

# **The Employee's Guide to Career Transition**

**(CTAP, ICTAP, RPL)**

**U. S. Office of Personnel Management**

**Strategic Human Resources Policy**

**Center for Talent and Capacity Policy**

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(Note: This revision removes information about expired priority selection programs for former District of Columbia Department of Corrections and Panama Canal Zone employees.)

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## **(1). Introduction**

As the Federal Government continues to restructure and downsize, some employees may find themselves having to "transition" to new jobs--sometimes even to occupations in the private sector. Making major career changes, perhaps for the first time in many years, can be a frightening and frustrating experience that raises many questions.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) recognizes the difficulties this kind of change can bring. We developed this guide to inform and prepare you to take charge of your career. Your transition is more likely to be successful if you see this as an opportunity to move to an exciting new job or career in the Federal government or the private sector.

### **Background**

During the 1990's, transition and placement in the Federal government underwent a dramatic transformation. In 1995, OPM issued regulations requiring Executive Branch agencies to provide career transition assistance to employees affected by downsizing or restructuring. These agencies developed Career Transition Assistance Plans for their surplus and displaced employees.

### **Agency Career Transition Assistance Plans (CTAPs)**

Agency plans must consist of three parts:

#### **(1) Agency Career Transition Services**

Each agency provides career transition services to surplus employees, giving them skills and resources to help them find other employment. These services might include skills assessment, resume preparation, counseling, or job search assistance. Agencies must also develop policies on retraining their surplus employees.

#### **(2) Agency Special Selection Priority under the Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP)\***

Agencies must give selection priority to their own well-qualified surplus employees who apply for vacancies in agency components in the local commuting area. Agencies must notify their surplus or displaced employees when they plan to fill these jobs. With a few exceptions, the agency must select those who apply and are eligible and well qualified before any other candidate from within or outside the agency.

### (3) Agency Reemployment Priority Lists (RPL)

Each agency must also maintain a Reemployment Priority List (RPL) for each local commuting area where it separates employees by reduction in force. Employees can register for the RPL to tell their former agency that they want to return if the agency has vacancies. Employees can register for their agency's RPL as soon as they receive a reduction in force (RIF) separation notice. Before the agency can select a candidate outside its workforce, it must first check the RPL for that location. With a few exceptions, the agency must select a qualified employee from the RPL before hiring anyone from outside the agency.

### **Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP)**

OPM also changed the way displaced Federal workers receive priority for jobs in other agencies (besides the one they worked in before involuntary separation). In 1996, OPM suspended the Interagency Placement Program (IPP) and replaced it with the Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP). The IPP was a centralized list of displaced employees referred by OPM to hiring agencies. ICTAP is very different from the IPP and has placed more employees. ICTAP is not a list--instead, employees must apply for positions in the local commuting area and include proof that they were displaced. ICTAP gives an eligible, well-qualified employee selection priority over almost any other applicant from outside the agency. Under ICTAP, for example, a DoD employee with a RIF separation notice could apply for a competitive service vacancy in the local commuting area at the Department of Education. In most cases, Education must select this well-qualified person for the position before choosing another applicant from outside the agency.

*\* Note to DoD Employees:* The Department of Defense (DoD) does not provide agency selection priority through CTAP. Instead, DoD uses the Priority Placement Program (PPP) to help place its surplus employees. DoD also provides career transition services to its employees to the extent possible. Displaced DoD workers can also register for their local RPL, and request selection priority for jobs in non-DoD agencies using the ICTAP.

## **(2). Where Can I Go for More Information?**

The rest of this Guide explains CTAP, ICTAP and RPL and how they work. Your human resources office should have information on your agency's specific services and programs, including agency career transition services, CTAP selection priority, and RPL. Agency human resources representatives should also be able to answer your questions about ICTAP selection priority.

OPM's website at [www.opm.gov](http://www.opm.gov) provides access to information on various human resources

topics, including lists of Federal job opportunities worldwide. You should also visit OPM's link to state employment and retraining services at: [www.opm.gov/rif/general/onestop.htm](http://www.opm.gov/rif/general/onestop.htm).

You can download this and other Employee Guides on various downsizing topics, including: the "Employee's Guide to Reduction in Force (RIF)" and the "Employee's Guide to Benefits for Those Affected by Reduction in Force" from the sites listed above.

OPM has information on worldwide Federal job opportunities available by phone (478-757-3000; 478-744-2299 for TDD), and on the worldwide web at [www.usajobs.opm.gov](http://www.usajobs.opm.gov). Complete information on job search resources appears in the last section of this Guide.

