

**U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness**

Report of a Special Study

**ACHIEVING A BALANCE:
MEETING WORK AND FAMILY
OBLIGATIONS**

Washington Oversight Division

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to Congressional concern that agencies are not making family-friendly workplace arrangements available to employees, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) reviewed these programs as a part of all agency oversight evaluations conducted from May 1998 through September 1999. We collected on-site data and conducted interviews at key locations in a total of 8 large agencies, and 11 small agencies. Family-friendly programs studied included: part-time employment, job sharing, telework, alternative work schedules, flexible and compressed, resource and referral services for child and elder care, and on-site or near-site child care centers.

Alternative work schedules were generally available in most agency locations reporting to us. Part-time employment and referral for child/elder care were available in about two-thirds of the locations. Child care centers were available in forty-three percent of the locations. Job sharing was available in only about one-third of the locations. Also, although many agencies have telework policies in place, only a small number of employees actually use this program.

Employees and managers are generally familiar with available family-friendly programs that balance the needs of the organization and employees. Program information is generally available. However, agency assessment of how well family-friendly programs are actually working is informal, rather than data based.

Most supervisors and managers understand and support family-friendly programs. Supervisors and managers who support family-friendly activities find them useful because they help to attract and retain quality employees. Some supervisors and managers expressed concern about the programs, saying that there are too many options available, and that they are losing control over scheduling office coverage and meetings. For example, supervisors and managers often mentioned telework as a concern because of difficulty in monitoring work done at home.

Most employees appreciate the availability of family-friendly programs. They believe family-friendly programs increase morale through increasing time available to attend to personal matters. However, some employees are concerned that managers are not supportive of family-friendly activities. On the other hand, employees understand that sometimes accomplishment of agency mission does not allow for such flexibility.

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II. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND

In 1998, Congressmen representing large groups of Federal employees expressed concern to Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Director Janice Lachance that not all Federal agencies are offering family-friendly flexibilities to employees. They asked OPM to conduct a survey of how many and which agencies and departments have implemented these policies and an analysis of how the programs are working. In July 1998, OPM responded with a report. The report presented survey data collected from 61 agency personnel offices and focus group data gathered from a broad sampling of employees, managers, and union representatives.

In its report on OPM's Fiscal Year (FY) 1999 appropriations bill, Congress instructed OPM to establish an office to receive concerns and suggestions regarding agency implementation of family-friendly programs. On March 1, 1999, OPM established the Family-Friendly Workplace Advocacy Office (FFWAO) which promotes family-friendly programs and responds Governmentwide to employee concerns and suggestions regarding the implementation of family-friendly programs. This study was then initiated to obtain current information about the operation of agency family-friendly efforts. Data was gathered from all agencies subject to OPM's human resources management evaluations from May 1998 through September 1999.

B. METHODOLOGY

OPM evaluators collected data at key installations or locations among 8 large agencies and 11 small agencies. Before the on-site work began, program officials submitted information about their agency's efforts. Then, focus group interviews were conducted with managers and employees. Also, four questions on availability of work and family programs were included in the Merit System Principles Questionnaire (MSPQ) used in all FY 1999 agency evaluations.

The study covered the following seven family-friendly options: part-time employment, job sharing, telework, alternative work schedules (both flexible and compressed), resource and referral services for child and elder care, and on-site or near-site child care centers. The study did not focus on family-friendly programs required by statute (e.g., leave sharing and the granting of up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave a year for various reasons such as child-birth, adoption, foster care, or for the care of seriously ill family members).

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III. FINDINGS

A. COMMONLY AVAILABLE FAMILY-FRIENDLY PROGRAMS

From May 1998 through September 1999, OPM gathered information about seven family-friendly programs implemented in 8 large agencies and 11 small agencies. Agency advance information responses often covered multiple locations. A copy of our advance information request is shown in Appendix A. The responses to our advance information request on programs implemented are reported in detail in Appendix B for large agencies, and in Appendix C for small agencies. All responses are summarized in Table 1 below.

As can be seen in Table 1, alternative work schedules (AWS), both flexible and compressed, were generally available in most locations reporting to us. Part-time employment and referral for child/elder care were available in about two-thirds of the locations reporting. Child care centers were available in forty-three percent of the locations. Job sharing was available in only about one-third of the locations. Also, although many agencies have telework policies in place that allow working at home or at a satellite location, advance information and interviews indicated that only a small number of employees actually use the program.

