a local ceremony. Recipients receive a silver medal, a citation and a certificate.

Distinguished Service Awards—Awards for career employees who have demonstrated extremely significant long-term contributions to Department programs and missions. Typically nominees have previously received the Meritorious Service Award. Distinguished Service

Awards are signed by the Secretary and are generally presented at the annual Honor Award Convocation. Recipients receive a gold medal, a citation, and a certificate.

Unit Award for Excellence of Service—An award for exceptional contribution of employee groups, units, or teams. Unit Awards are signed by the Director and presented at a local ceremony. Recipients receive a citation and a certificate.

Heroic Act Honors

Heroic Act Honors are honorary recognition to employees or citizens for heroic acts or unusual bravery in the face of danger.

Valor Awards—Awards granted to *employees* who risk their lives while attempting to save the life of another. Valor Awards are signed by the Secretary and are generally presented at the annual Honor Award Convocation. Recipients receive a gold medal, a citation, and a certificate.

Citizen's Awards for Bravery—Awards granted to *private citizens* who risk their lives to save the life of an employee serving in the line of duty, or the life of any other person, while on property owned by or entrusted to the Service. Citizen's Awards for Bravery are signed by the Secretary and are generally presented at the annual Honor Award Convocation. Recipients receive a citation, and a certificate.

Exemplary Act Awards—Awards granted to *employees* or *private citizens* who attempt to save an individual's life or for private citizens who attempt to save the life of an employee serving in the line of duty or any other person while on property owned by or entrusted to the Service, *when risk to their own lives is not an issue*. Exemplary Act Award are signed by the Director and presented at a local ceremony. Recipients receive a citation and a certificate.

Employee Relations

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Employee Discipline and Conduct-Based Actions

When an employee's conduct is unacceptable, corrective measures called conduct-based actions must be taken. Examples of unacceptable conduct include leave abuse, failure to follow supervisory instructions, and violation of the Standards of Conduct.

As a supervisor, it is your duty to take steps to correct an employee's unacceptable conduct. Address the unacceptable conduct as soon as possible. In addition to maintaining documentation of the inappropriate behavior, work with your HR Office to take appropriate action. Depending on the severity of misconduct, you may issue an oral warning, which can be followed up in writing. In most situations, you will pursue a "progressive" course of action, which can be a relatively minor action such as an oral warning, but can go as far as removing the employee from Federal service.

Progressive actions ensure that the employee is given adequate notice of the problem; identify what the employee must do to rectify the problem; and state the consequences if the conduct is not rectified.

Progressive actions include:

- Written counseling or warning;
- Written official reprimand;
- Suspension of 14 days or more;
- Removal of the employee from Federal service;



If you are having a conduct-related problem with an employee, contact your HR Office as soon as possible. Addressing the problem early may prevent future misconduct.

New Employee Probation

When new employees are hired into the Federal service, they are placed on a one-year probationary period. During this time, employees are evaluated to see if they are suitable for Federal service and capable of meeting the needs of the position for which they were hired. Employees terminated because of misconduct or work performance problems during this probationary period have limited appeal rights.

As a supervisor, it is your job to maintain complete documentation of the probationary employee's performance and conduct. Only employees who are performing at the Fully Successful level and who demonstrate acceptable conduct and leave use should be retained. If any performance, conduct, or leave abuse problems develop, notify your HR Office immediately and well before the end of the probationary period.

New Supervisor Probation

Just as new employees are placed on a one-year probation, newly promoted to supervisors and managers

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are also on a probationary period of one year. During this time, the new supervisor or manager is evaluated to see if they are suitable for and capable of performing the full range of supervisory duties. All probationary supervisors and managers must achieve at least a Fully Successful (level 3) performance rating and demonstrate acceptable conduct during their probationary period to remain in their positions.

If you supervise a new supervisor or manager, you must assess their supervisory and/or managerial performance. If the employee's performance or conduct is deficient, she may be returned to a non-supervisory or non-managerial position. Employees who are removed from supervisory positions are normally assigned to another position of no lower grade or pay than the one they left to accept the supervisory position.

Administrative Grievance

Grievance rights and procedures ensure an objective review of employee complaints. Employees who feel they have been unfairly treated have the right to present their written grievances. Employees may file grievances on their own behalf, and can be advised by and/or represented by a person of their choosing.

