

## Work Arrangements and Quality of Work/Life

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### INTRODUCTION

The Federal Government is a leader in providing family-oriented leave policies, flextime, and telecommuting arrangements to support a positive work culture and environment. The Government is committed to helping employees meet and balance the responsibilities of work and home life.

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### WORK/LIFE FLEXIBILITIES

The following work/life flexibilities are addressed in this document:

- Hours of work and scheduling flexibilities
- Telework/telecommuting
- Leave flexibilities
- Job sharing
- Employee Assistance Programs
- Child and elder care assistance
- Subsidized transportation
- Employee health
- Emergency preparedness.

Associated web links are included at the end of each description where appropriate.



Work arrangements and quality of work/life Web site:

<http://www.opm.gov/wrkfam/>

### Hours of Work and Scheduling Flexibilities

Agencies have the discretionary authority to determine the hours of work for their employees to ensure agencies meet organizational goals and to help employees balance personal needs. (5 U.S.C. chapter 61, subchapters I and II; 5 CFR part 610)

Agencies should establish:

- Full-time, part-time, intermittent, and seasonal **work schedules**.

## Work Arrangements and Quality of Work/Life (continued)

### Hours of Work and Scheduling Flexibilities (continued)

- **Hours of work** for employees, including traditional day shifts, night and weekend duty, rotating shifts, and “first-40” schedules.
- **Paid and unpaid breaks** in the workday. (See link on page 3.)
- **Overtime hours.** Employees generally earn overtime pay or compensatory time off for hours of work in excess of 8 in a day or 40 in a week under title 5, United States Code. (See links on page 3.)
- **Alternative work schedules**, which can replace traditional schedules (i.e., 8 hours per day/40 hours per week, with fixed starting and stopping times). *The Handbook on Alternative Work Schedules* provides a framework for Federal agencies to use in establishing alternative work schedules and provides information to assist agencies in administering such programs. Also, information on negotiating alternative work schedules can be found in the Office of Personnel Management’s (OPM’s) Labor-Management Relations Guidance Bulletin “Negotiating Flexible and Compressed Work Schedules.” (See links on page 3.)

Alternative work schedules include:

- **Flexible work schedules (FWS).** FWS allow an employee to complete the basic 80-hour biweekly work requirement in less than 10 workdays. FWS consist of workdays composed of core hours and flexible hours. Core hours are the designated period of the day when all employees must be at work. Flexible hours are the part of the workday when employees may (within limits or “bands”) choose their times of arrival and departure. The authority for FWS is contained in 5 U.S.C. 6122.

An agency’s FWS plan may permit employees to earn **credit hours**. An employee may elect to earn credit hours for working hours in excess of the employee’s basic work requirement (e.g., 40 hours a week). An employee may use earned credit hours to take time off and vary the length of a workweek or a workday.

## Work Arrangements and Quality of Work/Life (continued)

### Hours of Work and Scheduling Flexibilities (continued)

For more information on the administration of credit hours, refer to *The Handbook on Alternative Work Schedules*.

- **Compressed work schedules (CWS).** CWS are fixed work schedules that enable full-time employees to complete the basic 80-hour biweekly work requirement in less than 10 workdays. These schedules are authorized by 5 U.S.C. 6127.

Agencies may adopt either flexible or compressed work schedules for their employees. An employee may not be permitted to work on a “hybrid” schedule that combines aspects of both programs.

- **Adjusted work schedules** for religious observances, which are available for employees whose personal religious beliefs require they abstain from work at certain times of the workday or workweek. Modifications in work schedules must not interfere with the efficient accomplishment of an agency's mission. The hours worked in lieu of the normal work schedule do not create any entitlement to premium pay (including overtime pay). (5 U.S.C. 550a; 5 CFR part 550, subpart J)



Web sites related to hours of work and scheduling:

<http://www.opm.gov/oca/worksch/html/lunch.htm> (paid and unpaid breaks)

<http://www.opm.gov/oca/pay/html/factot.htm> (overtime)

<http://www.opm.gov/flsa/index.htm> (overtime – Fair Labor Standards Act)

<http://www.opm.gov/oca/pay/html/comp.htm> (overtime – compensatory time off)

<http://www.opm.gov/oca/aws> (alternative work schedules)

<http://www.opm.gov/cplm/labrmgmt.htm> (alternative work schedules – labor management)

<http://www.opm.gov/oca/worksch/html/reli.htm> (adjusted work schedules for religious observances)

## Work Arrangements and Quality of Work/Life (continued)

### Telework/ Telecommuting

With portable computers, high speed telecommunications links, and ever-present pocket communications devices, many employees today can work almost anywhere at least some of the time. Telecommuting, also referred to as telework, allows employees to work at home or at another approved location away from the regular office. Sometimes an employee may work at a telecenter. A telecenter is a multi-agency facility that provides a geographically convenient office setting as an alternative to the employee's main office. A telecenter can also serve as an administrative support center for employees working at home.