Table 1 - Availability of Work and Family Programs Reported at Agencies/Locations				
WORK AND FAMILY PROGRAMS	Number of agency locations reporting that family-friendly programs have been implemented			Percent of Total
	Large Agency	Small Agency	Combined Responses	
Part-time	38	11	49	70.3
Job sharing	19	3	22	31.4
Telework	38	8	46	65.7
Flexible work schedules	53	11	64	91.4
Compressed work schedules	55	11	66	94.3
Resource/referral for child and/or elder care	39	10	49	70.0
On-site child care available	25	5	30	42.9
TOTAL AGENCY RESPONSES	59	11	70	100

B. PROGRAM INFORMATION AVAILABLE, BUT ASSESSMENT LACKING

Most employees and supervisors/managers that we interviewed said they were familiar with available family-friendly programs that balance the needs of the organization and employees. Methods for publicizing the programs reported in responses to our advance information request included email, pamphlets, handbooks, union contracts, posters, brochures, informational seminars, websites, and new employee orientation. Benefits of family-friendly programs, as reported by focus group participants, include: time for personal responsibilities; help in retaining good employees; help in recruiting good employees; fewer unplanned absences; and extended hours for customers.

However, agencies responding to our advance information requests reported they lacked the means to collect information on how well family-friendly programs were actually working. The only frequently mentioned method of evaluating programs was feedback provided informally by employees, managers, and supervisors. Very few agencies analyze the effectiveness of the work and family programs in a more formal manner.

C. MOST SUPERVISORS AND MANAGERS UNDERSTAND AND SUPPORT THE PROGRAMS, BUT SOME HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT LOSING CONTROL

Many supervisors and managers interviewed said they understood family-friendly programs, and also expressed a desire to have the option to personally use more of the programs. However, many of these same supervisors and managers reported that their agencies either discourage or prohibit supervisors and managers from using activities such as compressed work schedules and telework.

Often varying levels of support for the programs exist within different offices at the same agency. These differences were generally attributed to differences in supervisors' and managers' attitudes toward family-friendly programs. Further, inconsistency in implementation is often due to flexible policies that allow managers to make decisions regarding family-friendly programs.

Supervisors and managers who support the programs indicated that the programs are useful because they help to retain quality employees, attract new quality employees, boost morale, and reduce unscheduled leave. Supervisors and managers with concerns about the programs said that there are too many programs available and that employees feel an entitlement that is inconsistent with the needs of the organization. Some lower level supervisors/managers discourage employee use of the programs even though upper level supervisors/managers strongly encourage use.

Supervisors and managers expressed reservations about the loss of control experienced when work and family programs are implemented, but most believe that the programs support mission accomplishment overall. The primary reasons provided by supervisors and managers for not implementing family-friendly programs are concerns about office coverage and problems scheduling meetings, particularly on Mondays and Fridays. Also, many supervisors and managers expressed concern that compressed work schedules and telework have a negative impact on productivity.

Supervisors and managers most often mentioned telework as an activity that raises their concern. It was also one of the programs most commonly requested by employees. As reflected in Governmentwide survey results, as shown in Table 2 below, only about a fifth of managers and employees believe that employees are given the opportunity to work at home. In contrast, nearly 70 percent of managers and employees agreed that employees are given the opportunity to work on flexible schedules.

Table 2 - Opportunity for Work At Home/Flexible Schedules				
Questions		Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Employees are given the opportunity to work at home.	Employees	64%	15%	21%
	Mgrs/Supvs	64%	18%	19%
Employees are given the opportunity to work on flexible schedules.	Employees	26%	7%	67%
	Mgrs/Supvs	24%	9%	68%

FY 1999 Merit System Principles Questionnaire, Governmentwide Sample

Supervisors and managers are concerned about their ability to monitor work done at home. Although they are wary of the telework program, managers made no reports of program abuse. Telework requests were the most commonly denied of the family-friendly options. Telework is often allowed only in limited circumstances such as by those with a medical condition. Although many supervisors and managers expressed concern about the telework effort, others expressed an interest in participating in the program themselves.

D. MOST EMPLOYEES APPRECIATE AVAILABILITY OF FAMILY-FRIENDLY PROGRAMS, BUT SOME PERCEIVE LACK OF MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

The great majority of employees we interviewed told us they appreciated the availability of family-friendly programs. Employee group participants named increased morale and time to attend to personal matters as benefits of work and family programs. Although a few employees expressed concern that exercising some of the flexibilities might adversely affect their careers, most employees did not believe that participating in the programs would have an adverse impact.