### **(3). Placement Priority--Reduction in Force (RIF) or Out-of-Area Reassignment**

#### **(A). Selection Priority in Your Agency (CTAP)**

CTAP is designed to improve your chances of finding a new job in your agency through selection priority. OPM's regulations establish the minimum requirements agencies must meet in providing their employees with transition services and selection priority for vacancies. Each agency has a specific Career Transition Assistance Plan containing detailed information about the agency's transition policies. Your human resources office should be able to explain the specifics for your agency.

**Note for Department of Defense (DoD) Employees:** CTAP special selection priority does not apply to DoD employees. DoD uses the Priority Placement Program (PPP) to help place its surplus employees. You can get more information on the PPP from the DoD Civilian Assistance in Re-Employment (CARE) Office at (703) 696-1799 or from their web site at <http://www.cpms.osd.mil/care/index.html>. DoD also provides career transition services to its employees to the extent possible. In addition to the PPP, displaced DoD employees can register for their local RPL, and request selection priority for jobs in non-DoD agencies using the ICTAP.

#### **1. How do I get selection priority for vacancies in my agency?**

You must:

- be "surplus" or "displaced" (in other words, you must meet the definitions in either 2. or 3. below);
- have a current performance rating of at least "fully successful" (Level III) or equivalent;

- occupy a position in the same local commuting area of the vacancy;
- apply for a specific vacancy at or below your current grade level with no greater promotion potential than your current position;
- meet the application deadline in the announcement; and
- be found "well qualified" for the job.

## 2. *What is a "surplus" employee?*

You are "surplus" if you:

- are in the competitive service\*\*;
- are in tenure group I (career) or tenure group II (career-conditional); **and**
- have an official notice from your agency saying that your position is no longer needed. This notice could be:
  - a "Certificate of Expected Separation" (CES);
  - an agency certification that you are in a surplus organization or occupation;
  - a notice that your position is being abolished; or
  - a letter saying you are eligible for discontinued service retirement.

\*\* Agencies can extend the definition of a "surplus" employee to include employees in the excepted service if they are on Schedule A or B appointments without time limit and have received an appropriate notice (see above). Selection priority for these employees is limited to other permanent Schedule A or B positions in the same agency and local commuting area. **Note:** Excepted Service employees are not eligible for selection priority in other agencies under the Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan.

## 3. *What is a "displaced" employee?*

You are "displaced" if you:

- are in the competitive service\*\*;
- are in tenure group I (career) or tenure group II (career-conditional); **and**

- have an official notice from your agency saying you will be separated by reduction in force. This notice could be:
  - a specific reduction in force separation notice; or
  - a notice of proposed removal because you declined a directed reassignment or transfer of function out of the local commuting area.

\*\* Agencies can extend the definition of a "displaced" employee to include employees in the excepted service if they are on Schedule A or B appointments without time limit and have received an appropriate notice (see above). Selection priority for these employees is limited to other permanent Schedule A or B positions in the same agency and local commuting area. **Note:** Excepted Service employees are not eligible for selection priority in other agencies under the Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan.

#### ***4. Who is not eligible for selection priority?***

You are generally not eligible for selection priority if you are:

- in the excepted service (unless your agency gives special selection priority to excepted employees);
- downgraded or reassigned due to reduction in force, but not separated;
- in a different local commuting area from the vacancy;
- in a temporary or term position in the competitive service;
- in an agency that is not in the Executive branch;
- in an agency that does not follow OPM hiring procedures (this includes Postal Service, legislative and judicial branch agencies); or
- in the Senior Executive Service (SES).

#### ***5. I meet all the requirements for CTAP priority. How does this selection priority in my agency work?***

With few exceptions, if your agency plans to fill a vacancy in the local commuting area lasting more than 120 days, it must give CTAP eligibles the opportunity to apply. Agencies can advertise vacancies to surplus and displaced agency employees using OPM's USAJOBS, email, hotline recordings, bulletin boards, etc. If you are interested in an advertised vacancy,

you must apply within the time frame given and attach proof of your CTAP eligibility (see below).

If the agency finds you well qualified for the vacancy, you have priority over other candidates from within or outside your agency. If you are among two or more well-qualified CTAP eligibles, the agency may select any one of you. Agencies may select candidates from other agency components only after giving priority to eligible CTAP candidates within the component. An example of a component might be the National Park Service within the Department of the Interior. Check with your human resources office to see how your agency defines “component.”

#### **6. *When does my eligibility begin?***

Your eligibility begins when you receive one of these notices or documents:

- a reduction in force (RIF) separation notice;
- a notice of proposed removal for declining a directed reassignment or transfer of function to another local commuting area;
- a Certificate of Expected Separation (CES); or
- your agency's certification that you are in a surplus organization or occupation (this could be a position abolishment letter, a notice of eligibility for discontinued service retirement, or similar notice).

Whichever notice or document you receive is your proof of eligibility for CTAP priority.

