

For: All FAS Employees

FAS International Flexiplace Pilot Program

Approved by: Acting Administrator, FAS



1 Overview

A

Background

In recent years, jobs overseas for FAS civil service employees, who are also spouses of FAS foreign service officers have become harder to find. In an effort to ease the burden and to retain valuable employees, FAS has agreed to participate in a 2-year flexiplace pilot program for civil service employees who are spouses of FAS foreign service officers. This program will allow such spouses to port their job overseas if:

- their work is appropriate to this arrangement
- this arrangement will benefit the Government.

B

Purpose

This notice provides:

- information about the international flexiplace pilot program
- procedures for applying for the pilot program.

C

Contacts

For more information about this notice or the pilot program, contact the FFAS Flexiplace Program Manager on 202-418-9039 or TDD 202-418-9116.

Other contacts are also listed in this notice.

D

Labor Management Obligations

Where exclusive representation exists, bargaining may be requested to the extent allowed by applicable statutes. Where contract language already addresses these policies and procedures for bargaining unit employees, contract language prevails.

Disposal Date	Distribution
February 1, 2004	All FAS Employees

2 International Flexiplace Pilot Program

A Policy

Under an approved 2-year pilot of international flexiplace, eligible employees may port their job overseas. This program is not an entitlement. The employee's job must meet all the flexiplace criteria as outlined in subparagraph C.

Employees on international flexiplace will initially be detailed for no longer than 120 calendar days to the Country in which their foreign service spouse has been assigned. The employee will work flexiplace on a trial basis for the duration of the detail. If the trial period proves successful, the employee will be placed on an international flexiplace agreement.

B Eligible Employees

To be considered for international flexiplace, an employee shall:

- be an FAS civil service employee that is a legal spouse of an FAS foreign service officer
 - have permanent career status
 - have a performance rating of at least "fully successful" or equivalent
 - demonstrate motivation, independence, and dependability in accomplishing work assignments
 - not require significant face-to-face contact with others
 - have good time management skills
 - be engaged in work that can be performed successfully offsite at all times.
-

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2 International Flexiplace Pilot Program (Continued)

C

Work Requirements

Appropriate work for a flexible worksite must meet the following criteria:

- be portable
- be measurable
- be completed away from the official duty station without adversely affecting the following:
 - workload of other employees
 - office coverage
 - the mission of the work unit.

Jobs that require the following types of skills may be considered good candidates for flexiplace:

- thinking and writing; such as data analysis, reviewing voluminous documents, and writing decisions or reports
- telephone-intensive tasks; such as setting up conferences, obtaining information, and following up on participants in training sessions
- computer-oriented tasks; such as programming, data entry, and word processing.

D

Working Offsite

Employees may only work in U.S. Embassies or at home when working international flexiplace.

It is preferable when working at a U.S. Embassy that the employee work in space already assigned to FAS. If FAS space is unavailable and obtaining Embassy space is cost prohibitive, the employee must work from home.

The employee may only work from home if the security of data can be guaranteed.

Onsite days in Washington, D.C., shall be minimal.

Note: These requirements apply to full-time, as well as part-time employees.

Continued on the next page

2 International Flexiplace Pilot Program (Continued)

E

International Flexiplace Agreement

FAS-1200 (Exhibit 1) is a written agreement that:

- outlines details of the FAS international flexiplace pilot program
- certifies the employee has read and understands the elements of this notice
- must be signed before the employee begins working offsite.

Employees **must** submit a new FAS-1200 any time there is a permanent change to their flexiplace work schedule.

3 Responsibilities

A

Approval Authority

Approval authority for international flexiplace is as follows:

- the employee must gain initial approval from the first line supervisor
- final approval lies with the respective Deputy Administrator.

If the flexiplace agreement must be terminated, then the Deputy Administrator, in consultation with the first line supervisor, shall terminate the agreement.

B

Supervisory Responsibilities

Supervisors shall consider the following criteria in evaluating a position for flexiplace:

- office staff is not adversely affected

Note: Ensure that work assignments and responsibilities are evenly distributed.