Some employees perceive that supervisors and managers do not support the programs as much as they should because workload considerations are more important. Primary complaints by employees were inconsistencies between offices within the same agency and a lack of management support. Given employees' perceptions of supervisors' and managers' occasional lack of support, it is not surprising that employees' survey responses related to whether family responsibilities are understood and supported were not as positive as managers' responses. See Table 3 below.

Table 3 - Support for Family-Friendly Programs				
Questions		Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Employee family responsibilities are understood and supported.	Employees	19%	21%	60%
	Mgrs/Supvs	10%	12%	78%
Employees who have personal or work-related problems are offered help.	Employees	21%	20%	59%
	Mgrs/Supvs	8%	11%	81%

FY 1999 Merit System Principles Questionnaire, Governmentwide Sample

When offices chose not to allow participation in certain programs, employees expressed often an understanding of why participation was not allowed. The most common reason for not implementing programs was that accomplishment of the mission does not allow for such flexibility.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to obtain new information about the operation of family-friendly programs in selected installations. Our findings lead us to the following conclusions and recommendations for further action.

1. Train supervisors and managers on beneficial impact of family-friendly programs on attracting and retaining quality employees. Show them how work planning and scheduling tools can be used to assure productivity by employees using family-friendly benefits.

Success stories and measures about family-friendly benefits helping agencies attract and retain quality employees need to be shared with supervisors and managers in both OPM and internal agency management development programs. Show supervisors and managers how work planning and scheduling tools can be used to assure productivity by employees who want to use alternative work schedules and telework.

Recommendation for Agencies: Train front-line supervisors and managers on how family-friendly programs help attract and retain quality employees, improve productivity, and support mission accomplishment. OPM's *Work and Family Issues: A Module for Supervisors and Managers* may be used to train front-line supervisors and managers on effective use of family-friendly options.

OPM Will: Develop a complimentary executive-level briefing module on effective use of family-friendly programs for use in senior manager and executive training.

2. Develop improved measurement and feedback on effectiveness of agency family-friendly programs.

Very few agencies have established measures for tracking effectiveness of family-friendly programs and demonstrating how they balance the needs of the organization and the needs of employees. Establishment of such measures at multiple organizational levels, and in the aggregate, would hold installations and agencies accountable for their use. OPM's *Accountability Systems Development Guide* may be used to help develop such measures.

Recommendation for Agencies: Develop base-line measures of effectiveness for agency family-friendly programs.

OPM Will: Work with Interagency Family-Friendly Workplace Working Group to help agencies develop base-line measures of effectiveness for agency family-friendly programs.

3. Encourage supervisors and managers to consistently apply family-friendly programs across offices and agencies.

Varying levels of support for family-friendly programs exist within different offices at the same agency. These differences are attributed to differences in supervisors' and managers' attitudes and inconsistent implementation by supervisors and managers.

Recommendation for Agencies: Encourage supervisors and managers within the same office at an agency, and supervisors and managers across different offices at the same agency, to make family-friendly programs available in a consistent manner within their organization.

OPM Will: Work with the Interagency Family-Friendly Workplace Working Group to encourage supervisors and managers to implement family-friendly programs in a consistent manner within the same office at an agency, and across different offices at the same agency.

4. Support supervisors' and managers' use of family-friendly programs such as compressed work schedules and telework.

Supervisors and managers are expressing interest in being able to use family-friendly benefits themselves, particularly compressed work schedules and telework. Giving supervisors and managers more flexibility to use such benefits themselves would generate greater support for the programs among supervisors and managers, and encourage them to be more supportive of employee use of the programs.

Recommendation for Agencies: Give supervisors and managers more flexibility to use alternative work schedules and telework themselves.

OPM Will: Work with the General Services Administration and other Federal agencies to identify agency-best practices in telework and share them with agencies.

APPENDIX A

ADVANCE INFORMATION REQUEST ACHIEVING A BALANCE: MEETING WORK AND FAMILY OBLIGATIONS

- A. Please indicate which work and family programs have been implemented at your organization and provide your best estimate of the number and percent of your permanent employees participating in them.

