

**FEMA MANUAL 252-11-1**  
**CADRE OF ON-CALL RESPONSE/RECOVERY EMPLOYEE (CORE)**  
**PROGRAM**  
**APPROVAL DATE: 08/25/2015**



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## **Foreword**

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) intends to achieve business and management excellence by providing guidance and policy direction for the administration of FEMA's Cadre of On-call Response/Recovery Employees (COREs). FEMA's most valuable resource is its workforce; permanent and temporary employees who are focused on and committed to leading America to prepare for, prevent, respond to, and recover from all-hazards incidents. FEMA relies upon its temporary personnel, in particular, to carry out its role in incident management and support operations and to augment FEMA's permanent workforce.

The objective of the CORE Program is to attract and maintain a pool of highly skilled and motivated temporary personnel who are well trained and ready to respond and deliver quality and timely services to survivors and communities impacted by all-hazards incidents. The publication of this Manual will ensure consistent policy application and enable FEMA to better manage COREs in a cost effective and efficient manner, while offering the necessary incentives to recruit a professional incident workforce capable of assisting disaster survivors in their time of greatest need.

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## **CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **1-1. Purpose**

This Manual establishes the policies and procedures for FEMA's Cadre of On-call Response/Recovery Employees (CORE) Program. FEMA will achieve consistency and facilitate the equitable and effective management of all COREs through the implementation of the policies and procedures set forth in this Manual.

### **1-2. Applicability and Scope**

- A. The provisions of this Manual apply to all FEMA COREs, unless otherwise indicated.
- B. FD 010-7, Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT) Program Directive (IMAT Directive), is applicable to COREs who receive CORE-I appointments, also known as CORE-Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT) Members or Pilot IMATs. Inconsistencies between this Manual and the IMAT Directive are resolved in favor of the IMAT Directive.
- C. The Attorney Hiring and Promotion Plan (AHPP), dated April 21, 2014, provides pay setting, pay adjustments, and promotion policy for CORE Attorneys. Inconsistencies between this Manual and the AHPP are resolved in favor of the AHPP.

### **1-3. Authorities**

Section 306 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, Pub. L. No. 93-288, as amended (Stafford Act), codified at 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121 et seq., provides FEMA with authority "to appoint and fix the compensation of such temporary personnel as may be necessary, without regard to the provisions of title 5, United States Code, governing appointments in the competitive service."

### **1-4. References**

The following list is not an exhaustive list of statutes, regulations, DHS and FEMA directives and manuals, policies, and guidance memorandums applicable to COREs.

- A. FEMA Policy 401-123-1, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Policy Statement, October 1, 2014.
- B. Memorandum from the DHS Chief Human Capital Officer, Annual Leave Enhancements, February 17, 2006.
- C. DHS Instruction 121-01-007, DHS Personnel Suitability and Security Program, June 2009.
- D. DHS Management Directive 254-02, Employee Assistance Program, May 31, 2007.

- E. DHS Management Directive 0810.1, The Office of Inspector General, June 10, 2004.
- F. DHS Management Directive 3120.2, Employment of Non-Citizens, March 22, 2004.
- G. Memorandum from the Deputy Administrator, Every Employee an Emergency Manager—Action Items, January 20, 2012.
- H. FEMA Directive (FD) 010-7, Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT) Program Directive, January 12, 2015.
- I. FEMA Directive 010-9, FEMA Incident Workforce Cadre Management, June 9, 2015.
- J. FEMA Directive 122-1, International Travel, October 24, 2011.
- K. FEMA Directive 122-2, Local Travel Reimbursement, March 12, 2013.
- L. FEMA Directive 122-4, Payment of Official Travel Expenses from a Non-Federal Source, June 27, 2013.
- M. FEMA Directive 122-7, Premium Class Travel, September 19, 2013.
- N. FEMA Directive 122-8, Invitational Travel, February 7, 2014.
- O. FEMA Directive 122-9, Travel Charge Card, April 18, 2014.
- P. FEMA Directive 119-6, Employee Physical Fitness Program, February 2, 2012.
- Q. FEMA Directive 141-1, Records Management Program Directive, March 6, 2014.
- R. FEMA Manual (FM) 106-1-1, Scheduling of Work, March 5, 2014.
- S. FEMA Manual 123-9-1, Telework, January 9, 2013.
- T. FEMA Manual 123-20-1, Drug-Free Workplace Program, July 28, 2014.
- U. FEMA Manual 253-2-1, Premium Pay, February 11, 2014.
- V. FEMA Manual 255-1-1, FEMA Employee Performance Management Program (EPMP), February 21, 2013.
- W. FEMA Manual 255-4-1, Employee Awards and Recognition, September 26, 2013.
- X. FEMA Manual 109-2-1, Privacy Program, June 4, 2013.
- Y. FEMA Manual 3300.3, FEMA Absence and Leave Policy, July 31, 2001.
- Z. FEMA Manual 6200.1, Travel Regulations, November 25, 1988.
- AA. Memorandum from the FEMA Chief Counsel, Appointment and Compensation of Stafford Act Employees Under Section 306(b)(1) of the Stafford Act, June 25, 2012.
- BB. Attorney Hiring and Promotion Plan, April 21, 2014.

CC.FEMA Interview and Selection Guidance, June 4, 2014.

DD.FEMA Budget Guidance on use of DRF/DRS resources, March 2015.

## **1-5. Policy**

- A. The authority provided by the Stafford Act allows FEMA to manage its CORE Program without being required to apply all of the provisions of Title 5, United States Code, and its implementing regulations. FEMA chooses, as a matter of policy, to administratively implement some Title 5 provisions and, in other circumstances, to use its Stafford Act authority to create and administer its own policies to more effectively manage Stafford Act employees consistent with the intent and program needs for these positions. In all circumstances, FEMA intends to develop and implement policies that are fair and equitable to its CORE workforce and that are consistently understood and implemented by FEMA managers and supervisors.
- B. COREs are hired to directly support the response and recovery efforts related to disasters and are funded out of the Disaster Relief Fund (DRF). As temporary employees, COREs cannot replace the work performed and funded through annual appropriations by permanent full-time staff. COREs can perform Stafford Act duties that are not otherwise funded in FEMA's budget and can be charged to an open disaster. The use of COREs must be reviewed and validated on a recurring basis to ensure a continued need for the positions and consistent funding decisions across FEMA.
- C. FEMA shall:
  1. Staff positions with the best qualified persons available;
  2. Develop and use COREs to the maximum extent possible consistent with the completion of FEMA's mission and the Stafford Act;
  3. Establish CORE positions with a minimum of two-year appointments (unless otherwise justified for less than two years based on workload analyses) based on requests from Offices and Directorates authorized to fill CORE positions. Offices and Directorates will request the renewal of a CORE's appointment prior to the CORE's expiration date, subject to funding (see section 3-9);
  4. Require COREs to sign a Conditions of Employment letter at the time of hiring and reappointment;
  5. Ensure that all personnel actions are taken without regard to political, religious, or labor organization affiliation or non-affiliation, marital or family status, race, color, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, genetic information, age, or prior Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) activity; without regard to criteria unrelated to the position, such as personal friendship or patronage, and that selections are based solely on job-related criteria; and do not fall within prohibited personnel practices identified at 5 U.S.C. § 2302(b);