- office coverage is not adversely affected
 - employee will not require frequent travel
-

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3 Responsibilities (Continued)

**B
Supervisory
Responsibilities
(Continued)**

- service to internal and external customers will not be adversely affected
 - work activities are portable and can be performed as effectively away from the office
 - job tasks are easily quantifiable or primarily project-oriented
 - the technology needed to perform the job offsite is currently available
 - cyclical work does not present a problem
 - security and confidentiality of data can be adequately assured
 - work assignments do not require access to classified data.
-

**C
Employee
Responsibilities**

Employees shall:

- sign and comply with the terms and conditions of a written flexiplace agreement
 - maintain productivity and customer service
 - follow established procedures for:
 - requesting and obtaining leave
 - accurately recording time and attendance.
-

Notice PM-2291

4 Personnel Rules That Apply to the Flexiplace Program

A

**Overtime and
Credit Hours**

Rules on overtime apply to flexiplace employees. Employees shall work overtime only with advance approval. Flexiplace privileges may be canceled for employees who continue to work unapproved overtime.

Employees on a flexiplace arrangement may earn credit hours depending on their work schedule.

Note: See 17-PM, paragraph 358.

B

**Hours of Duty
and Work
Schedules**

Alternative work schedules available to onsite employees may be approved for flexiplace employees. A flexiplace employee's work schedule is established with the concurrence of the supervisor and should parallel the Embassy's schedule.

C

Holidays

Employees on international flexiplace shall follow the Embassy holidays. They will not be entitled to U.S. holidays unless the Embassy recognizes them.

D

Pay and Leave

Rules on pay and leave administration apply to flexiplace employees.

E

**Emergency
Dismissals
and Evacuation
Procedures**

If an employee works in an Embassy, he/she shall follow the emergency/hazardous weather dismissal and evacuation procedures of the Embassy.

If the employee works from home, he/she should consult with his/her first line supervisor about specific emergency dismissals.

If the Embassy's evacuation situation requires or leads to spousal/dependent departure from the Country, the employee will consult with his/her supervisor on continued participation in the flexiplace pilot program.

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4 Personnel Rules That Apply to the Flexiplace Program (Continued)

F

Official Duty Station

The official duty station of an employee on international flexiplace will be changed to the city and Country in which they work.

Employees will lose Washington, D.C., locality pay. In the event of reduction-in-force, employees working flexiplace will be considered as having a Washington, D.C., duty station.

G

Overseas Allowances

According to 3 FAM 123.17, employees working international flexiplace are ineligible for overseas allowances. They are covered under the allowances allowed as the spouse of a foreign service officer.

H

Performance Standards

Generally, the same performance standards apply to flexiplace employees and onsite employees who perform the same tasks. Work productivity that cannot be measured by performance standards is not appropriate for flexiplace.

I

Position Descriptions

Established position descriptions will apply to flexiplace employees, except that the "Supervisory Controls" and "Work Environment" sections may need to be adjusted. These adjustments may not affect the classification of the employee's position.

J

Time and Attendance

First line supervisors shall continue to:

- review the flexiplace employee's request for leave
- certify the flexiplace employee's time and attendance.

Employees will e-mail/FAX completed work schedules at the end of each pay period.

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Notice PM-2291

4 Personnel Rules That Apply to the Flexiplace Program (Continued)

K

**Worker's
Compensation**

Flexiplace employees are covered by the Federal Employees Compensation Act and may qualify for payment for on-the-job injury or occupational illness.

L

Travel

Travel reimbursements will be based on the employee's official duty station.

Note: The employee will not be reimbursed for local travel expenses incurred between the domicile and the duty station while on a detail.

M

**Reasonable
Accommodations**

Requests for reasonable accommodations will be approved on a case-by-case basis. To request an accommodation, contact the FFAS Flexiplace Program Manager at 202-418-9039 or TDD at 202-418-9116 at least 3 weeks before starting flexiplace.