	<u>Implemented</u> <u>Yes/No</u>	<u>Date*</u> <u>Implemented</u>	<u>Number and</u> <u>(Percent) of Employees</u> <u>Participating</u>
1. Part-time employment	----	----	----(____)
2. Job sharing	----	----	----(____)
3. Telework (working at home or at a satellite location)	----	----	----(____)
4. Flexible work schedule (electing to work within designated parameters)	----	----	----(____)
5. Compressed work schedule (completing the basic workweek in less than 10 workdays)	----	----	----(____)
6. Resource and referral services for child and elder care	----	----	----(____)
7. Child care center (on-site or near-site)	----	----	----(____)

* If the program was implemented in 1997 or 1998, please give the month and year. If the program is older, you need only give the year it was implemented.

- B. Please provide copies of the policy guidelines you use (i.e., local or agency-level regulations or instructions) regarding the above programs.
- C. Please make available on-site employee newsletters or other means of promoting these programs, feasibility studies, negotiated agreements, or evaluation reports describing the development of the programs, or any other material you believe will help us understand how these programs operate in your organization.

Name and phone number of agency contact for questions regarding this information:

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**APPENDIX B
FAMILY-FRIENDLY PROGRAMS IMPLEMENTED IN LARGE AGENCIES**

Agency	Installation	Part-Time	Job Sharing	Telework	Flexible Work Schedule	Compressed Work Schedule	Resource Referral Child/Eld	Child Care Center
Education 4,057 Employees	Educational Headquarters, Washington, DC	/	/	/	/	/		/
	Chicago Mega Region	/		/	/	/	/	
	San Francisco Mega Region			/	/	/	/	/
	Atlanta Mega Region	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Education Total	3	2	4	4	4	3	3
Energy 16,148 Employees	Headquarters and Germantown, MD			/	/	/	/	/
	Albuquerque Operations Office, Albuquerque, NM	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Bonneville Power Administration, Portland, OR	/		/	/	/	/	/
	Chicago Operations Office, Argonne, IL	/	/	/	/	/	/	
	Oak Ridge Operations Office, Oak Ridge, TN	/	/	/	/	/		
	Oak Ridge Office of Scientific and Technical Information, Oak Ridge, TN				/	/	/	
	Ohio Field Office, Miamisburg, OH	/	/	/	/	/	/	/

Report of a Study of Work and Family Programs

Agency	Installation	Part-Time	Job Sharing	Telework	Flexible Work Schedule	Compressed Work Schedule	Resource Referral Child/Eld	Child Care Center
Energy (Continued)	Richland Operations Office, Richland, WA	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Rocky Flats Field Office, Rocky Flats, CO	/		/	/	/	/	
	Savannah River, Savannah, GA	/	/	/	/	/		
	Southwestern Power Administration, Tulsa, OK			/	/	/		
	Energy Total	8	6	10	11	11	8	4
Health & Human Services 58,261 Employees	Office of The Secretary HQ DC, Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco			/	/	/		
	Administration on Children and Families HQ DC, Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco	/		/	/	/		
	Food and Drug Administration HQ, Rockville, MD: Atlanta, Bothell WA, Chicago, Dallas, San Francisco			/	/	/		
	Health Care Financing Administration HQ Baltimore, MD; Atlanta & Chicago Regional	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Health Resources and Services Administration HQ, Baton Rouge, Philadelphia, Dallas, Denver, San Francisco			/	/	/		
	National Institutes of Health 14 Centers, Bethesda, MD			/	/	/		
	Health & Human Services Total	2	1	6	6	6	1	1

Report of a Study of Work and Family Programs

Agency	Installation	Part-Time	Job Sharing	Telework	Flexible Work Schedule	Compressed Work Schedule	Resource Referral Child/Eld	Child Care Center
Housing & Urban Development 9,984 Employees	Headquarters Personnel Division, Washington, DC				/	/	/	/
	Administrative Service Center #3, Denver, CO Great Plains, Northwest/Alaska, Pacific/Hawaii, Rocky Mountain	/		/	/	/	/	/
	Atlanta Administration Service Center, Atlanta, GA	/			/	/		
	Cleveland Area Office, Cleveland, OH	/			/	/		
	Georgia State Office, Atlanta, GA			/	/	/		
	Jacksonville Area Office, Jacksonville, FL			/	/	/		
	Housing & Urban Development Total	3	0	3	6	6	2	2
Navy 194,082 Employees	LANFLT, CINLANFLT, Headquarters, Norfolk, VA			/	/		/	
	LANFLT, Fleet Tech. Support Center, Norfolk, VA				/	/	/	
	LANFLT, Fleet Industrial Supply Ctr., Norfolk, VA	/			/	/	/	
	LANFLT, Mid-Atlantic Region, Norfolk, VA				/	/	/	
	LANFLT, Naval Station, Norfolk, VA				/	/	/	
	LANFLT, Naval Weapons Station, Yorktown, VA				/	/	/	
	MC, Marine Corps Logistics Base, Barstow, CA					/		/
	MC, Marine Corps Air Station, Miramar, CA					/		/