6. Establish a pay system that will improve the ability of FEMA to attract and retain quality candidates and employees;
  7. Ensure that equal pay is provided for work of equal value, with appropriate consideration of both national and local pay rates paid by employers in the private sector, and that appropriate incentives and recognition should be provided for excellence in performance; and
  8. Provide effective education and training, consistent with Stafford Act duties, which will result in enhanced organizational and individual performance.
- D. COREs must:
1. Maintain high standards of integrity, conduct, and concern for the public interest; and
  2. Be prepared at all times to deploy or work from alternate work locations other than their normal official duty station.
- E. COREs may be terminated at any time, with cause (poor performance or misconduct), or without cause (such as when workload or funding diminishes or ends).
- F. A CORE may be subject to removal if the CORE declines a deployment request without reasonable cause.

## **1-6. Definitions**

- A. Algorithm. A formula for allocating a CORE's salary and benefits across multiple disaster declarations. The allocation should correlate to the estimated amount of time the CORE performs work attributable to each declaration.
- B. Annual Direct Charge CORE Certification. The annual process for verification of Disaster Relief Fund (DRF) related duties and the continued need for all CORE positions.
- C. Appointment. A personnel action that results in an individual becoming a FEMA employee. Individuals, who accept CORE positions, are given excepted service appointments with FEMA under the Stafford Act. Generally, appointments may not be effective prior to the date of approval by the appointing official and are only effective from the date of acceptance of the offer of employment and entrance on duty, unless a later date is stated on the SF-52, or other approving document.
- D. Ancillary Support. Personnel directly supporting disaster operations from their daily duty station.
- E. Backfill. Hiring an employee to fill a previously approved vacant funded position.
- F. Basic pay. The rate of pay fixed by administrative action for the position held before any deductions, but exclusive of additional pay of any other kind, including premium pay.

- G. Career path. A progression of positions in one or more occupational series leading to an increase in responsibility and proficiency.
- H. Confidential Financial Disclosure (OGE Form 450) Filer. A CORE who, because of the duties of his or her assigned position, must file confidential financial disclosure reports (OGE Form 450s) as directed by the Office of Government Ethics and FEMA's Office of the Chief Counsel pursuant to 5 C.F.R. § 2634 Subpart I. COREs in these positions are assigned FEMA duties that involve the exercise of significant discretion in certain sensitive areas. OGE Form 450 disclosures serve to ensure confidence in the integrity of FEMA operations by identifying and preventing potential conflicts of interest. If a CORE's position description indicates duties requiring a confidential financial disclosure, timely filing of OGE Form 450 is a condition of employment.
- I. Continuing Service Agreement (CSA). A written agreement between FEMA and a CORE under which the CORE agrees to a specified period of employment with FEMA in return for a monetary incentive or participation in a training or developmental program.
- J. Conversion Action. The process by which a non-CORE FEMA employee is appointed to a CORE position.
- K. CORE-I (IMAT CORE). A CORE assigned full-time to an IMAT and to an IMAT position description. CORE-Is receive four-year appointments and are the first FEMA personnel deployed to an incident, serving in leadership roles as part of an IMAT. When not deployed, IMAT CORE base salaries are paid from the Disaster Readiness and Support (DRS) account; however, when deployed their salaries are paid by the disaster (under the declaration). IMAT COREs are non-direct charge COREs and new, backfill, or reassignment actions are not subject to direct charge CORE requirements.
- L. Declaration. Declarations for DRF-funded events, including major disasters, emergencies, fire management declarations, and disasters under the Compact of Free Association.
- M. Demotion. A change to a lower grade or pay band and a decrease in pay as a result of an adverse action or poor performance.
- N. Direct Charge CORE. Employees whose primary duty is to carry out Stafford Act functions in support of open, active declarations or pre-event surge activities to an event for which a declaration is reasonably likely and imminent. The salary of a Direct Charge CORE is charged to Major Disasters, Emergencies, Fire Management Assistance Grants or the Disaster Surge account. Direct Charge COREs working on specific events should charge their time directly to those events. Direct Charge COREs working on multiple events or working as a part of a distributed group defined below should charge their time to an algorithm that accurately reflects the amount of work performed for each of those events. Specifically, the salary of a Direct Charge CORE may be structured in one of the following ways:

1. Specific Declaration: Salary is based on work performed on a single, specific declaration.
  2. Multiple Declarations: Salary is based on work that provides services to multiple declarations and is charged based on an established algorithm.
  3. Distributed Group Activities: Activities comprised of non-segregable declaration and non-declaration related functions that will be performed collectively by COREs and non-COREs. The number of COREs carrying out a particular Distributed Group Activity is based on the percentage of time required for the disaster related functions of that Distributed Group Activity. Charges are allocated across multiple disasters based on an established algorithm for the Distributed Group Activity.<sup>1</sup>
- Duties related to preparedness, readiness, and planning for future events are not allowable Direct Charge CORE duties. Charging a CORE's salary to declarations when the duties performed by the CORE do not support those declarations could result in a violation of the Anti-Deficiency Act (ADA) and result in adverse actions against the responsible officials.
- O. **Distributed Group Activity Baseline**. The ratio of COREs and non-COREs carrying out a particular Distributed Group Activity as determined by the percentage declaration and non-declaration functions performed for that Activity based on verifiable workload data and evaluation of current or past budget justification materials.
- P. **FEMA Qualification System (FQS)**. A performance-based system for certifying FEMA employees as "Qualified" or "Trainee" in IM and IS positions; certification is based on successful completion of required experience, required training, and demonstrated performance (see FEMA Directive 010-9, Incident Workforce Cadre Management, dated June 9, 2014).
- Q. **Fitness Determination**. "Fitness" means "the level of character and conduct determined for an individual to perform work for or on behalf of a Federal agency as an employee in the excepted service (other than a position subject to suitability) or as a contractor employee." Executive Order 13,488, § 2(d); implemented in DHS Instruction 121-01-007, Chapter 3.
- R. **IM CORE**. A CORE assigned to a two-year appointment and whose primary job duty is to perform an FQS incident management position. When not deployed, IM CORE base salaries are paid from the Disaster Readiness and Support (DRS) account; however, when deployed their salaries are paid by the disaster (under the declaration). IM COREs are non-direct charge COREs

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<sup>1</sup> For example, OCFO's FEMA Finance Center has a Distributed Group Activity that processes and pays invoices related to both disaster and non-disaster activities. Determining the number of CORE positions that should populate this Distributed Group Activity requires an analysis of the ratio of disaster functions versus non-disaster functions. If the analysis concludes that 70% of the functions are disaster related and the entire Distributed Group Activity requires 10 positions, then the analysis would justify 7 CORE positions out of the 10 needed to perform those functions.