#### **7. *When does my eligibility expire?***

Your eligibility expires when:

- your agency separates you by RIF;
- you resign, retire or otherwise separate from the agency;
- your agency separates you for declining a directed reassignment or transfer of function to another local commuting area;
- your agency cancels or rescinds the notice that made you eligible;



- you move to another position in the agency, time-limited or permanent, that is not affected by the RIF;
- you receive a career, career-conditional, or excepted service position without time limit in any agency; or
- you are no longer being separated by RIF.

## 8. *What are the steps in the process?*

### *Step One: Application*

If you are eligible, you request CTAP selection priority by:

1. applying for a vacancy in your agency in the local commuting area; and
2. attaching proof of eligibility (for example: your RIF separation notice, CES, surplus notification, or notice of proposed removal). Make sure you attach any other documentation requested by the agency in the vacancy announcement.

### *Step Two: Qualifications Review*

The agency reviews your application, comparing your background to the required qualifications, selective factors, knowledge, skills, abilities and competencies to determine if you are well qualified for the job. The agency must define "well qualified" on vacancy announcements so you know the criteria they are using.

If your agency finds that you are not well qualified, they must conduct a second review of your application and tell you the results in writing.

### *Step Three: Selection*

If your agency finds you well qualified for the vacancy, in most cases they must select you before hiring another candidate from either inside or outside the agency.

If two or more well-qualified CTAP applicants request selection priority, the agency may choose among them. Some agencies have a specific policy on selection order (for example, they may always select "displaced" employees before "surplus" employees).

If no well-qualified CTAP eligibles apply, the agency can fill the position through other means.

**9. What does "vacancy" mean?**

Under CTAP, a vacancy is a competitive service position lasting 121 days or more. It is a "vacancy" if the agency plans to fill the position, even if they originally intended to do so without posting a competitive announcement.

**10. What is my "local commuting area"?**

Your local commuting area is based on the duty station of your position of record when you receive your notice. Agencies determine the local commuting area for jobs they announce. It is the geographic area usually considered a single area for employment purposes. It includes any population center and the surrounding localities where people live and routinely travel back and forth daily to their jobs. You can only get selection priority for vacancies announced in your local commuting area.

**11. What does "well qualified" mean?**

"Well qualified" means that you:

- meet the qualification standards and eligibility requirements for the position, including any medical qualifications, suitability, and minimum educational and experience requirements;
- meet all selective factors;
- either meet quality ranking factor levels at the level set by the agency, or are rated above minimally qualified in accordance with the agency's specific rating and ranking process;
- are physically qualified, with reasonable accommodation where appropriate, to perform the essential duties of the position;
- meet any special qualifying condition(s) for the position (such as the ability to speak a specific language or other selective factor); and
- are able to satisfactorily perform the duties of the position upon entry.

If your agency finds that you are not well qualified, they must conduct a second review of your application and tell you the results in writing.

**12. Can "well qualified" vary between positions or agencies?**

Yes. Each position has its own qualification requirements, selective factors, knowledge, skill, ability and competency requirements. Since each job is different, you should relate your background and experience directly to the position.

**13. *Can I get priority for higher-graded positions?***

No. Selection priority only applies to vacancies at your same (or a lower) grade, and with no higher promotion potential than your current position.

You can still apply for jobs at higher grades or those with greater promotion potential, but you won't receive selection priority when you compete for those jobs.

**14. *What about lower-graded jobs?***

If you are thinking about applying for lower-graded jobs, you should ask your agency about its pay-setting policies. They could offer the job at a lower salary than you had before. Don't apply for a job you won't accept, because turning down any permanent offer may end your selection priority.

**15. *Is my priority limited to certain job series?***

No. You can apply for any position, but you only get selection priority if you are well qualified for the job.

**16. *I'm not sure whether I'm well qualified for a particular position. How can I find out?***

You can probably tell by reviewing the requirements in the vacancy announcement and comparing them to your credentials. If you are having trouble, ask your human resources office or career transition center for help in determining your qualifications.

**17. *What happens if I decline a job offer? Do I lose my eligibility?***

Your agency may end your selection priority if you apply for a permanent vacancy and are selected, but decline the offer. Check your agency's policies for specifics. If you decline a temporary or term position, you keep your selection priority for permanent positions until you separate or your eligibility ends for some other reason.

**18. *I am full-time, but I might apply for a part-time job. What happens if I accept?***

Accepting another position--even part-time--ends your eligibility for agency selection priority. As we said before, don't apply for a job you won't accept because turning down a

permanent position will end your selection priority.

**19. *If I take a temporary or term job, will I lose my CTAP eligibility?***

Yes. Accepting another position, even time-limited, means you are no longer faced with RIF separation, so you no longer get agency selection priority.

