



United States
Department of
Agriculture

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Office of the
Assistant Secretary
for Administration

TO: Mission Area Personnel Officers
Staff Office Resource Managers

Office of
Human Resources
Management

FROM: Ruthie Jackson
Director

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SUBJECT: Children in the Workplace

We have received a number of requests from managers and supervisors for guidance on Children in the Workplace. Mission Areas, Agencies, and Staff Offices may desire to develop policy on this subject. However, we do not envision developing a Departmentwide policy as we believe this is an issue best addressed by local managers and supervisors on a case-by-case basis.

In addition to agency-sponsored activities like "Bring Your Daughter/Son to Work Day", there are local circumstances that could cause managers and supervisors to consider allowing employees to bring children into the workplace. These could include infrequent emergency situations (dependent care provider is unavailable, early release of children from school, etc.) when an employee is needed at work and no other alternatives are available. These other alternatives could include contacting a child care referral service to arrange for backup child care services, liberal granting of accrued annual and sick leave (when applicable), leave without pay, a short-term Telework arrangement, etc.

The safety and productivity of the workplace are two concerns that must be considered when addressing the issue of allowing children in the workplace. Managers and supervisors must consider both the safety of children visiting the workplace, as well as their impact on the safety of employees. Managers must also consider matters relating to worker productivity and potential liability to the government. Children injured in the workplace are not eligible for benefits under the workers' compensation program. These issues and other local concerns (e.g., disasters, evacuation drills, travel in government vehicles, etc.) must be considered when deciding whether to allow children to enter the workplace.

Mission Area Personnel Officers
Staff Office Resource Managers
Page 2

Managers and supervisors should also consider the possible labor-management relations implications of permitting employees to bring their children to work. By allowing this to occur, management could be establishing a past practice, thereby binding the work unit to continue the practice unless changed through collective bargaining. In addition, it is imperative that all employees in the workplace be treated fairly and equitably when situations arise calling for a management/supervisory determination. If you have any questions please contact Marge Adams at (202) 720-3286 or marjoriea.adams@usda.gov.

cc: Work/Life Program Managers