Report of a Study of Work and Family Programs

Agency	Installation	Part-Time	Job Sharing	Telework	Flexible Work Schedule	Compressed Work Schedule	Resource Referral Child/Eld	Child Care Center
Navy (Continued)	NAVAIR, Naval Aviation Depot, Cherry Point, NC				/			
	NAVAIR, Naval Aviation Depot, North Island, NC				/		/	
	NAVAIR, Naval Air Warfare Center, Weapon Division, China Lake, CA	/		/	/	/	/	/
	NAVSEA, Puget Sound Shipyard, Bremerton, WA	/				/		
	NAVSEA, Norfolk Naval Shipyard, Portsmouth, VA						/	/
	NAVSEA, Undersea Warfare Center, Keyport, WA	/	/		/		/	
	NAVSUP, Fleet Industrial Supply Center, Hawaii	/	/	/	/	/	/	
	PACFLT, Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility, Honolulu, HI	/			/	/	/	
	PACFLT, Naval Region Southwest, San Diego, CA	/				/		
	PACFLT, Intermediate Maint., Silverdale, WA	/	/	/	/	/		
	PACFLT, Naval Air Station, Whidbey Island, WA	/	/	/	/	/	/	
	Navy Total		10	4	5	15	16	13

Report of a Study of Work and Family Programs

Agency	Installation	Part-Time	Job Sharing	Telework	Flexible Work Schedule	Compressed Work Schedule	Resource Referral Child/Eld	Child Care Center	
Social Security Administration 65,629 Employees	Headquarters, Baltimore, MD	/		/	/	/	/	/	
	Atlanta Region III, Atlanta, GA			/	/	/	/	/	
	Chicago Region V, Chicago, IL	/	/		/	/	/	/	
	Dallas Region VI, Dallas, TX	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	
	Kansas City Region VII, Kansas City, KS	/			/	/			
	Seattle Region X, Seattle, WA	/	/			/	/	/	
	Social Security Administration Total		5	3	3	5	6	5	5
Transportation 64,858 Employees	Office of the Secretary, Washington, DC	/		/	/	/	/	/	
	Maritime Administration Multiple Sites	/	/	/	/	/	/		
	Federal Highway Administration, HQ, Baltimore, MD; Atlanta Regional Office, and Lakeland, CO Office	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	
	Research and Special Program Administration, Volpe Center, Cambridge, MA	/	/	/	/		/	/	
	Research and Special Program Administration, Headquarters, Washington, DC	/		/	/	/	/	/	
	U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, DC; Seattle, WA; Elizabeth City, NC; Portsmouth, VA, Norfolk, VA; Cleveland, OH; Boston, MA	/		/	/	/	/	/	/
	Transportation Total		6	3	6	6	5	6	5

Report of a Study of Work and Family Programs

Agency	Installation	Part-Time	Job Sharing	Telework	Flexible Work Schedule	Compressed Work Schedule	Resource Referral Child/Eld	Child Care Center
Veterans Affairs	Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Kansas City, MO 1385 Employees	/		/		/		
	Veterans Affairs Total	1	0	1	0	1	0	0
Grand Total Large Agencies		38	19	38	53	55	39	25

APPENDIX C

FAMILY-FRIENDLY PROGRAMS IMPLEMENTED IN SMALL AGENCIES

Agency	Number of Employees	Part-Time	Job Sharing	Telework	Flexible Work Schedule	Compressed Work Schedule	Resource Referral Child/Eld	Child Care Center
Commodity Futures Trading Commission	580	/			/	/	/	/
Consumer Product Safety Commission	467	/		/	/	/	/	/
Export-Import Bank	417	/		/	/	/	/	/
Farm Credit Administration	295	/	/	/	/	/	/	
Federal Communications Commission	1937	/		/	/	/	/	
Federal Labor Relations Authority	223	/		/	/	/	/	
Federal Trade Commission	1017	/			/	/	/	/
Holocaust Museum	232	/			/	/		
National Labor Relations Board	1861	/	/	/	/	/	/	
Office of Personnel Management	3682	/		/	/	/	/	/
Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation	750	/	/	/	/	/	/	
Total Small Agencies		11	3	8	11	11	10	5