5 Removal of Employees From International Flexiplace

A

Removing an Employee From International Flexiplace

An employee's involvement in the flexiplace program is voluntary and may be discontinued by the employee or the supervisor at any time with appropriate notice. This notice must be sufficient to allow necessary workplace adjustments to be made.

Management may remove an employee from the pilot program if any of the following occur:

- the employee's performance declines
- other employees are unable to perform their duties because of the absence or unavailability of the flexiplace employee
- the work assignment changes to include duties that cannot be performed from a remote worksite
- divorce
- the program no longer benefits the organization's needs.

Normally, the employee will not be removed from flexiplace for a single minor infraction. The supervisor and employee will make a bonafide effort to resolve specific problems before any decision is made to remove the employee from the flexiplace program.

B

Employee Options After Removal

The employee maintains his/her options as a foreign service spouse upon the removal from international flexiplace.

Example: Upon termination of the agreement, the employee may return to the regular worksite or request leave without pay.

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Notice PM-2291

5 Removal of Employees From International Flexiplace (Continued)

C

Responsibilities Upon Termination of Flexiplace Agreement

Notify the following upon termination of your flexiplace agreement:

- FFAS Flexiplace Program Manager, 202-418-9039
 - International Services Staff, 202-720-2741
 - Washington User's Assistance Team, 202-720-6763
 - Embassy, if that is your alternate worksite or you have had equipment, telephone service, or both provided by the Embassy.
-

6 Applying for International Flexiplace

A

Requirements Before Working Offsite

The following requirements must be completed before an employee starts to work offsite.

In addition, all clearances and technical requirements must be in place before any employee can begin flexiplace.

B

Completing Applicable Forms

The employee must complete the following forms to participate in the pilot program:

- FAS-1200, FAS International Flexiplace Work Agreement (Exhibit 1)
- FFAS-7, Flexiplace Home Safety Checklist (Exhibit 2)

Note: The employee shall submit FFAS-7 **only** if working from home.

FAS-1200 and FFAS-7 shall be submitted to the FFAS Flexiplace Program Manager, STOP 0595 or FAX 202-418-9129.

Employees may obtain copies of FAS-1200 and FFAS-7 at:

<http://dc.ffasintranet.usda.gov/hrd/flexipla.htm>

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6 Applying for International Flexiplace (Continued)

C

**Securing
Embassy Space
and Furniture**

Employees should contact the International Services Staff on 202-720-2741 to secure space or furniture at an Embassy.

The Deputy Administrator will coordinate with the Foreign Agricultural Affairs Area Director concerning any necessary ICASS requirements.

D

**Obtaining
Computer
Equipment and
Dial-In Access**

Employees shall first contact the User's Assistance Team (UAT) in Washington, D.C., on 202-720-6763 to acquire necessary equipment and dial-in access. This process will need to be coordinated with the Embassy and UAT will assist the employee with that process.

E

**Obtaining
Telephone
Service**

Employees shall work with the Embassy to secure necessary telephone lines or services.

An employee working at home may have a telephone line installed for the sole purpose of flexiplace.

7 Program Assessment

A

Evaluation

The benefits of continuing this pilot program will be assessed 18 months after approval by the Administrator.

FAS-1200, FAS International Flexiplace Work Agreement

REPRODUCE LOCALLY. Include form number and date on all reproductions.

FAS-1200 U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
(01-17-02) Foreign Agricultural Service

FAS INTERNATIONAL FLEXIPLACE WORK AGREEMENT

PART A - The following constitutes an international flexiplace agreement between:

1. Employee's Name	2. Agency Program Area, Division and Branch
3. Social Security Number	4. Grade
5. Current Official Duty Station	6. Current Official Duty Station Telephone Number ()
7. Supervisor's Name	8. Supervisor's Telephone Number ()

PART B - Employee's Alternate Work Location:

9. Select one: <input type="checkbox"/> Home <input type="checkbox"/> Embassy	11. Telephone Number ()
10. Employee's Alternate Work Location (Including ZIP Code)	12. FAX Number
	13. E-Mail Address
	14. Flexiplace Official Duty Station

PART C - Alternate Work Location Schedule:

15. Flexiplace Beginning Date	16. Flexiplace Ending Date
17. Overseas Work Schedule: A.M. P.M.	18. Hours available for Washington, D.C. A.M. P.M.