Informal Grievance

If you receive a grievance, ensure that you are the appropriate official to answer the grievance; that the grievance is timely; and that the grievance clearly describes both the issue(s) and the remedy sought. You or the appropriate official must respond to the grievance in a timely manner.

A request for informal resolution of a grievance should be made within 15 days after the incident from which the dispute arose or 15 days from the date the employee became aware of the matter giving rise to the grievance. The initial presentation will normally be made to the first-level supervisor, with a copy submitted to the HR Office.

The employee has the option of requesting alternative dispute resolution (ADR) to assist in the resolution of

the issue. (See the CORE PLUS section below for more details.) If the ADR process is used, there is a 45-day period for resolution. If the employee chooses not to use ADR or the ADR is unsuccessful in resolving the issue, the employee must be given a written decision within ten days of the presentation of the informal grievance or the conclusion of the ADR process. The written decision contains the reasons and rationale for the decision, and informs the employee of the right to present the grievance under the formal procedure if they are dissatisfied with the decision under the informal process. The employee is referred to the HR Office for technical assistance concerning the formal grievance procedures.

If you receive an informal grievance from an employee, contact your HR Office immediately for assistance.

Formal Grievance

An employee should file a formal grievance with the HR Office within seven days from the receipt of the informal decision. The formal grievance must be in writing and contain sufficient detail to identify and clarify the basis for the grievance. The HR Office makes a technical review of the grievance and, within seven days, accepts or rejects the grievance. If the grievance is accepted, the HR Office determines the appropriate deciding official, who issues a written decision within 20 days after receipt of the grievance file.

Negotiated Agreement Grievances

Negotiated agreement grievances are complaints from employees under a union-management agreement. These grievances concern conditions of employment or allegations of violations of incorrect interpretations of a labor agreement. Requirements and procedures for filing grievances differ throughout each negotiated contract.

If you are presented with a grievance, you must adhere to the specifications of the negotiated contract. In general, supervisors must acknowledge, investigate, and respond to the grievance. You should also immediately contact your HR Office to obtain information on procedures and covered and exempt issues.



Alternative Dispute Resolution (CORE)

For more information on the CORE program, refer to the *Options for Managing and Resolving Workplace Conflicts and Disputes* section below.

Personnel Security and Suitability

Federal and Departmental regulations mandate that positions must be designated at a sensitivity or risk level commensurate with the duties and responsibilities of the position. The Departmental Manual prescribes the method and criteria for determining a position sensitivity or risk level. Positions are designated, not people.

As a supervisor, it is your responsibility to ensure that positions under your supervision are properly designated and that the employees in those positions are advised of the reason for the designation level. Position sensitivity and risk level designations should be determined in conjunction with the program manager and the HR Office. It is also your responsibility to ensure that the position designation is updated if the duties of the position change.

Background Investigations

Each selectee/employee is subject to a background investigation. The scope and frequency of investigations

are determined by the position sensitivity or risk level designation. An initial investigation must be completed prior to entrance on duty. Some positions require a reinvestigation be conducted every five years. Selectees/employees are required to promptly complete the investigation forms and to be fingerprinted.

As a supervisor, it is your responsibility to ensure that the employee completes and submits the required investigation forms in a timely manner to the HR Office or Service Security Office, as appropriate.

Suitability and Security Adjudication

The results of a background investigation are adjudicated to determine whether employment or continued employment of an individual is clearly consistent with interests of national security and/or the efficiency of the Federal service. The adjudicator is charged with determining whether the individual is trustworthy, loyal, reliable, and of sound judgment. Employees must continue to meet these standards during their Federal employment.

As a supervisor, it is your responsibility to ensure that your employees understand the importance of continuing to meet the adjudicative standards and that they are aware of the duties that determined the position sensitivity or risk level. It is also your responsibility to report any derogatory information to the Service Security Officer regarding an employee in a sensitive position.

Positions with national security-related duties and law enforcement authority are designated sensitive (i.e., Special Sensitive, Critical Sensitive, or Non-Critical Sensitive), and the incumbents must be eligible and maintain eligibility for a national security clearance. Supervisors must ensure that the position description reflects that the position requires eligibility for a national security clearance. If the employee requires access to national security classified information, contact the Service Security Officer, who will advise you on how to request security clearance. The Service Security Officer is the only official within Service who is authorized to grant security clearances.