- and new, backfill, or reassignment actions are not subject to direct charge CORE requirements
- S. Incident Management (IM). The incident-level operation of the Federal role in emergency response, recovery, logistics, and mitigation. Responsibilities include the direct control and employment of resources, management of incident offices, operations, and delivery of Federal assistance through all phases of response and recovery.
  - T. Incident Support (IS). The coordination of all Federal resources that support emergency response, recovery, logistics, and mitigation. Responsibilities include the deployment of national-level assets, support of national objectives and programs affected during the disaster, and support of incident operations with resources, expertise, information, and guidance.
  - U. Locality Payment. A locality-based comparability payment (see 5 U.S.C. § 5304 and 5 C.F.R. Part 531, subpart F).
  - V. Mission Essential. Personnel who perform a limited set of FEMA functions that must be continued throughout, or resumed rapidly after, a disruption of normal activities.
  - W. Non-Direct Charge CORE. COREs whose salaries are partially or wholly funded by the DRS account within the DRF. These employees' functions support operational readiness, response, and recovery functions of the Stafford Act that are not directly attributable to the response and recovery efforts of any specific declaration or pre-event surge activities to an event for which a declaration is reasonably likely and imminent. Examples of Non-Direct Charge COREs include IM and IMAT COREs when not deployed or working for an open disaster.
  - X. Offices and Directorates. Office of the Administrator, Office of Chief Counsel, Office of the Chief Financial Officer, Office of External Affairs, Office of Policy and Program Analysis, Office of Response and Recovery, Response Directorate, Recovery Directorate, Logistics Management Directorate, Protection and National Preparedness, National Preparedness Directorate, National Continuity Programs Directorate, Grant Programs Directorate, Mission Support, Office of the Chief Administrative Officer, Office of the Chief Component Human Capital Officer, Office of the Chief Information Officer, Office of the Chief Procurement Officer, Office of the Chief Security Officer, Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration, FIA Mitigation, FIA Insurance, United States Fire Administration, and Offices of Regional Administrators.
  - Y. Pay Adjustment. Any increase or decrease in a CORE's basic pay when there is no change in the duties or responsibilities of the CORE's position within the same career path and pay plan (see sections 5-3 and 6-3).
  - Z. Pay Band. A range of pay for a group or categories of employees that FEMA established according to FEMA's Stafford Act authority.

- AA. Permanent Full-Time (PFT).** A permanent FEMA employee who meets the definition of “employee” under 5 U.S.C. § 2105.
- BB. Post-Action Review.** An internal control established to ensure compliance with the Annual Direct Charge CORE Certification review and documentation requirements established for Direct Charge CORE positions.
- CC. Program Area.** A discrete subdivision within an Office, Division, Branch, or Unit that performs work that is substantially different from the work performed by other subdivisions.
- DD. Promotion.** A personnel action that moves a CORE (1) to a higher grade; (2) from one pay band to a higher pay band in the same career path; or (3) to a position in another career path in combination with an increase in the CORE’s basic pay.
- EE. Qualifying Life Event (QLE).** OPM designated events deemed acceptable to the IRS that may allow premium conversion participants to change their participation election for premium conversion outside of an open season. For more information, see OPM’s Healthcare Reference Materials for a listing of the authorized Qualifying Life Events.
- FF. Reassignment.** A personnel action that moves a CORE from one position to another without promotion or change to a lower pay band, grade, or step, at management discretion and based on necessary approvals. Reassignment includes: (1) movement to a position in a new occupational series, or to another position in the same series; (2) assignment to a position that has been reclassified due to the introduction of a new or revised classification or job grading standard; (3) assignment to a position that has been reclassified as a result of a position review; and (4) movement to a different position at the same band but with a change in salary that is the result of a different locality payment.
- GG. Relative.** A father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, first cousin, nephew, niece, husband, wife, unmarried domestic partner, father-in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, stepfather, stepmother, stepson, stepdaughter, stepbrother, stepsister, half-brother, or half-sister. The definition of “relative” for sick leave, Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), and other leave purposes may be different; for more information see FEMA Manual 3300.3, Absence and Leave.
- HH. Rightsizing.** The process by which FEMA reduces CORE staff levels in response to changed conditions such as a diminished workload, or budgetary or statutory changes.
- II. Selecting Official.** A FEMA employee who is authorized to make a hiring decision.
- JJ. Specialized Experience Statement.** A written description of any specialized experience that a candidate must possess in order to be considered minimally qualified for the vacancy. Any candidate who does not meet the specialized

experience requirements will not be referred to Office or Directorate by OCCHCO.

**KK. Supervisor.** An employee who accomplishes work through the direction of other people. A supervisor must spend at least 25 percent of their time exercising independent judgment over other employees on matters relating to, but not limited to, work assignments, performance management, administration, training, and property accountability.

**LL. Supervisor of Record.** The supervisor of record has the delegated authority to assign work, discipline, and remove a CORE from federal employment in accordance with the procedures found in Chapter 11 (discipline) and Chapter 8 (performance management).

**MM. Temporary Duty Supervisor.** The individual (PFT, CORE, or Reservist) on-site or in virtual communication with deployed PFTs, COREs, or Reservists and authorized to exercise independent judgment to assign work. The temporary duty supervisor is not authorized to take personnel actions against a CORE under his or her functional authority, unless the temporary supervisor is also the supervisor of record.