Telework/telecommuting Web sites:

<http://www.opm.gov/wrkfam/telecomm/telecomm.htm>

<http://www.telework.gov/>

### Leave Flexibilities

Federal leave programs include the following:

- **Annual and sick leave programs** provide most employees with a total of a) 13 days of sick leave each year (which accumulates without limit in succeeding years), and b) 13, 20, or 26 days of annual leave, depending on years of service. (A maximum of 240 hours may be carried over to the next leave year.) Under expanded sick leave policies, employees may use up to 12 weeks of paid sick leave each year to care for a family member with a serious health condition. In addition, an employee may use limited amounts of sick leave each year to care for a family member who is incapacitated by illness or injury, accompany family members to routine health care appointments, arrange for or attend the funeral of a family member, and for absences related to adopting a child. (5 U.S.C. chapter 63, subchapter I; 5 CFR part 630, subparts B, C, and D; 5 CFR 630.401 and 630.1202)

## Work Arrangements and Quality of Work/Life (continued)

### Leave Flexibilities (continued)

- **Annual leave enhancements** were made per Section 202(a) of the Federal Workforce Flexibility Act of 2004, which adds a new paragraph (e) to 5 U.S.C. 6303. This paragraph provides that a newly appointed employee's prior non-Federal work experience may be creditable in determining the amount of annual leave the employee will earn each biweekly pay period. Qualified non-Federal work experience must have been performed in a position with duties directly related to the position to which he or she is being appointed and must meet other requirements as prescribed by OPM. Additionally, the head of the agency to which the new employee is appointed must determine that the granting of such service credit is necessary in order to achieve an agency mission or performance goal. Section 202 provides that not later than 180 days after enactment of the Act (April 28, 2005), OPM must prescribe regulations to allow the credit of non-Federal service for the purpose of determining an employee's annual leave accrual rate.
- **SES and SL/ST annual leave accrual** was updated per Section 202(b) of the Federal Workforce Flexibility Act of 2004, which adds a new paragraph (f) to 5 U.S.C. 6303. This paragraph provides that members of the Senior Executive Service (SES), employees in senior level (SL) and scientific or professional (ST) positions, and employees covered by an equivalent pay system, as determined by OPM, will accrue annual leave at the rate of 1 day (8 hours) for each full biweekly pay period. This provision became effective on October 30, 2004. SES and SL/ST employees may accumulate up to 120 hours of annual leave.
- **Leave sharing programs** allow an employee who has a personal or family medical emergency and who has exhausted his or her own leave to receive donated annual leave from other Federal employees through the voluntary leave transfer or leave bank programs. (5 U.S.C. 6331-6340 and 6361-6373; 5 CFR part 630, subparts I and J)
- **The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993** entitles an employee to a total of 12 administrative workweeks of unpaid leave during any 12-month period for:

## Work Arrangements and Quality of Work/Life (continued)

### Leave Flexibilities (continued)

- The birth of a son or daughter and care of the newborn
- The placement of a son or daughter with the employee for adoption or foster care
- The care of an employee's spouse, son or daughter, or parent with a serious health condition
- An employee's own serious health condition that makes him or her unable to perform the duties of his or her position.

Employees continue to be covered by the Federal Government's health insurance program while using family and medical leave. (5 U.S.C. 6381-6387; 5 CFR part 630, subpart L)

- **Leave for bone-marrow and organ donation** allows a Federal employee to use up to 7 days of paid leave each year (in addition to sick or annual leave) to serve as a bone-marrow donor and up to 30 days of paid leave each year to serve as an organ donor. (5 U.S.C. 6327)
- **Time off for volunteer activities.** Federal agencies can support employees' commitment to community service by ensuring all employees are aware of the various flexibilities available to them to participate in volunteer activities. Agencies may permit employees to make maximum use of existing flexibilities such as alternative work schedules, annual leave, credit hours under flexible work schedules, compensatory time off, and excused absence (administrative leave), where appropriate, to perform community service. OPM advises the granting of excused absence for volunteer activities should be limited to those situations in which the employee's absence, in the department's or agency's determination, is not specifically prohibited by law and satisfies one or more of the following criteria:
  - The absence is directly related to the department or agency's mission
  - The absence is officially sponsored or sanctioned by the head of the department or agency

## Work Arrangements and Quality of Work/Life (continued)

### Leave Flexibilities (continued)

- The absence will clearly enhance the professional development or skills of the employee in his or her current position
- The absence is brief and is determined to be in the interest of the agency.



Federal leave programs Web sites:

<http://www.opm.gov/oca/leave>

[www.opm.gov/oca/leave/html/workshop.htm](http://www.opm.gov/oca/leave/html/workshop.htm)

<http://www.opm.gov/oca/compmemo/1998/cpm98-V.htm>

### Job Sharing

Job sharing is an available option that may help balance some employees' work and family responsibilities. Under such an arrangement, two employees each work less than full-time, but coordinate their schedules and assignments so together they "share" a work role and ensure the duties and responsibilities of what would otherwise be one full-time position are properly carried out.