SECTION 7

Supervisor Training

National Conservation Training Center's (NCTC) Supervisory Skills Development Program

The Department of the Interior has established a training policy for all new supervisors. The Service has addressed this policy by developing the Supervisory Skills Development Program (SSDP), intended to help new supervisors become more effective while meeting the requirements outlined in the policy. The training policy identifies topics that are essential to new supervisors and is divided into two phases.

Phase I includes a minimum of 40 hours of basic training in human resources management, equal employment opportunity, diversity, and ethics. New supervisors are required to complete Phase I during the first six months of the initial one-year supervisory probationary period.





Phase II training supports development of supervisory leadership skills, with a goal of 40 hours of training during the second year of Service that an employee is in a supervisory position. The SSDP identifies a number of Phase II topics in which new supervisors should be able to demonstrate competency. Phase II training should be based on individual need as identified in an employee's Individual Development Plan.

Supervisors who are no longer on probation and who have not received Phase I and II training are required to demonstrate competency in all of the Program topics and address any developmental needs.

The National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) provides on-line and residential training for supervisors. NCTC staff can also help identify other available training that teaches required supervisory skills reach topic in Phase I and Phase II.

National Conservation Training Center's (NCTC) Applied Supervision Course

The NCTC course *Applied Supervision* meets most of the Phase I requirements. This course is offered approximately every two months at NCTC and is designed to be taken during the first six months of the supervisory probationary period.

Equal Opportunity

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Equal Opportunity Dedicated to Creating a Healthy Work Environment

The objectives of the Service's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) program are to provide full and fair opportunities for all employees and applicants for employment and to provide for the non-discriminatory treatment of all employees as they carry out their workplace duties. Employees should be offered career advancement opportunities consistent with merit principles (based on performance and abilities).

As a supervisor, you are involved in virtually all of the decisions that directly affect the success or failure of your organization's EEO program. You fill vacant positions and make selections for promotions, approve training and detail employees to other positions, and set the tone for dealings among employees in your organization. To comply with the Service's EEO policies and requirements, you should become familiar with the following information.

Supervisors should communicate the Service's anti-discrimination/EEO policies in staff meetings on a regular basis, making sure that employees understand

their rights and responsibilities related to maintaining a healthy work environment.

Director's Equal Opportunity and Diversity Objectives

- Reduce the overall low participation of minorities.
- Reduce the low participation of Asians and Blacks in the 400 series.
- Reduce the overall low participation of women.
- Reduce the low participation of White and Hispanic women in 401, 480, 482, and 486 series.
- Reduce the low participation of minorities and women in leadership positions (GS-13 through SES).
- Continue the hiring goals for individuals with targeted disabilities.
- Increase the participation of individuals with disabilities.

Equal Opportunity Laws and Executive Orders

The Service's equal opportunity policy applies to and is an integral part of every aspect of personnel policy and practice in the employment, development, advancement, and treatment of civilian employees in the Federal government. EEO laws and executive orders prohibit discrimination and ensure equal opportunity for all persons, without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or sexual orientation for individuals who are either employed, or seeking employment, with the Federal Government.

The Service's EEO Programs are authorized under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act; Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967; Rehabilitation Act of 1973; Equal Pay Act of 1963; Civil Rights Act of 1991; Executive Order 11478; Executive Order 13087; and Executive Order 13145.

Agency Policies and Requirements

The Department of the Interior and the Service are dedicated to creating a healthy and discrimination-free work environment. Guiding documents for supervisors are the Service's Equal Opportunity and Diversity Non-Discrimination Policy and Policy on Harassment and Zero Tolerance, and DOI's Policy and Harassment and Zero Tolerance. These policies are posted on the DOI and Service Internet and are also available on the Service Intranet at <https://intranet.fws.gov/region9/bphc/hc/dcr/policies.html>.

Equal Opportunity and Diversity Manual Chapters

Service Manual Chapters on Equal Opportunity and Diversity can be found on the Internet at <http://www.fws.gov/policy/manuals/>. Current chapters can be found in the Service Manual under the Service Management Series (000) under Equal Opportunity (Parts 060-069).