## **1-7. Responsibilities**

- A. FEMA Administrator or Deputy Administrator is responsible for:
  1. Approving details of COREs to perform non-Stafford Act activities; and
  2. Approving written recommendations for pay of recruitment, relocation, and retention incentives that are greater than 25% of a CORE's base pay and, if approved, forwarding concurrence to the head of the requesting Office or Directorate and to OCCHCO.
- B. Associate Administrators, Headquarters' Office Chiefs Reporting Directly to the Administrator, and Regional Administrators are responsible for:
  1. Reviewing and approving the creation or renewal of Direct Charge CORE positions, confirming funding, and forwarding to OCCHCO for requisite personnel processing actions;
  2. Conducting an annual certification of Direct Charge CORE positions approved by authorized officials based on required supporting documentation and any follow-up, including referrals to the Office of Chief Counsel (OCC) or appropriate offices for further action (see section 2-3);
  3. Ensuring that all personnel involved in the hiring of COREs are familiar with the appropriate legal use of CORE positions, the funding factors involved in the hiring process, and comply with all legal and budgetary requirements;
  4. Ensuring all baselines are established and validated on a recurring basis for Distributed Group Activity Direct Charge COREs and all new baselines or baseline changes are approved by OCFO;

5. Certifying that all Direct Charge COREs are carrying out only DRF-related duties performed on open, active disasters;
  6. Providing timely, supporting documentation to OCFO and any oversight organization to complete post-action reviews (see section 2-3);
  7. Reviewing requests for recruitment, relocation, or retention incentives that require approval by the Administrator and, if in concurrence, sending the request to OCCHCO, OCFO, and the Administrator for approval; and
  8. Reviewing requests for recruitment, relocation, or retention incentive repayment waivers and, if in concurrence, transmitting to OCCHCO for review.
- C. Assistant Administrators, Deputy Associate Administrators, and Office Directors Not Reporting Directly to the Administrator are responsible for:
1. Requesting to advance a CORE's initial rate of pay to step five or greater of the grade;
  2. Reviewing requests for recruitment, relocation, or retention incentive repayment waivers that do not require approval by the Administrator and, if in concurrence, transmitting to OCCHCO and OCFO for review and approval; and
  3. Ensuring all CORE hiring actions submitted for higher level approval meet the standards promulgated herein.
- D. Headquarters Office or Directorate Chiefs or Regional Administrators are responsible for:
1. Approving the reassignment of a CORE based on workload needs and subject to funding;
  2. Conducting workload analyses to justify the need for new or continued use of CORE positions;
  3. Submitting staffing plans to OCCHCO with the requested number of CORE positions by title, series, grade, and duty station for OCCHCO's approval which should also support Disaster Spend Plans required by OCFO;
  4. Coordinating with OCCHCO to announce and hire CORE positions;
  5. Renewing CORE appointments based on workload needs and subject to funding;
  6. Approving recruitment, relocation, or retention incentives that do not need Administrator approval; and
  7. Approving Functional Area SMEs in the event of a rightsizing.
- E. Office of Chief Counsel (OCC) is responsible for:
1. Reviewing and advising on legal sufficiency of FEMA matters to include: spending legislation, fiscal policy and potential ADA violations;

2. Providing guidance, as necessary, regarding the appropriate use of the Disaster Relief Fund to charge CORE salaries;
3. Supporting OCFO and OCCHO in conducting the Annual Post-Action Review of direct charge COREs;
4. Reviewing and approving the use of COREs for limited non-Stafford Act activities in furtherance of FEMA's mission;
5. Providing all COREs entering Federal service with an Initial Ethics Orientation as required by 5 C.F.R. § 2638.703;
6. Identifying all COREs that need to be designated as Confidential Financial Disclosure filers who must complete annual ethics training as required by 5 C.F.R. § 2638.705, and auditing the content of said training for compliance with 5 C.F.R. § 2638.704;
7. Notifying all COREs of the requirement to file a new entrant report within 30 days of assuming a position designated as requiring a Confidential Financial Disclosure Report per 5 C.F.R. § 2634.903(b);
8. Notifying all COREs designated as Confidential Financial Disclosure filers to file annual reports as required by 5 C.F.R. § 2634.903(a);
9. Reviewing Confidential Financial Disclosure reports, and providing advisory opinions to COREs, as appropriate, with regard to real or apparent conflicts of interest identified in the CORE's financial disclosure report;
10. Designating ethics attorneys to provide ethics advice to COREs;
11. Providing legal review of performance and disciplinary actions; and
12. Providing legal advice on policy development and implementation.

F. Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) is responsible for:

1. Managing use and oversight of the DRF;
2. Ensuring the establishment of internal controls designed to prevent and detect non-compliance with applicable laws, standards, and accounting principles;
3. Reviewing and approving initial baseline and subsequent baseline adjustments for "distributed group" CORE positions;
4. Working with OCC and OCCHCO on the Annual Post-Action Review of direct charge COREs;
5. Conducting periodic audits and annual certifications of Direct Charge CORE positions and post-action reviews to validate and verify that all Direct Charge CORE duties are DRF-related and the appropriate approvals and documentation are evident, and taking action as appropriate on potential ADA violations;

6. Referring instances that cannot be validated or verified as DRF-related duties to OCC or appropriate offices for further action;
  7. Determining whether funding exists for each recruitment, relocation, or retention incentive request; and
  8. Establishing an annual awards cap for COREs subject to funding.
- G. Associate Administrator for Mission Support is responsible for reviewing all workload analysis disputes between the head of an Office or Directorate and OCCHCO and issuing a final decision.
- H. Associate Administrator for Response and Recovery is responsible for deciding appeals from an FCO decision on whether to demobilize a CORE due to misconduct.
- I. Office of the Chief Administrative Officer (OCAO) is responsible for:
1. Maintaining responsibility for the management and oversight of all Government-owned personal property within FEMA and for enforcing all applicable statutes, rules, regulations, and official guidance relating to Government-owned personal property; and
  2. Administering the transit subsidy program.
- J. Office of the Chief Component Human Capital Officer (OCCHCO) is responsible for:
1. Approving and administering all human capital programs and policies to include appointment and compensation programs;
  2. Providing timely information to COREs regarding available benefit options, election periods, and technical direction on how to apply for available benefit options;
  3. Making final decisions on all pay setting and requests for adjustments for CORE pay;
  4. In consultation with the requesting Office or Directorate, approving workload analyses and staffing plans submitted by an Office or Directorate to justify CORE positions;
  5. Providing Offices and Directorates with a list of COREs and their not-to-exceed expiration dates who are assigned to the Office or Directorate on a biweekly basis;
  6. In consultation with the requesting Office or Directorate, revalidating the request based on position management for a CORE position prior to the expiration of the position when an Office or Directorate requests a renewal of a CORE position;
  7. Providing support for post-action reviews and the annual certifications, as well as supporting OCFO in execution of its responsibilities;