**20. *What if I accept a position outside the Federal Government? Am I still eligible for selection priority?***

Your eligibility for CTAP selection priority in your agency ends when you separate, whether you leave involuntarily (such as by RIF) or voluntarily (such as by resignation). However, if you separated involuntarily, you might still have selection priority in other agencies (see Section 3 (C) of the Guide).

**21. *What if I move? Am I eligible for selection priority for agency vacancies in a different geographic area?***

No, not unless your agency's policy expands the area for CTAP priority. You can still apply for jobs in your new location, but you will not receive selection priority for those jobs.

**22. *My agency says I wasn't well qualified for a job. I disagree. Where can I go with my complaint?***

Each agency should have a problem resolution coordinator to handle these types of situations. Ask your human resources office for the person or office to hear your grievance or complaint.

**23. *I am not eligible for CTAP selection priority. Is there are other assistance available to me?***

See Section 6 of this Guide for information on services that may be available to surplus or displaced employees. All employees, including those in the competitive, excepted, and Senior Executive Service (SES), are eligible for some type of career transition assistance or services.

SES employees are eligible for placement assistance through a special SES placement program. If you are an SES employee facing RIF separation, check with your agency human resources office for information about this program.

Agencies that do not follow OPM hiring procedures (this includes Postal Service, legislative and judicial branch agencies) are not required to provide career transition services to their

employees, but many still do. Consult your human resources office for details.

## **(B). Agency Reemployment Priority Lists (RPL)**

Agencies must maintain a Reemployment Priority List (RPL) for competitive service employees facing RIF separation, those who have already been RIF'd, and employees recovered from work-related (compensable) injuries.

### ***24. What is a Reemployment Priority List (RPL)?***

The RPL is a list agencies use to give reemployment priority to any career and career-conditional competitive service employees they separated by RIF or due to compensable injury. Under OPM regulations, each agency must establish an RPL for each local commuting area where competitive service employees have either been RIF'd or have recovered from work-related injury.

### ***25. Can I get hiring preference in other agencies by getting on the RPL?***

No. The RPL only provides hiring priority for jobs in your current/former agency in the same local commuting area. It does not give you priority for jobs in any other agency. The ICTAP (see section 3(C) below) gives you selection priority for jobs in other agencies.

### ***26. When am I eligible for the RPL? When does my eligibility expire?***

You can register for your agency's RPL when you receive either a specific reduction in force separation notice or a Certificate of Expected Separation (CES). You must have a rating of least a "minimally successful" or equivalent (Level II) for your current performance rating.

You can also register if you separated more than one year ago due to a work-related injury, you have fully recovered, and your worker's compensation benefits have ended.

The registration deadline is 30 calendar days after RIF separation, or 30 calendar days after worker's compensation benefits terminate.

Career (tenure group I) employees get two years of rehiring priority starting from the date your name is put on the agency RPL. Career-conditional (tenure group II) employees get one year of priority.

Your eligibility also ends if you:

- ask the agency to remove your name from the RPL;

- receive a career, career-conditional, or excepted service appointment without time limit in any agency;
- decline a permanent job offer at your current or former grade;
- decline an interview;
- don't respond to an offer or an availability inquiry, or fail to appear for a scheduled interview; or
- separate for some other reason (such as retirement or resignation) before the RIF date.

**27. *How do I apply for the RPL?***

Ask your agency for an RPL application form. You should specify the grade(s), occupation(s), minimum hours of work per week you would accept, and whether you are interested in temporary and/or term jobs.

You can register for as many positions as you like. Your agency human resources specialist should help you determine which positions you qualify for and answer any questions you have about the RPL application.

**28. *Am I limited to certain series or grades?***

You can list any position on your application, but you only get priority for jobs you qualify for at the same (or lower) grade with no higher promotion potential than your current (or last) position.

If you are thinking about listing lower-graded jobs, you should ask your agency about its pay-setting policies. They could offer a job at a lower salary than you had before. Don't list a job you don't think you would accept because turning down a permanent offer could limit or terminate your RPL consideration, depending on the grade level and type of offer.

**29. *When does the agency have to consider me through the RPL?***

You get priority when your agency fills competitive service jobs from outside its workforce. This includes temporary and term positions if you indicated interest in time-limited jobs on your RPL application.

If you qualify for the vacant job, your agency may not fill the position by:

- a new appointment (unless they appoint a veteran with at least 10-point hiring preference);
- transferring someone from another Federal agency; or
- reinstating a former Federal employee (unless they appoint someone with restoration or reemployment rights).

**30. Can the agency fill positions without having to choose someone from the RPL?**

Yes, agencies may fill positions without considering RPL registrants under certain circumstances. These situations include:

- selecting someone from the agency's current workforce;
- no qualified RPL registrants are available at the grade level of the position being filled; or
- filling the position through a 30-day special needs appointment, an appointment for persons with disabilities, or another excepted appointment.