Reasonable Accommodation

Reasonable accommodation is a logical change or adjustment to a job or worksite that makes it possible for qualified employees with disabilities to perform the essential functions of a position. Accommodations are determined on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the needs and specific disability of the applicant or employee, the essential duties of the position in question, the work environment, and the reasonableness of the proposed accommodation. DOI Manual Chapter 373 DM 15 specifies the purpose, authorities, definitions, responsibilities, guidelines, and other important information about reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities. Managers should become familiar with this manual chapter. Request for reasonable accommodation should be coordinated through Human Resources and Diversity and Civil Rights Divisions.

Performance Measures

Every Service manager and supervisor should have one Performance Measure in their Performance Plan that focuses on equal opportunity and diversity. This performance measure is a requirement in all Senior Executive Service (SES) Service positions. An example of this type of performance measure could be: "Improve Ability to Reduce Barriers to Equal Employment Opportunity." For more examples, please contact the HR Office.

EEO Complaint Process

Federal employees, former employees and applicants for Federal employment may file individual or class complaints of discrimination with the agency that allegedly discriminated against them. A discrimination complaint may be filed under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, the Rehabilitation Act, or the Equal Pay Act. As an aggrieved person, an employee, former employee or applicant may allege discrimination on the basis(es) of race, color,



religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age (over 40), physical or mental disability, genetic information, or retaliation for participating in EEO activities or for opposing unlawful discrimination. Harassment is a form of discrimination that can be present with any basis.

The Branch of Equal Opportunity and Diversity (EOD) processes complaints of discrimination based on sex, color, race, religion, age (40 years of age or older), disability (mental or physical), national origin, sexual orientation, genetic information, or retaliation for involvement in protected EEO activity. EOD is involved in two of the stages of the complaint process: the pre-complaint stage (also referred to as the informal or counseling stage) and the formal stage.

Pre-Complaint (Informal) Stage

The primary purpose of the pre-complaint stage is to seek a resolution to an alleged discriminatory matter brought to the EEO Counselor's attention by an aggrieved person, who may be either an employee, former employee or an applicant for employment with the Service.



Any Federal employee, former employee or applicant for federal employment who believes he has been discriminated against on the basis of sex, color, race, religion, age (over 40), disability (mental or physical), national origin, sexual orientation, genetic information, or reprisal for participation in the EEO process, and would like to file an EEO complaint, must first contact an EEO Counselor and enter the EEO pre-complaint process, prior to filing a formal complaint. The aggrieved person must initiate pre-complaint counseling within 45 calendar days of the date of the matter alleged to be discriminatory or, in the case of a personnel action, within 45 calendar days of the effective date of the action or the date he became aware of the alleged offense.

Pre-Complaint—EEO Counseling

The EEO Counselor is a neutral party in the resolution process and will not serve as an advocate (or representative) for either the employee or the Service. It is not the EEO Counselor's role to place blame or to determine who is telling the truth, or whether laws have been violated. The EEO Counselor serves as a bridge between the employee and management to get the employee's concerns(s) out into the open for consideration. The counselor interviews the employee and makes inquiries concerning the issue(s) raised by the employee. The information gathered is shared with the employee and management to help reach a resolution. The EEO Counselor may interview people who have knowledge of the situation, but not people who can only provide hearsay evidence.

The pre-complaint counseling stage ends 30 calendar days from the date the employee entered the process. At that time, unless the employee has granted an extension, not to exceed 60 calendar days, the EEO Counselor issues a Notice of Final Interview (NOFI) to the employee. The employee has the right to file a formal complaint of discrimination within 15 calendar days after receiving the NOFI if the matter(s) brought to the counselor's attention are not resolved to the employee's satisfaction.

Formal Complaint Stage

The formal complaint must be in the form of a signed statement from the complainant or the complainant's representative, containing the complainants (or representative's) telephone number and address, and must be sufficiently precise to identify the complaint and describe the action or practice which forms the basis of the complaint.

*Please refer to the **Options for Managing and Resolving Workplace Conflicts and Disputes** section to learn about the Department of the Interior's Integrated Conflict Management System, CORE PLUS.*

Acceptance/Dismissal of Complaints

If the complaint is accepted, the Branch of Equal Opportunity and Diversity will obtain the services of a contract EEO Investigator who will conduct a complete and impartial investigation of the complaint.