8. Approving and administering the recruitment, appointment, placement, and separation of COREs, including setting the length of the appointment term;
9. Providing advice, guidance, training, and direct support to temporary duty supervisors and supervisors of record regarding how to properly document and address performance and misconduct;
10. Coordinating affirmative employment programs with the Office of Equal Rights;
11. Establishing and maintaining personnel records;
12. Assuming responsibility for all EAP operations within FEMA;
13. Administering the performance management and awards and recognition programs;
14. Through the Human Resources cadre, ensuring that any demobilized CORE who has been deployed for at least 20 days has been issued a performance evaluation prior to departing the incident work site;
15. Coordinating with OCC Ethics and supervisors of record to properly designate positions as Confidential Financial Disclosure filers and providing OCC Ethics with monthly reports identifying when a CORE has been appointed to or is no longer serving in a position designated as a Confidential Financial Disclosure filer;
16. Providing technical guidance to Offices and Directorates in the planning of rightsizing procedures and approving the execution of rightsizing procedures;
17. Providing direct support to COREs with respect to individual issues requiring action in connection with the administration of pay, benefits, and other personnel matters;
18. Reviewing and approving requests for recruitment, relocation, or retention incentives;
19. Administering FEMA's Drug-Free Workplace program; and
20. Providing information to managers and supervisors regarding the procedures for performance and disciplinary actions, recommendations for disposition in each case; and any relevant appeal process.

K. Office of the Chief Security Officer (OCSO) is responsible for:

1. Using standardized policies and procedures for verifying applicants' personal identity;
2. Determining the fitness of applicants and COREs by conducting background checks; and
3. Authorizing facility access and issuing identification badges for COREs in a manner that ensures nationwide consistency across the CORE program.

L. Division Chiefs are responsible for reviewing and providing a final decision on any hire via name request within their area of responsibility.

M. Second Level Supervisors are responsible for:

1. Overseeing the use of COREs consistent with the requirements established herein;
2. Requesting to advance a CORE's basic rate of pay to step two, three, or four of the grade in conjunction with the CORE's supervisor of record;
3. In coordination with OCCHCO, reviewing and issuing final decisions on disciplinary action appeals;
4. In coordination with OCCHCO, reviewing and issuing final decisions on all actions to terminate a CORE's position for lack of FEMA need;
5. Reviewing and providing a final decision on all requests for merit-based increases, step increases, and to set pay for a new hire above the minimum rate for the position; and
6. Developing a Rightsizing Plan.

N. Federal Coordinating Officers (FCO) are responsible for deciding to demobilize a CORE due to misconduct.

O. Cadre Coordinators are responsible for:

1. Establishing and implementing individual performance goals on an annual basis for each position in the cadre, utilizing the position-specific behaviors found in the position's PTB or any other sources approved by OCCHCO, and consulting with employees with Incident Management Titles in the cadre on the substance of the performance goals insofar as practical; and
2. Receiving and reviewing completed evaluations for their cadre personnel. Completed evaluations will be archived for each employee.

P. Selecting Officials are responsible for:

1. Recruiting and selecting COREs in accordance with this Manual, transmitting any request for hire via name request to his or her program area's Division Chief (or higher) for review; and
2. Documenting the reasons for the selection of any CORE, and ensuring that all relevant records documenting such reasons are transmitted to OCCHCO for retention, including all interview notes.

Q. Supervisors of Record are responsible for:

1. Ensuring COREs are used for authorized purposes as outlined herein;
2. Providing day-to-day supervision of the performance and conduct of COREs under their supervision;
3. Assigning and evaluating work performed by a CORE when a CORE is not deployed;

4. Requesting to renew appointments based on a workload analyses and staffing plan, subject to funding;
5. Requesting pay adjustments, conversion actions, and pay settings when a CORE voluntarily requests a change to a lower pay band or rate;
6. Requesting to advance a CORE's basic rate of pay to step two, three, or four of the grade in conjunction with the CORE's second level supervisor;
7. Initiating all recommendations for merit-based pay and step increases;
8. Establish performance and development plans, and evaluating employee performance in accordance with FEMA Manual 255-1-1;
9. Recommending performance awards consistent with FEMA guidelines;
10. Retaining performance appraisals and all other documents related to the performance and/or conduct of COREs under their direct supervision, for a duration to be determined by FD 141-1, FEMA Records Management Program and relevant Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) regulations, if applicable;
11. Submitting all requests for recruitment, relocation, or retention incentives to the head of their Office or Directorate for approval;
12. Communicating proper conduct and performance standards to COREs consistent with FEMA policy;
13. Receiving all deployment evaluations for COREs under their direct supervision and completing applicable progress reviews and annual performance ratings, considering as appropriate any deployment evaluations provided to the CORE by the temporary duty supervisor while deployed;
14. Coordinating with OCC Ethics and OCCHCO to properly designate positions as Confidential Financial Disclosure Filers, and ensure that COREs complete required new entrant and annual ethics training requirements;
15. Approving a CORE's work schedule, telework schedule (if requested), and time and attendance records;
16. Monitoring a CORE's performance while teleworking in accordance with FM 123-9-1;
17. Coordinating with COREs under their supervision to identify any real or apparent conflicts of interest or other standards of conduct issues prior to deployment, raising any such issues to the appropriate ethics counselor and, if applicable, mitigating any of these issues in accordance with recommendations from the ethics counselor and the temporary duty supervisor;
18. Providing performance feedback and mentoring to maximize the success of a CORE in achieving performance goals and objectives;

19. Coordinating with OCCHCO's Employee Relations Specialists to document incidents of poor performance and misconduct as they occur, and following up with the CORE to ensure that he or she understands the seriousness of his or her performance deficiencies or misconduct;
20. Initiating personnel actions against COREs, to include discipline or removal for misconduct or poor performance after consulting with OCCHCO, and ensuring that any such actions are consistent with Merit Systems and EEO principles;
21. In coordination with OCCHCO, documenting the reasons for all other personnel actions, including assignments, reassignments, promotions, demobilizations, rightsizing, and non-renewal of CORE appointments, and ensuring that such documentation is forwarded to OCCHCO along with any request or recommendation for personnel action;
22. Collecting all government equipment prior to the effective date of a CORE's removal or resignation;
23. Overseeing and managing the resignation process when a CORE submits a resignation notification and forwarding all documentation to OCCHCO for processing;
24. In coordination with OCCHCO, adopting the rightsizing procedures provided in this Manual; and
25. Ensuring the professional development for COREs under their supervision.