PART D International Flexiplace Checklist:

NOTE: Employee certifies that he or she has discussed the following with his and or her supervisor and understands the impact of the following:

- Loss of Washington, D.C. locality pay
- Allowances
- Payment of COLA's
- Holidays
- Emergency dismissals
- Travel expenses
- Certification of time and attendance
- Work schedule and availability to Washington, D.C. employees
- How his and or her work will be measured
- Options should trial flexiplace period fail or flexiplace agreement need to be terminated

PART E - Approvals: Employee volunteers to participate in the international flexiplace program and to adhere to applicable Union Contract guidelines and Agency policy. Agency concurs with employee's participation and agrees to the applicable guidelines and policies.

19. Employee's Signature	Date
20. Supervisor's Signature	Date
21. Deputy Administrator's Signature	Date

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FFAS-7, Flexiplace Home Safety Checklist

REPRODUCE LOCALLY. Include form number and date on reproductions.

FFAS-7 (06-01-99) U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services

FLEXIPLACE HOME SAFETY CHECKLIST

PART A - GENERAL INFORMATION

1. FLEXIPLACE PARTICIPANT'S NAME, ALTERNATE WORKSITE, AND TELEPHONE NUMBER	2. AGENCY/DIVISION/BRANCH
3. EMPLOYEE'S OFFICIAL DUTY STATION, CITY, AND STATE	4. FLEXIPLACE COORDINATOR'S NAME AND TELEPHONE NO.
5. ALTERNATE WORKSITE ADDRESS	6. DESCRIBE THE LOCATION OF DESIGNATED WORK AREA (if worksite in participant's home.)

PART B - CHECKLIST ITEMS

The following checklist is designed to assess the overall safety of the alternate worksite. Read, complete, and submit this form. Upon completion, the checklist should be signed and dated by the participating employee and their immediate supervisor. A copy of this document should be maintained by the supervisor.

MARK "NA" IF NOT APPLICABLE	YES	NO
7. Is the space free of indoor air quality problems, and the space adequately ventilated?		
8. Is the space free of noise hazards (in excess of 85 decibels)?		
9. Is there a potable (drinkable) water supply?		
10. In working at home, are you in compliance with municipal codes? Homeowner Association?		
11. Are lavatories available with hot and cold running water?		
12. Are all stairs with 4 or more steps equipped with handrails?		
13. Are all circuit breakers and/or fuses in the electrical panel labeled?		
14. Do circuit breakers clearly indicate if they are in the open or closed position?		
15. Is all electrical equipment free of recognized hazards that would cause physical harm (frayed or loose wires, bare conductors, exposed wires)?		
16. Will the building's electrical system permit the grounding of electrical equipment?		
17. Are aisles, doorways, and corners free of obstructions to permit visibility and movement?		
18. Are file cabinets and storage closets arranged so drawers and doors do not open into walkways?		
19. Do chairs have any loose casters (wheels)? Are the rungs and legs of chairs sturdy?		
20. Are the phone lines, electrical cords, and extension wires secured under a desk or alongside a baseboard?		
21. Is the office space neat, clean and free of excessive amounts of combustibles?		
22. Are floor surfaces clean, dry, level, and free of worn or frayed seams?		
23. Are carpets well secured to the floor, and free of frayed or worn areas?		
24. EMPLOYEE'S SIGNATURE	DATE	
25. SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE	DATE	

SPECIAL NOTE: SUPERVISORS ARE ENCOURAGED TO CONDUCT AN ON SITE INSPECTION FOR ANY EMPLOYEE CHECKING FIVE OR MORE "NO" ANSWERS. EMPLOYEES ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR INFORMING THEIR SUPERVISOR OF ANY SIGNIFICANT CHANGE TO WORKSITE.

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