



Work Life Programs - Finding Balance

What's in it for me?

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service offers employees a myriad of innovative work/life programs.

As your Employer of Choice, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) offers employees a myriad of innovative work/life programs that can not only help to improve your life, but afford you the flexibility to select from a menu of flexible alternative work schedules that keep the focus on families while still accomplishing the agency's mission-critical work.

Service employees ranked the agency favorably in questions regarding work/life issues in the 2008 Federal Human Capital Survey. Specifically, 82% of Service employees responded positively to "My supervisor supports my need to balance work and other life issues." Moreover, nearly 60% of the employees who responded to the 2008 survey reported positive feedback regarding the Service's alternative work schedules.

The following describes some of the Service's work/life initiatives. Please note that participation in any of these programs requires supervisory approval. As an Employer of Choice, Service leadership believes that our unique work/life programs and initiatives improve everyone's work environment. We encourage you to sign up and join your many colleagues who are already taking advantage of these programs (if you haven't done so already)!

Fitness Center Reimbursement Program

The Service reimburses eligible employees up to 50 percent of their membership fee for a commercial, non-federally sponsored, fitness center, up to \$300 per year. Supervisors must approve an employee's application to join the program before the employee is officially enrolled. To be eligible, the fitness center must offer a full complement of exercise equipment and programs for cardiovascular and body strengthening, and the center cannot restrict membership and access to facilities based on sex, race, national

origin, color, religion, age, disability, or sexual orientation. The Service has hundreds of employees who participate in this program annually.

Financial Planning Reimbursement Program

The Service reimburses 50 percent of a permanent employee's financial planning services expenses up to \$200 every 3 years. Employees are required to use a certified financial planner of their choice to receive reimbursement. The Service does not endorse or recommend financial planning service providers; therefore, the agency is not responsible for any decisions employees make based on their advice. Employees may receive this benefit once every 3 years or if retiring or voluntarily separating from the Service, within 12 months of retirement or separation. Human Resources staff routinely refers new employees with recent life events to this program.

Professional Liability Insurance Reimbursement Program

The Service reimburses 50% of the annual cost of professional liability insurance, up to \$150 per year, for law enforcement officers, supervisors, and management officials.

Broadband Reimbursement Program

The Service provides employees who telework and require broadband services to perform their work duties at home with partial reimbursement for costs associated with basic high-speed cable modem, DSL, and high-speed satellite connection from a commercial vendor. Employees must have a signed telework agreement. The program was initiated in 2008.

Telework/ Telecommuting

Nationally, the Service has hundreds of employees who work from home or from telecommuting centers. Employees who telework or telecommute are required

to have a signed telework agreement in place with their immediate supervisors. Currently, the Service has approximately 125 employees who telework 3 or more days a week and over 500 who routinely telework on a less frequent basis. Service teleworkers represent all grades levels, include managers, and cover many professions.

Job Share

Job share affords employees who want to work part-time a unique opportunity to split the responsibilities of a designated, full-time position. At the supervisor's discretion, a position's duties and responsibilities may be evenly split between two employees, even if they are not the same grade! The program has been successful for approximately four years and employees who are affected by the work of the position have provided positive feedback.

Parental Leave Options

The Service actively educates and encourages its employees to exercise their full rights and options under this program. For complete information about parental leave options, please refer to 226, FW2, the Service's Absence and Leave Policy.

Trailing Partner Policy / Domestic Partner Assistance Program

The Service policy and accompanying Director's Order provides assistance to Service employees faced with a geographic move in an effort to encourage the continued career development and retention of employees.

The policy provides placement assistance to employees who are faced with possible job loss or have been involuntarily separated due to reduction-in-force (RIF), reorganizations, or similar actions, with priority referral for vacancies in accordance with the Department of the Interior (Department) and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). The program also provides spousal placement assistance. The objective of the assistance program is to provide placement assistance and information to Service employees and their domestic partners who are relocating to a different geographic area. The program is open to any domestic partner of a permanent Service employee who is relocating. Additionally, if the domestic partner of a permanent Service employee is transferred by his/her employer, the Service employee may also receive assistance. In this situation, the employer need not be the Service, Department, or Federal Government. The Service offers employees and their partners a variety of resources. The following are just a few examples: (1) obtain information from local governments and Chambers of Commerce concerning local employers, types of skills required, and specific job opportunities that are available; (2) provide the domestic partner with information regarding Federal employment application procedures

and requirements. (For example, an accompanying domestic partner could be counseled as to whether or not a certain occupation requires testing, and, if so, be provided the appropriate application procedures, the testing location, and related information); and, (3) assemble a listing of Federal vacancies within the Department, the Service, and the appropriate commuting area.

Employee Assistance Program

Each year, one out of five employees faces a significant problem that disrupts life at home and reduces productivity at work. Service employees can receive free help from the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The EAP provides a confidential and comprehensive program that can assist employees with resolving their personal concerns, including:

- Emotional Issues
- Relationship Issues
- Family Issues
- Alcohol Issues
- Job Concerns
- Financial Issues and Financial Planning
- Legal Issues

Employees can contact the EAP by calling 1-800-222-0364.

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