R. Temporary Duty Supervisors are responsible for:

1. Ensuring COREs are used for authorized purposes as outlined herein;
2. Providing day-to-day supervision of the performance and conduct of deployed COREs;
3. Communicating proper conduct and performance standards to deployed COREs, included but not limited to, the basis for a deployment performance evaluation consistent with FEMA policy;
4. Completing performance evaluations for all COREs under their functional authority who are deployed for at least 20 days, and transmitting performance evaluation records to the CORE's supervisor of record within 30 days of the date of the demobilization; and
5. Advising the CORE and consulting with OCCHCO regarding issues of CORE misconduct and poor performance and referring allegations of misconduct to the CORE's supervisor of record for review and coordination with OCCHCO prior to initiating disciplinary action.

S. COREs are responsible for the following, including, but not limited to:

1. Performing assigned duties and responsibilities acceptably;

2. Conducting themselves in a manner that will bring credit to FEMA and supervisors directing their work, and observing the spirit and letter of the laws and regulations which govern the conduct of COREs;
3. Signing and complying with the terms and conditions of their appointments (including any conditions relating to receiving a security clearance), and other applicable FEMA directives;
4. Working at a Directed Work Location if directed by a supervisor or other properly designated FEMA official;
5. Reviewing benefit options and making selections within prescribed election periods;
6. Properly using, caring for, and protecting any assigned government property issued to them by FEMA.
7. Completing and signing a Self Certification of Health and Safety Checklist prior to beginning work, if the CORE's home is his or her official duty station;
8. Following FEMA's Absence and Leave and Scheduling of Work policies and procedures;
9. Completing Initial Ethics Orientation within 90 days of entry on duty as required by 5 C.F.R. § 2638.703;
10. Complying with the ethics statutes in Title 18, United States Code, and the implementing ethics regulations promulgated by the Office of Government Ethics and DHS. COREs should seek guidance from his or her designated ethics attorney if issues arise that may be governed by these laws and regulations (contact FEMA's Privacy Office for additional information and a listing of OCC Ethics Counselors);
11. If designated as a Confidential Financial Disclosure filer, timely filing New Entrant and Annual OGE Form 450 reports (as required by 5 C.F.R. § 2634 Subpart I);
12. Completing annual ethics training, FQS training, and other required training;
13. If the CORE is a reemployed civilian retiree receiving an annuity, providing a copy of his or her most recent annuity notice and all subsequent notices of change, indicating the monthly annuity amounts to OCCHCO prior to or at the time of appointment;
14. Signing and complying with the conditions of a Continued Service Agreement (CSA) if approved to receive a recruitment, relocation, or retention incentive;
15. Signing and abiding by the conditions of a CSA if selected to participate in a leadership development program;
16. Returning all FEMA-owned equipment before separating from FEMA; and

17. Engaging in activities to promote their professional development.

**1-8. Reporting Requirement**

The CORE program will be evaluated periodically to ensure that stated objectives are being met. Recommendations for improvement will be forwarded to the Chief Component Human Capital Officer and the Chief Financial Officer.

**1-9. Forms Prescribed**

- A. FEMA Form 252-11-1-1, Request for CORE Action.
- B. FEMA Form 30-35, Telephone Reference Check.
- C. FEMA Form 106-1-1-1, Request for Work Schedule.
- D. FEMA Form 119-7-1-3, Custody Receipt for Government Property On Personal Charge.
- E. FEMA Form 123-9-0-1, Telework Application and Agreement Form.
- F. FEMA Form 123-9-0-2, Employee Self Certification Health and Safety Checklist.
- G. FEMA Form 254-1-1, Public Transportation Benefit Program Application.
- H. Standard Form-50, Notification of Personnel Action.
- I. Standard Form-52, Request for Personnel Action.
- J. Standard Form 2809, Health Benefits Election Form.
- K. TSP-1 Thrift Saving Plan Election Form.

**1-10. No Private Right**

Nothing in this Manual shall be interpreted to create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law by any party in any administrative or civil matter.

**1-11. Questions**

Questions concerning the CORE Program should be addressed to OCCHCO at 202-212-3962. Questions concerning the funding or certification process for Direct Charge CORE positions or requests for Distributed Cost COREs should be addressed to OCFO Field Based Operations at [FEMA-fbo-action-tracker@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-fbo-action-tracker@fema.dhs.gov).

## **CHAPTER 2: RECRUITMENT AND HIRING**

### **2-1. General**

- A. FEMA Offices and Directorates will identify the Selecting Official for each hire.
- B. FEMA Offices and Directorates may elect to recruit and hire candidates via a vacancy announcement as specified in section 2-4, or via a name request pursuant to section 2-5. FEMA maintains the flexibility to use alternative hiring procedures not specified in this Chapter when necessary to meet its mission requirements.
- C. Nepotism is prohibited by 5 U.S.C. § 3110 and is also a “prohibited personnel practice” under 5 U.S.C. § 2302(b)(7). Under 5 U.S.C. § 3110, a public official is prohibited from appointing, employing, promoting, advancing, or advocating for appointment, employment, promotion, or advancement of a relative in or to a civilian position in FEMA in which the public official is serving or over which the public official exercises jurisdiction or control of any individual who is a relative of the public official. Upon determining that a minimally qualified candidate is a relative or the relative of the Selecting Official, or of someone in the chain of command of the Selecting Official, the program office must refrain from taking action on the job vacancy and contact the servicing HR Specialist for guidance. Supervision of a relative is not generally considered to be “nepotism” but is prohibited as it presents an apparent conflict of interest. Supervision of employees with whom the supervisor has a “covered relationship” may also be an apparent conflict of interest (see 5 C.F.R. § 2635.502).

### **2-2. Staffing Plans**

- A. Offices and Directorates authorized to fill CORE positions will conduct workload analyses every three years, or earlier if needed based on operational changes, to forecast and plan for future work and skills requirements based on historical data, technical estimates, directed requirements, and approved staffing models.
  - 1. The workload analysis will first identify all activities performed by each position (e.g., PFT, CORE, and Reservist) within an Office or Directorate, and designate current and planned future activities.
  - 2. The analysis will estimate how frequent the activity is performed, and the amount of time an employee will need to complete each of the identified activities for which a Distributed Group Activity Baseline has not been approved or is being modified.
  - 3. The analysis may identify shortages or overages in current staffing needs, which will be documented and maintained by the Offices and Directorates until superseded by a subsequent workload analysis or other staffing initiative.