**(C). Selection Priority in Other Agencies (ICTAP)**

**31. Who is eligible?**

To receive selection priority in other agencies through the Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP), your current or last position must be/have been career (tenure group I) or career-conditional (tenure group II) in the competitive service, and you must fall under one of these categories:

- *RIF*--you have been (or are being) involuntarily separated from an Executive branch agency through reduction in force;
- *Transfer of Function/Directed Reassignment*--you have been (or are being) separated under adverse action procedures because you declined a transfer of function or directed reassignment to another local commuting area;
- *Injury Compensation*--you were separated due to work-related injury, your worker's compensation benefits have stopped because you recovered, and your former agency is

unable to place you through its RPL (see Section 3 B of this Guide);

- *Disability Annuitant*--you retired with a disability and your annuity has been /will be terminated because OPM considers you recovered;
- *RIF--Retired*--you received a RIF separation notice and elected either optional retirement on the RIF effective date, or discontinued service retirement on or before the RIF date;
- *Military/National Guard Technician*--you were a Military Reserve or National Guard Technician and now receive a special OPM disability retirement annuity.

**32. *I am in one of the categories you just described. How do I get selection priority for vacancies in other agencies?***

You must:

- have a current performance rating of at least "fully successful" (Level III) or equivalent\*\*\* ;
- occupy (or have been separated from) a position in the same local commuting area of the vacancy;
- apply for a specific vacancy at or below the grade level you are being (or have been) separated from that does not have greater promotion potential than your last position;
- meet the application deadline; and
- be found "well qualified" for the job.

\*\*\***Note:** This requirement does not apply if you qualify for ICTAP due to injury compensation or disability annuity.

**33. *Who is not eligible for selection priority?***

You are generally not eligible for selection priority if you are:

- in the excepted service (unless you are covered under a separate law that gave you ICTAP eligibility);
- downgraded or reassigned involuntarily, but not separated;



- in a different local commuting area from the vacancy;
- in a temporary or term position in the competitive service;
- in an agency that is not in the Executive branch;
- in an agency that does not follow OPM hiring procedures (this includes Postal Service, legislative and judicial branch agencies); or
- in the Senior Executive Service (SES).

**34. *If I took a buyout, am I eligible for selection priority?***

Voluntary separation incentives, or buyouts, are given to employees who volunteer to leave the Federal service. Placement assistance is for employees who are involuntarily separated. So, if you retired or resigned with a buyout, you are not entitled to placement assistance. You can apply and compete for Federal jobs, but you would not receive selection priority--and you might have to pay back the full buyout amount if reemployed.

**35. *When does my eligibility begin?***

Your eligibility begins when you receive one of the following documents:

- a reduction in force (RIF) separation notice;
- a notice of proposed removal for declining a directed reassignment or transfer of function to another local commuting area;
- an OPM notice that your disability annuity has been (or will be) terminated;
- certification from your former agency that it cannot place you after your recovery from a compensable injury; or
- certification from the National Guard Bureau or Military Department that you are eligible for a disability retirement and will receive the special OPM annuity.

Whatever notice you receive is your proof of eligibility for ICTAP priority.

**36. *When does my eligibility expire?***

Your ICTAP eligibility expires:

- one year after your RIF separation;
- one year after your agency separates you for declining a directed reassignment or transfer of function to another local commuting area;
- one year after your agency certifies that they cannot place you after your recovery from a compensable injury;
- one year after you are notified that your disability annuity has been or is being terminated;
- when you receive a career, career-conditional, or excepted service position without time limit in any agency;
- when your agency cancels or rescinds your RIF or removal notice;
- if you move to another position, time-limited or permanent, before the RIF date;
- if you separate by resignation or non-discontinued service retirement before the RIF effective date; or
- with a specific agency, if you decline a permanent offer from that agency.

### ***37. What are the steps in the process?***

When an agency plans to hire an outside candidate, they must post the vacancy on OPM's USAJOBS systems. The announcement will contain all requirements well qualified candidates must possess--selective factors, qualifications, education, knowledge, skills, abilities, and competencies. See the last section of this Guide for information on how to access USAJOBS.

#### *Step One: Application*

If you are eligible, you request ICTAP selection priority by:

1. applying for a vacancy in the local commuting area; and
2. attaching proof of eligibility (your RIF separation notice, notice of proposed removal for failure to relocate, notice of disability annuity termination, an SF-50--Notification of

Personnel Action--documenting RIF separation, agency certification of inability to place you through the RPL, etc.). Make sure you attach any other documentation requested by the agency in the vacancy announcement.

### *Step Two: Qualifications Review*

The agency reviews your application, comparing your background to the required qualifications, selective factors, knowledge, skills, abilities, and competencies to determine if you are well qualified for the job. They must include their definition of "well qualified" on vacancy announcements so you know the criteria they are using.