The entire complaint, or any portion of it, may be dismissed for one or more of the following reasons:

- Failure to state a claim or stating a claim that is pending or has been decided by the agency or the EEOC;
- Failure to comply with time limits;
- Filing a complaint on a matter that has not been brought to the attention of an EEO Counselor and which is not similar or related to the matters counseled;
- Filing a complaint which is the basis of a pending civil action, or which was the basis of a civil action already decided by a court;
- Where the complainant has already elected to pursue the matter through either the negotiated grievance procedure or in an appeal to the Merit Systems Protection Board;
- Where the matter is moot or merely alleges a proposal to take a personnel action;
- Where the complainant cannot be located;

- Where the complainant fails to respond to a request to provide relevant information;
- Where the complainant alleges dissatisfaction with the processing of a previously filed complaint; or,
- Where there is a clear pattern of misuse of the EEO process by the complainant for a purpose other than preventing and eliminating employment discrimination.

If some, but not all, of the claims in a complaint are dismissed, the Service notifies the complainant in writing of the rationale for this determination, identifies the allegations that will not be investigated, and places a copy of this notice in the investigative file. This determination is reviewable by an EEOC Administrative Judge if a hearing is requested on the remainder of the complaint, but is not appealable until final action is taken by the Department of the Interior Office of Civil Rights on the remainder of the complaint.

Investigations

Investigations are conducted by independent contractors. The Branch of Equal Opportunity and Diversity will ensure that an impartial and complete factual record is developed.

The investigation must be completed within 180 calendar days from the filing of the complaint. A copy of the report of investigation is provided to the complainant, along with a notification that, within 30 calendar days of receipt of the report of investigation, the complainant has the right to request a hearing before an EEOC Administrative Judge or a final decision from DOI Office of Civil Rights.

Hearings at Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)

Requests for hearing must be sent by the complainant to the EEOC office, as indicated in the EOD's accept/dismiss letter, with a copy to EOD. Within 15 calendar days of receipt of the request for a hearing, the agency must provide a copy of the complaint file to EEOC.



Hearings are considered part of the investigative process, and are closed to the public. The Administrative Judge conducts the hearing and receives relevant information or documents as evidence.

Final Action by Department of the Interior

When an Administrative Judge has issued a decision (e.g., a dismissal, a summary judgment decision, or a decision following a hearing), the Department of the Interior must take final action on the complaint by issuing a final order within 40 calendar days of receipt of the Administrative Judge's decision. The final order must notify the complainant whether or not the agency will fully implement the decision of the Administrative Judge, and contains notice of the complainant's right to appeal to EEOC or to file a civil action.

Appeals to the EEOC

A complainant may appeal an agency's final action or dismissal of a complaint within 30 calendar days of receipt.

Mixed-Case Complaints

Some employment actions that may be the subject of a discrimination complaint may also be appealed to the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB). In such cases, the employee must elect to proceed with a mixed-case EEO complaint with the agency under EEOC's complaint procedures, or a "mixed-case appeal" before the MSPB. Whichever is filed first is considered an election to proceed in that forum. The pre-complaint process (counseling) does not constitute an election to proceed in the EEO forum. Filing a formal EEO complaint constitutes an election to proceed in the EEO forum.

Mixed-case complaints are processed similarly to other complaints of discrimination, with the following notable exceptions:

- At the completion of the investigation, the complainant does not have the right to request a hearing before an EEOC Administrative Judge, and the agency must issue a decision within 45 calendar days.
- The agency has 120 calendar days from the date of the filing of the mixed-case complaint to issue a final decision. If the agency fails to issue a final decision within 120 days, the complainant may appeal the matter to the MSPB any time thereafter, or may file a civil action, but not both.
- If the complainant elects to appeal the Final Agency Decision, the appeal must be made to the MSPB, not the EEOC, within 30 calendar days of receipt of the decision.
- Individuals who have filed a mixed-case complaint or a mixed-case appeal and who have received a final decision from the MSPB may petition the EEOC to review the MSPB final decision.

In contrast to non-mixed matters, individuals who wish to file a civil action in mixed-case matters must file within 30 calendar days (not 90) of receipt of DOI's final decision; the MSPB's final decision; or the EEOC's decision on a petition to review.

Alternatively, a civil action may be filed after 120 calendar days from the date of filing the mixed case complaint with the agency or the mixed case appeal with the MSPB if there has been no final decision on the complaint or appeal, or 180 calendar days after filing a petition to review with EEOC if there has been no decision by EEOC on the petition.