- B. Based on the workload analysis, Offices and Directorates requesting CORE positions will develop and submit staffing plans, subject to funding, to OCCHCO with the number of CORE positions by title, series, grade, and duty station.
1. OCCHCO will review the entity's requested number of CORE positions and proposed length of appointment based on the workload analysis and staffing plan.
  2. Upon OCCHCO's review and approval of the staffing plan, OCCHCO will submit the plans to OCFO for approval if the plan includes a non-Direct Charge CORE, or a Distributed Group Activity Direct Charge CORE if the distributed group activity baseline has not been approved or has changed since the last approval.
  3. Upon any needed confirmation from OCFO, OCCHCO will authorize an Office or Directorate to create or renew a set number of CORE Positions.
  4. The Associate Administrator for Mission Support will review and resolve any disputes between an Office or Directorate and OCCHCO regarding the approval of a workload analysis or staffing plan.
- C. Any request to add, move, rightsize, or adjust a CORE position (if rightsizing a position, see Chapter 12, Rightsizing) made between workload analysis cycles or that does not align with the current staffing plan must be submitted by the head of the Office or Directorate and will require a reexamination of the most recent workload analysis to determine whether the identified shortages or additional work exists to justify the requested position, its length, and pay band or grade. Upon OCCHCO's review and approval of the staffing plan, OCCHCO will submit the plans to OCFO for approval if the plan includes a non-Direct Charge CORE, or a Distributed Group Activity Direct Charge CORE if the distributed group activity baseline has not been approved or has changed since the last approval.
- D. Duty stations for COREs will be established by the supervisor of record in conjunction with OCCHCO.

### **2-3. Annual Direct Charge CORE Certification**

- A. An Annual Direct Charge CORE certification, validating and verifying the CORE's performance of DRF related duties and the continued need for all CORE positions (which have not been requested or funded elsewhere in FEMA's budget), is required by the Assistant Administrator, Associate Administrator, Regional Administrator, and any FEMA employee reporting directly to the Administrator.
- B. CORE positions must be used to execute functions or activities funded solely by the DRF or DRS account and are not charged elsewhere in FEMA's budget. COREs may be used to administer support to FEMA's non-permanent workforce hired under the Stafford Act, performing duties including, but not limited to, hiring and staffing, training and development,

- personnel and payroll processing, legal support, developing and implementing disaster policies and decisions, supervising Stafford Act employees, maintaining information technology and telecommunications services for Stafford Act employees or events, financial management, property and facility management, and auditing and program oversight. OCFO and OCC will provide Directorates and Offices with supplemental guidance on the proper use of CORE positions as needed.
- C. Offices and Directorates must also electronically maintain documentation supporting the creation, backfilling or reassignment of CORE positions. Offices and Directorates will maintain workload analyses, position justifications, and staffing plans. The electronic files<sup>2</sup> are also subject to independent post-action compliance review by OCFO and/or OCCHCO.
  - D. Documentation requirements for “Direct Charge” COREs
    1. Comprehensive list of all COREs to include position title, area assigned, branch/office, duty station, grade, PIN, and CORE type.
    2. Algorithm(s), to include methodology and frequency of analysis, used to determine allocation of salary costs to open active disasters.
    3. A description of duties for each position or group of positions performing the same work that validates the relationship of work being performed to open, active disasters. Example: This Public Assistance (PA) Specialist will: (1) be responsible for the closeout of project worksheets, (2) deploy to disasters to support the development and obligation of PA projects, and (3) conduct eligibility review of public assistance projects.
    4. Baselines and supporting documentation for establishing the baselines for Distributed Activity Group “Direct-Charge” COREs.
    5. Documentation shall be maintained on OCFO’s SharePoint (see footnote 2) and shall be made available to the OCFO and/or OCCHCO for review. Files must be maintained in accordance with the most current DHS records retention policy.

#### **2-4. Procedures for Soliciting Candidates**

FEMA uses the procedures listed below to hire qualified candidates for CORE appointments unless a name request procedure is used (see section 2-5).

- A. To advertise a CORE position, an Office or Directorate shall submit a Standard Form (SF-52) to OCCHCO with a position description. If desired, the Office or Directorate may also submit a draft vacancy announcement or instead, request that OCCHCO draft it. Additionally, the Office or Directorate may, but is not required to, submit a specialized experience statement and any assessment screen-out questions that should be included in the announcement for the purpose of screening out applicants who are not

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<sup>2</sup> Electronic files should be uploaded to <https://portalapps.fema.net/apps/ocfocore/Pages/default.aspx>.

- minimally qualified for the position. Upon receipt of all required and optional documentation, the HR Specialist prepares (or reviews, if submitted) the Vacancy Announcement and sends the draft to the Office or Directorate for final approval.
- B. The Office or Directorate, in consultation with the HR Specialist, may search for qualified candidates utilizing one or more of the following recruitment sources:
1. An email to all FEMA employees, FEMA employees who reside in a specific geographic area, or FEMA employees who already work in the Office or Directorate advertising the position;
  2. Electronic posting on OPM's USAJOBS website (<https://usajobs.gov>);
  3. Outside sources, including but not limited to, other Federal agencies, state employment services, state and local emergency management organizations, professional societies, minority organizations, local colleges/universities and other educational facilities and sources; or
  4. Other sources which, as approved by OCCHCO, will provide adequate competition.
- C. At a minimum, the vacancy announcement posted through USA Jobs must include:
1. FEMA's name;
  2. Announcement number (for USA Jobs announcements only);
  3. Title, series, and grade of the position, including promotion potential;
  4. Opening and closing dates (except in the case of open announcements);
  5. Duty location;
  6. Number of vacancies;
  7. Major duties of the position;
  8. Length of appointment;
  9. Qualification requirements;
  10. How to apply, including required supporting documentation;
  11. Statement that the appointment(s) is excepted from the competitive service, and are authorized under the Stafford Act;
  12. Statement that the selectee must sign a "conditions of employment" form;
  13. Statement that the selectee is subject to the "Every Employee Is An Emergency Manager" Memorandum, requiring capability to deploy for up to 30 consecutive days and changes to work locations, including a requirement to work at home in the event of emergencies or when otherwise directed;
  14. Equal employment opportunity statement; and