Job sharing Web site:

<http://www.opm.gov/wrkfam/jobshare.asp>

### Employee Assistance Programs

These programs provide a variety of confidential services, including counseling and referrals, to employees who are experiencing personal problems such as work and family pressures, substance abuse, or financial problems that can adversely affect performance, reliability, and personal health.

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### Employee Assistance Programs (continued)

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) help employees and, where feasible, their families with problems that may affect their well-being and their ability to do their jobs. These worksite programs, which are generally available to all Federal employees, offer cost-free, confidential employee counseling and referral to community treatment and/or professional services, as appropriate. Although agencies are only required by law to establish and administer employee counseling programs that deal specifically with alcohol and drug problems, most agencies have "broad brush" EAPs that offer help for a variety of other problems. These EAPs offer counseling and referral services for problems such as mental, emotional, family, financial, dependent care, and legal difficulties.

In addition to providing individual counseling, EAPs also play a key role in educating employees on a variety of health and assistance topics such as HIV/AIDS, money management, parenting, caring for aging parents, stress management, and selecting quality child care.

The basic services of EAPs include:

- Confidential, free, short-term counseling to identify and assess the problem(s) and to assist employees in problem solving.
- Referral, where appropriate, to a community service or professional resource that provides treatment and/or rehabilitation. With the exception of illness or injury directly resulting from employment, medical care and treatment are personal to the employee and, therefore, payment may not be made from appropriated funds unless provided for in a contract of employment or by statute or regulation.
- Follow-up services to assist an employee in achieving an effective readjustment to his or her job during and after treatment, e.g., back-to-work conferences.
- Training sessions for managers and supervisors on handling work-related problems that may be related to substance abuse or other personal and/or health-related problems.

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### Employee Assistance Programs (continued)

- Orientation and educational programs to familiarize all employees with the services of EAPs and how to access them.
- Briefings to educate management and union officials on the role of EAPs.

In addition, the Employee Assistance Program can be extremely important in the prevention of, and intervention in, workplace violence incidents; the delivery of critical incident stress debriefings; and providing assistance to employees during agency restructuring. (5 U.S.C. 7361, 7362, and 7904; 5 CFR part 792)



Employee Assistance Programs Web site:

<http://www.opm.gov/ehs/eappage.asp>

### Child and Elder Care Assistance

Child and elder care are available to help employees with child and elder care needs. Many agencies offer referral assistance to community resources, provide lunch and learn seminars, and sponsor caregiver fairs. OPM developed a Handbook of Child and Elder Care Resources, which provides employees, managers, and employee assistance counselors with information about organizations and agencies across the country that can help employees locate quality child and elder care services. In addition, OPM recommends two resource and referral services that direct callers to local services providers and community resources:

- 1) Child Care Aware on 1-800-424-2246
- 2) The Elder Care Locator on 1-800-677-1116.

### *Child Care Subsidy Authority*

Congress enacted a provision that permits agencies to spend appropriated funds to assist lower income employees with the costs of child care. For those agencies offering child care subsidies, children must be enrolled in child care facilities licensed or regulated by State or local authorities. (Public Law 107-67, November 12, 2001, and 5 CFR part 792)

## Work Arrangements and Quality of Work/Life (continued)

### *Child Development Centers*

Many Federal agencies also provide on-site or near-site child development centers. There are approximately 1,000 worksite child care centers sponsored by the civilian and military agencies.



Child and elder care assistance Web sites:

<http://www.opm.gov/wrkfam/childcare.asp>

<http://www.opm.gov/wrkfam/html/cldguide.asp>

<http://www.opm.gov/wrkfam/html/cchb500.asp>

<http://www.opm.gov/wrkfam/html/howto1.asp>

### **Subsidized Transportation**

Federal agencies offer qualified employees a transportation fringe benefit program that includes the option to exclude from taxable income employee commuting costs incurred through the use of mass transportation and van pools. Agencies in the National Capitol Region offer employees "transit passes" in amounts approximately equal to employee commuting costs, not to exceed the maximum level allowed by law. (Executive Order 13150)

### **Employee Health**

Agencies may establish health services programs, including preventive health services, at the worksite. Many of these services may be made available to employees without charge. They are beneficial to individual employees as well as to agencies. Maintaining a healthy, productive workforce enables agencies to meet their vital missions on behalf of the American people.



Employee health Web sites:

<http://www.opm.gov/ehs/index.asp>

<http://www.opm.gov/ehs/Emphlth.asp>

<http://www.opm.gov/ehs/health3.asp>

## Work Arrangements and Quality of Work/Life (continued)

### Emergency Preparedness

Agencies must be prepared to protect employees in the workplace in the event of an emergency situation. Each Federal facility has unique requirements that must be met by its managers. OPM has produced a series of guides that address the general issue of emergency preparedness, including guides for employees and their families, inside or outside of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.



Emergency preparedness Web site:

<http://www.opm.gov/emergency/>