If the agency finds that you are not well qualified, they must conduct a second review of your application and tell you the results in writing.

### *Step Three: Selection*

The agency must first select its own surplus or displaced employees under its Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP). If there are no well-qualified CTAP eligibles, the agency may fill the job from within its current workforce or select an employee from its Reemployment Priority List (RPL).

After the agency clears its CTAP and RPL, they must consider ICTAP candidates before selecting most other outside candidates. If the agency finds you well qualified for the vacancy, in most cases they must select you before hiring another applicant from outside the agency.

At any time during the recruitment process, the agency may choose not to fill the vacancy, or to select one of its own employees.

If two or more well-qualified ICTAP applicants request selection priority, the agency may choose among them.

If no well-qualified ICTAP eligibles apply, the agency is free to fill the position through other means.

### **38. Do I get priority for every Federal job?**

No, there are some exceptions. Under ICTAP, you may request selection priority for vacancies that are:

- in the local commuting area;

- in any Executive Branch agency (Note: the Postal Service, courts, etc., are NOT Executive Branch agencies);
- at or below your current (or last) grade level, with no greater promotion potential than the position from which you were (or are being) separated; and
- being filled from outside the agency's workforce.

**39. *When can an agency fill a position without having to select an ICTAP eligible?***

Well-qualified ICTAP eligibles have priority over most other candidates from outside the agency. Agencies must give ICTAP eligibles priority before filling a competitive service position through competitive examining, noncompetitive appointment, transfer, or reinstatement.

There are situations where agencies can fill positions without selecting a well-qualified ICTAP eligible. These exceptions include: vacancies lasting less than 121 days; reemployment of former agency employees with reemployment rights; employees moved due to formal reorganization or transfer of function; selection of internal agency employees; appointments of veterans with 10 point or greater hiring preference; and conversions of specific excepted appointments.

**40. *What does "local commuting area" mean?***

Local commuting area is defined in the CTAP section of this Guide (section 3 (A), Question 10).

**41. *What does "well qualified" mean?***

"Well qualified" is defined in the CTAP section of this Guide (section 3 (A), Question 11).

**42. *Can I get priority for higher graded positions?***

No. Selection priority applies only to vacancies at your same (or lower) grade and with no greater promotion potential than your current or last position.

You can apply for jobs at higher grades or with greater promotion potential, but you won't receive selection priority when you compete for those jobs.

**43. *What about lower-graded jobs?***

If you are thinking about applying for lower-graded jobs, you should ask the agency about its pay-setting policies. They could offer the job at a lower salary than you had before. Don't apply for a job you won't accept, because turning down any permanent offer may end your right to selection priority, at least with that agency.

**44. *Is my priority limited to certain job series?***

No. You can apply for any position, but you only get selection priority if you are well qualified for the job.

**45. *I'm full-time, but I might apply for a part-time job. What happens if I accept?***

Accepting any permanent position--even part-time--ends your selection priority. As we said before, don't apply for a job you won't accept because turning down any permanent offer may end your selection priority with that agency.

**46. *If I take a temporary or term job, do I lose my selection priority?***

It may depend on when you accept the position. If you receive a separation notice, but accept a temporary or term job before the involuntary separation occurs, your selection priority ends because you are no longer being involuntarily separated. However, if you accept a temporary or term job after your involuntary separation, you still have selection priority for permanent jobs. If you receive a career, career-conditional, or excepted appointment without time limit in any agency, your selection priority ends. Before accepting any employment offer, permanent or time-limited, you should check with a human resources specialist about the effect it would have on your eligibility.

**47. *What if I accept a position outside of the Federal Government? Am I still eligible for selection priority?***

If you resign or retire before RIF or other involuntary separation, you lose your ICTAP eligibility. Otherwise, accepting employment outside the Federal Government after involuntary separation does not affect your ICTAP eligibility. You can continue to request ICTAP priority when applying for Federal jobs for one year after your separation, or until you accept a permanent Federal position, whichever comes first.

**48. *What if I move? Am I eligible for selection priority for Federal vacancies in a different geographic area?***

No, ICTAP selection priority only applies in the local commuting area from which you were (or are being) separated. You can apply for jobs in your new location, but you will not receive selection priority for them.

**49. *I applied for a job, but the agency says I am not well qualified for it. I disagree. Where can I go with my complaint?***

Each agency should have a problem resolution coordinator to handle these types of situations. Ask the human resources office for the person or office to hear your grievance or complaint.

**50. *I'm not eligible for ICTAP selection priority. Is there any other assistance available to me?***

See Section 6 of this Guide for information on services that may be available to surplus or displaced employees. All employees, including those in the competitive, excepted, and Senior Executive Service (SES), are eligible to receive some type of career transition assistance or services.