Complaints involving allegations of discrimination based on sexual orientation and status as a parent are not processed under Federal Sector Equal Employment Opportunity regulations. The Department of the Interior established an administrative procedure, which contains different rights and responsibilities, to process a complaint containing sexual orientation allegations. Any employee may seek assistance from the Merit Systems Protection Board, Office of Special Counsel, the negotiated grievance process or the administrative grievance process.

For more detailed information, please contact the Branch of Equal Opportunity and Diversity.

Settlement Authority

The Assistant Director for Budget Planning and Human Capital (AD) has signature authority for all settlements that include material benefit or monetary payment. The AD is not a party to litigation; the signature only attests to the fact that the benefits conferred have been approved. The AD may delegate this signature authority to the relevant Regional or Assistant Director.

This policy requires that all Settlement Agreements that include any material benefit or monetary payment (e.g., exemption from competition into the SES Candidate Development Program, relocation, leave restoration, back pay, compensatory damages, attorneys' fees, interest, or lump sum payments of any kind, promotion, and training, if the training will qualify the employee for a non-competitive promotion, etc.), be approved by the AD. This policy does not apply to settlements that do not involve material compensation or benefit. This policy also calls for forwarding all requests for approval of proposed EEO settlement terms and mixed

EEO/Personnel proposed settlement terms to the Chief, Branch of Equal Opportunity and Diversity (EOD). The EOD Branch Chief forwards them to the AD and Human Capital Officer for clearance or approval, as applicable.

Training Resources

The Department of the Interior requires all supervisors and managers to complete a minimum of four hours of training related to Equal Employment Opportunity and/or Diversity each fiscal year. To meet this requirement, training should include topics on valuing and managing diversity; affirmative employment; reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities; understanding EEO regulations on discrimination and affirmative employment; prevention of sexual harassment and hostile work environment; alternative dispute resolution; and, the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation (No FEAR) Act of 2002. Managers and supervisors should ensure that they select courses covering the broader areas of diversity, such as various cultures, sexual orientation, and other characteristics that must be considered when managing a diverse workforce. The Branch of Equal Opportunity and Diversity (EOD) suggests that supervisors obtain at least one hour of training each year on some aspect of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (also known as the Rehabilitation Act of 1973) due to its technical nature and frequent changes in the law.

Additionally, in accordance with the No FEAR Act, EOD strongly suggest that you obtain some level of training (whether it be beginning or advanced) on at least one of the following subject areas, every two years: communication, dispute resolution, and managing diverse employees.

The National Conservation Training Center hosts many of these trainings. You can also obtain training on-line.

Options for Managing and Resolving Workplace Conflicts and Disputes

The Department of the Interior's Integrated Conflict Management System, CORE PLUS, is voluntary and provides impartial and confidential assistance to any employee seeking to improve or resolve a workplace issue or concern. Assistance options include confidential consultation, individual conflict coaching, communication and conflict management training, group facilitation, team-building, conciliation or mediation services.

There are no time limits or formal requirements for seeking assistance through the CORE PLUS program. However, contacting the CORE PLUS program does not change the filing requirements and deadlines for complaint processes.

CORE PLUS offers conflict management tools, dispute resolution assistance and education and training opportunities to improve communication and team building. CORE PLUS can help supervisors manage change, strengthen teams and partnerships, and improve organizational performance. CORE PLUS is fair, impartial, flexible and informal; voluntary and confidential; a non-adversarial and safe place for a difficult conversation; and a source of information, education and assistance to help reduce workplace tensions, improve communication, manage conflict, and build productive teams.

The CORE PLUS program does not replace any other complaint process available to employees, including other more formal avenues of redress such as a grievance, an EEO complaint, or a whistleblower complaint. Anyone seeking CORE PLUS assistance is encouraged to obtain information about all options and will be referred to the appropriate point of contact for reliable information on other processes.

An employee who seeks EEO counseling or files a complaint has the option to request an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) process through the CORE

PLUS Program to attempt informal resolution of the issues underlying a grievance or other type of complaint. CORE PLUS helps employees consider their options so they can decide what will meet their needs in a specific situation.

Each program area must ensure that a management representative participates in ADR when requested by a party bringing an issue/concern to the CORE PLUS program. If an employee's supervisor is directly involved in the issue/concern and does not voluntarily agree to participate, another management representative, preferably in the employee's chain of command, is required to participate. There may be limited circumstances when ADR is not appropriate and management is not expected to participate. A decision that ADR is not appropriate is made in consultation with the DOI Office of Collaborative Action and Dispute Resolution.