SES employees are eligible for placement assistance through a special SES placement program. If you are an SES employee facing RIF separation, check with your agency human resources office for more information about this program.

Agencies that do not follow OPM hiring procedures (this includes Postal Service, legislative and judicial branch agencies) are not required to provide career transition services to their employees, but many still do. Consult your human resources office for details.

## **(4). Reemployment after Disability or Injury**

### **(A). Reemployment after Recovery from Job-Related Injury**

Career or career-conditional competitive service employees who left the Government due to job-related illness or injury, were eligible for Workers' Compensation benefits (OWCP), and recovered within one year, are eligible for immediate restoration to their former agency. You should contact your former agency's human resources office to request restoration.

If it has been more than one year since you left with OWCP benefits, you may be eligible for your former agency's Reemployment Priority List (RPL). You must apply for the RPL within 30 days of the date your workers' compensation benefits end. If your agency is unable to place you in your former job or local commuting area, you may be entitled to broader consideration for other jobs and/or locations.

For general information on the RPL, read section 3(B) of this Guide.

If your former agency is unable to place you through their RPL (for example, the types of jobs you are qualified to do no longer exist in the agency), you may be eligible for ICTAP selection priority. This will allow you to request priority for jobs in other agencies in the local commuting area you were in when you separated. You must ask your former agency to certify that they cannot place you through the RPL. This certification is your proof of ICTAP eligibility and you must submit it with all job applications. Your ICTAP eligibility ends one year from the date of the agency's certification. You are not required to include your current or last performance appraisal. For more information on ICTAP, see section 3(C) of this Guide.

### **(B). Reemployment after Termination of Disability Annuity**

Former employees who retired with a disability may lose their annuity if they exceed earnings limitations or have medically recovered. If OPM's Retirement Office notifies you that your annuity has been or will be terminated, you should first check with your former agency to see if they can re-employ you. You can also request ICTAP selection priority for jobs in agencies other than your former agency if you retired as a career or career-conditional employee in the competitive service. Your ICTAP priority is limited to jobs in the local commuting area you were in when you separated. Your annuity termination notice from OPM is your proof of ICTAP eligibility and you must submit a copy of it with all job applications. Your ICTAP eligibility ends one year from the date of the notification. You are not required to include your current or last performance appraisal. For more information on ICTAP, including eligibility requirements, see section 3(C) of this Guide.

### **(C). Former Military Reserve/National Guard Technicians Receiving Special Disability Annuity**

Career or career-conditional competitive service employees receiving a special disability annuity from OPM as a former Military Reserve Technician or National Guard Technician are eligible for ICTAP selection priority. This allows you to apply for jobs in other agencies besides your former agency in the local commuting area you were in when you separated. The special disability annuity notice is your proof of ICTAP eligibility and you must submit a copy of it with all job applications. Unlike other ICTAP eligibles, your selection priority does not have a one-year time limit. You need not include the current or last performance appraisal required for other ICTAP candidates. For more information on ICTAP, see section 3(C) of this Guide.

## **(5). Veterans in Certain Positions**

Preference eligible veterans displaced from "restricted" Federal positions due to "A-76 contracting out" (outsourcing under Office of Management and Budget Circular A-76

procedures), may be eligible for selection priority under ICTAP. “Restricted” positions include Custodians, Elevator Operators, Guards, and Messengers. Specific regulations covering these veterans are in title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 330, Subpart D. The Code of Federal Regulations is available through the Government Printing Office web site at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cfr/index.html>.

This ICTAP eligibility lasts two years from the date of the separation. All other ICTAP provisions are the same. For more information on ICTAP, read section 3(C) of this Guide.

## **(6). Career Transition Services**

### ***51. What types of services are available to me to help me find another job?***

Ask your agency what services it offers. Depending on employees' needs and budget constraints, agency services will vary. Some examples of career transition services include: skills assessment, resume and cover letter preparation, networking and interviewing techniques, counseling, job search assistance, and retraining (if necessary).

### ***52. When am I eligible to use agency career transition services? When does this eligibility expire?***

Career transition services are available to surplus or displaced employees. You can use these services until separation. Some agencies also provide services after separation.

### ***53. How will these services help me find another job, including employment in the private sector?***

Career transition services can be valuable. Agency services can help you develop or improve your resume--the most widely used tool in both public and private sector employment. They can help you locate job opportunities through State and local government employment information services. Agencies can also help you practice interviewing techniques and conduct skills assessments to help identify occupations best suited to your talents.

### ***54. Besides my agency, are there other services available to me?***

You can visit OPM's link to state employment and retraining services at: [www.opm.gov/rif/general/onestop.htm](http://www.opm.gov/rif/general/onestop.htm). This page on OPM's web site provides a link to each State's One-Stop Center established under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. The Centers provide dislocated workers with re-training, career counseling, and other services to assist them in re-entering the workforce. This site will help you find information on



separation benefits and career transition by providing direct access to local, state-run services available to you.

## **(7). Job Information**

### ***55. How do I find out about other Federal vacancies?***

Job seekers can find out about Federal career opportunities in several ways:

#### **USAJOBS**

**USAJOBS** provide easily accessible worldwide Federal employment information, updated every business day from a database of more than 15,000 worldwide job opportunities.

**USAJOBS** is available to job seekers in a variety of formats (including computer or telephone), ensuring access for customers with differing physical and technological capabilities. It is convenient, user-friendly, and available 24 hours-a-day, seven days-a-week.

**USAJOBS** is available through:

Internet--You can find employment information at <http://www.USAJOBS.opm.gov>.

On the web site, you can retrieve current job vacancies worldwide, find employment information fact sheets, obtain applications and forms, and apply for many jobs online. The **USAJOBS** web site also has an Online Resume Builder feature you can use to create online resumes specifically designed for Federal jobs. You can print your **USAJOBS** resume and fax or mail it to employers, and save and edit it for future use. For many vacancies listed on the site, you can submit your **USAJOBS** resume directly to hiring agencies electronically.

Automated Telephone System--An interactive voice response telephone system at (478) 757-3000 or TDD (478) 744-2299 or at OPM offices throughout the country (local numbers listed in the blue pages).

By telephone, you can access worldwide current job vacancies, employment information fact sheets, and applications and forms, and in some instances, apply for jobs by phone.

### ***56. How do I find out about vacancies in State and local Governments or the private sector?***

Your agency's career transition center will have information on local job information networks which can help you locate employment in your particular area.

For more information on training or retraining opportunities, contact your local State employment services department and ask about training/retraining possibilities under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. The U.S. Department of Labor administers a dislocated worker program to assist laid off workers who are unlikely to return to their previous industry or occupation. The dislocated worker program authorizes a wide range of services to help individuals obtain meaningful re-employment. These services may include assessments of skills and interests, job development, counseling, job search assistance, career exploration, and occupational skills retraining, like computer training. States and local substate grantees decide on the particular mix and availability of services. The program is funded by U.S. Department of Labor, Employment & Training Administration. The web site address is [www.doleta.gov](http://www.doleta.gov).

## **(8). Glossary of Terms**

*An agency that does not follow OPM hiring procedures:* Any agency exempt from title 5, United States Code, the law covering certain government organizations and employees. This includes legislative and judicial branch agencies as well as the Federal Aviation Administration, U.S. Postal Service, General Accounting Office, Tennessee Valley Authority, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Central Intelligence Agency, State Department's Foreign Service, Federal Reserve System-related agencies, and others.

*Agency component:* The first major subdivision of the agency, separately organized and clearly distinguished from other components in work function and operation. An example of a component might be the National Park Service within the Department of the Interior. Each agency decides what is or is not a “component” within their particular agency organizational structure.

*Competitive Service:* Executive branch positions covered by civil service merit system laws. These jobs are normally filled through an open competitive civil service examination (but this does not necessarily mean taking a test). You should be able to tell from your Standard Form 50 (Notification of Personnel Action), block 34, if your position was/is in the competitive service.

*Displaced Employee:* See question 3 (section 3(A)).

*Excepted Service:* Civil service positions specifically excluded from the competitive service by law, executive order, or OPM action. These jobs are usually not covered by the same hiring/appointment, pay, and classification rules as competitive service jobs. Excepted service positions include attorneys, most security/intelligence positions, and most student appointments.

*Executive Branch:* Agencies under the direct authority of the President of the United States. These include Cabinet level agencies such as the Departments of Defense, Justice, Transportation, Energy, Education, Health and Human Services, Agriculture, Interior, etc., and smaller agencies such as the Office of Personnel Management, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Small Business Administration, etc. The Senate, House of Representatives and the Library of Congress are part of the Legislative Branch, and all U.S. courts are part of the Judicial Branch.

*Local Commuting Area:* See question 10 (section 3(A)).

*Promotion Potential:* Also sometimes called a "career ladder." This is the highest grade or level of work established for a position. A person selected for a GS-5 position with promotion potential to the GS-12 can be promoted to each intervening grade level from GS-5 to GS-12 as his/her knowledge and experience increases without competing with others. The position description and job announcement should indicate the position's promotion potential, if any.

*Surplus Employee:* See question 2 (section 3(A)).

*Ten point veterans' preference eligible:* Applicants can receive extra points (preference) in hiring if their armed forces service meets certain requirements. Only veterans with a service-connected disability (and the widows, mothers or spouses of certain deceased or disabled veterans) are generally eligible for 10 point veterans' preference.

*Vacancy:* See question 9 (section 3(A)).

*Well-Qualified:* See question 11 (section 3(A)).