The CORE PLUS program is easy to access by contacting a Bureau Dispute Resolution Specialist, a CORE PLUS program coordinator, a CORE PLUS roster member, or the Office of Collaborative Action and Dispute Resolution. Information about the CORE PLUS program should also be available through your supervisor, HR Office, an EEO office or any EEO Counselor.

Management Directive 715—Model Equal Employment Opportunity Program

Management Directive 715 (MD-715) is the policy guidance which the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) provides to Federal agencies to use in establishing and maintaining effective equal employment opportunity programs under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

The objective of this directive is to ensure that all employees and applicants for employment enjoy equality of opportunity in the Federal workplace regardless of race, sex, national origin, color, age (over 40 years),

religion, disability or reprisal for engaging in prior protected activity.

MD-715 requires the Service to take appropriate steps to ensure that all employment decisions are free from discrimination. It also sets forth the standards by which the Service EEO program will be reviewed by the EEOC, including but not limited to the requirement that the Service and its subordinates conduct periodic self-assessments and barrier analyses to remove barriers to free and open workplace competition. The Service is required to issue and submit an MD-715 report annually.

Special Emphasis Programs

Bureaus and offices are encouraged to conduct activities to commemorate Special Emphasis Programs, which address the unique concerns of women, minorities, and persons with disabilities in achieving equal opportunity in all employment and program delivery activities. Special Emphasis Programs identify and help eliminate discriminatory practices and procedures and other barriers to equal opportunity. The programs also continually improve hiring, training, retention, and promotion opportunities for all qualified individuals; sponsors special observance activities; conduct diversity training; and help managers create a highly skilled and diverse work force. You are encouraged to participate and encourage your employees to take part in activities for these programs.

Special Emphasis Programs goals are to:

- Improve employment and advancement opportunities for minorities, women and people with disabilities in the federal service;
- Identify systemic causes of discrimination against minorities, women and people with disabilities;
- Seek ways to help minorities, women and people with disabilities to advance by using their skills more fully;
- Monitor agency progress in eliminating discrimination and adverse impact on minorities, women and people with disabilities in employment and agency programs;

- Educate Federal employees and managers about the extent of various forms of discrimination within the Federal service.

Three Special Emphasis Programs, required by regulation, are the Federal Women's Program, Hispanic Employment Program, and the Disability Employment Program.

Federal Women's Program

March has been designated as Women's History Month. Since 1992, a Presidential Proclamation has carried the directive for what is now a major national and international celebration. Every March the Department of the Interior observes National Women's History Month by celebrating the many contributions of women in the history of this Nation.

Hispanic Employment Program

Hispanic Heritage Month begins on September 15, the anniversary of independence for five Latin American countries: Costa Rica; El Salvador; Guatemala; Honduras; and Nicaragua. Mexico and Chile achieved





independence on September 16 and September 18, respectively. Public Law 90-498 authorized an annual proclamation designating the week including September 15 and 16 as National Hispanic Heritage Week. Public Law 100-402, approved August 17, 1988, authorized the designation of the National Hispanic Heritage Month, inserting a 31-day period beginning September 15 and ending on October 15.

Disability Employment Program

The Disability Employment Program is a vital asset and resource to our agency by identifying problems, overcoming barriers, and providing solutions that will lead to increased work performances and career enhancement for Service employees with disabilities. National Disability Employment Awareness Month is observed in October. Presidential proclamations have called for this observance since 1945. The President's New Freedom Initiative is a significant effort to build on past success and increase opportunities, including integrating people with disabilities into the workforce, increasing access to technology, and expanding educational opportunities for all people with disabilities.

FWS Intranet

<https://intranet.fws.gov/>

FWS Manual

www.fws.gov/policy/

DOI Website

www.doi.gov

DOI Personnel Manager Guide

www.doi.gov/hrm/pmanager/

OPM Website

www.opm.gov

Employee Express

www.employeeexpress.gov/DefaultLogin.aspx

FWS Forms

www.fws.gov/forms/

Quicktime

<https://qtime.nbc.gov/proweb/qtime1552/login>

CORE PLUS

www.doi.gov/cadr/coreplus

NCTC Trainings

www.fws.gov/training



**Address or Other
Contact Information?**