15. Reasonable accommodation statement.
- D. All other vacancy announcement postings, authorized by section 2-4.B., must include, at a minimum:
1. Title, series, and grade of the position, including promotion potential;
  2. Opening and closing dates (except in the case of open announcements);
  3. Duty location;
  4. Major duties of the position;
  5. Length of appointment;
  6. How to apply, including required supporting documentation;
  7. Statement that the appointment(s) is excepted from the competitive service, and are authorized under the Stafford Act;
  8. Statement that the selectee must sign a “conditions of employment” form; and
  9. Statement that the selectee is subject to the “Every Employee Is An Emergency Manager” Memorandum, requiring capability to deploy for up to 30 consecutive days and changes to work locations, including a requirement to work at home in the event of emergencies or when otherwise directed.
- E. Vacancy Announcements that are restricted to a particular geographical area or to FEMA employees will clearly identify any such restrictions and indicate that non-compliant applications will not receive consideration.
- F. Once the Office or Directorate has approved the vacancy announcement, the Staffing HR Specialist posts the vacancy announcement via the sources previously agreed upon and notifies the Office or Directorate that the position has been posted.
- G. Vacancy announcements shall be posted for a minimum of five days. If requested, OCCHCO may approve a shorter posting for good cause.
- H. Minimum qualifications: Normally, OCCHCO reviews all submitted applications to ensure that applications have met the minimum qualifications and eligibility requirements and then refers all candidates deemed minimally qualified to the Selecting Official via a Certificate of Eligibles (CERT). Selecting Officials may request to receive all applications prior to OCCHCO’s review, in which case OCCHCO will conduct its review prior to issuance of any offer. Final qualification determinations are made by OCCHCO.
- I. After a selection is made, the Selecting Official shall provide all selection documentation to OCCHCO for retention in accordance with A and B above (see section 3-9). The Selecting Official will indicate the action taken (selection, non-selection, declination, etc.) on each CERT and will return the CERT to the HR Specialist by the expiration date of the CERT, unless an extension is authorized by OCCHCO.

## **2-5. Name Request**

- A. In lieu of utilizing the hiring procedures specified in section 2-4, Offices and Directorates may hire qualified candidates (eligible U.S. citizens, current Federal employees, or current FEMA COREs) via a name request to meet a hiring need or to promote a CORE to a grade outside of the CORE's current position ladder. Such a promotion must include the same justification and approval established for name request hires (see Chapters 5 and 6 for more information on promotions).
- B. The Office or Directorate must submit a justification that describes the individual's qualifications with the SF-52 and resume.
- C. Any name request must be approved in writing by the requesting organization's Division Chief (or higher).
- D. Name requests may be approved even if the Office or Directorate has not posted a vacancy announcement for the position or otherwise competed the position.
- E. The HR Specialist will review the package to determine if the applicant meets the basic qualifications for the position and promptly notify the Selecting Official if the applicant is not minimally qualified.
- F. Name request hiring actions must follow the interview, reference check, and job offer procedures outlined below.

## **2-6. Interviews**

Interviews are conducted for candidates referred to the supervisor as a means of obtaining supplemental information on their qualifications.

- A. At a minimum, the Selecting Official must interview the candidate selected for the position. The Selecting Official may designate one or more appropriate persons to conduct or participate in the interviews.
- B. The Selecting Official should ask all candidates the same job-related questions and document the responses in writing. The Selecting Official should maintain such documentation for a minimum of two years. The Selecting Official should ask the same questions, in the same order, of all interviewed candidates. Follow-up questions to clarify information are permissible. It is preferable to conduct interviews in person and to use the same interview method for all applicants.
- C. The Selecting Official should not ask questions regarding a candidate's race, religion, sex, family status, national origin, religion, age, genetic background, health history, disability, political affiliation, or any other prohibited questions found in FEMA's Interview and Selection Guidance, June 4, 2014.
- D. The Selecting Official or his or her designee(s) may conduct a subsequent interview or contact one or more of the candidates for additional or clarifying information after completing and evaluating the initial interviews. The

- supervisor should consult with the HR Specialist if a subsequent interview is deemed advisable to ensure that the reason for the subsequent interview is related to the requirements of the position.
- E. Interview notes must be retained in accordance with section 2-10 and must not be destroyed.
  - F. In accordance with the Every Employee is an Emergency Manager (EE-EM) initiative,<sup>3</sup> all employees conducting hiring interviews must explain and reiterate, using a set of standard questions and briefing points, the EE-EM vision that all COREs must be willing to receive incident support or incident management assignments. Additionally, all new COREs are required to sign an acknowledgment form confirming their understanding of the EE-EM policy. The supervisor must ensure that the EE-EM vision is explained in all initial interviews and that any candidate who is referred for hire or further examination has completed the applicable acknowledgment form. This form can be obtained from the serving HR Specialist.

- G. All new COREs must acknowledge the requirement to work at a Directed Work Location, which may be the CORE's Residence of Record or another alternate duty location, in the event of office closures, emergencies, or when otherwise directed.

## **2-7. Reference Checks**

The Selecting Official must check and document a candidate's references before the candidate receives a job offer. Reference checking is a vital part of a successful hiring strategy and is primarily used to verify information provided by the candidate; better predict the candidate's on-the-job success; and gain additional information about the candidate's qualifications for the position. Selecting Officials may use FEMA Form 30-35, Telephone Reference Check, to satisfy the requirement to document reference checks. Selecting Officials should coordinate with OCCHCO prior to deciding not to hire a candidate because of a reference check.

## **2-8. Job Offers**

All offers of employment must be made by OCCHCO. The servicing HR Specialist must confirm qualifications and the proposed rate of pay for the candidate with the Selecting Official prior to extending an offer. Additionally, the HR Specialist will confirm acceptance of the offer and will consult with the Selecting Official in establishing an entrance on duty (EOD) date once the appropriate background check has been made by OCSO.

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<sup>3</sup> See Memorandum from the Deputy Administrator, Every Employee an Emergency Manager—Action Items, January 20, 2012.

## **2-9. Notification to Applicants**

OCCHCO Talent Acquisition Division will acknowledge receipt of all applications and notify all applicants if they have or have not been selected for the position.

## **2-10. Recordkeeping Requirements**

- A. Supervisors shall create, maintain, use and dispose of FEMA records in accordance with applicable law and FD 141-1, FEMA Records Management Program.
- B. Pursuant to 29 C.F.R. § 1602.14 and in accordance with Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) regulations, all personnel records made or kept by FEMA, including but not limited to, application forms submitted by applicants, name request justifications, interview notes, reference check documents, and other records having to do with hiring, shall be preserved for one year from the date of the making of the record or of the personnel action involved, whichever occurs later.
- C. If applicable, when a non-selectee challenges the non-selection before an administrative or judicial body, OCCHCO and the supervisor must retain the aforementioned documentation until the final disposition of the charge or lawsuit. OCC will notify OCCHCO and the supervisor of any litigation holds and when documentation relating to a charge or lawsuit may be disposed of according to FEMA's record retention policy.

## CHAPTER 3: APPOINTMENTS

### 3-1. Eligibility for Appointment

All applicants selected for appointment to CORE positions must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- A. U.S. Citizenship, subject to limited exceptions;<sup>4</sup>
- B. Must be at least 18 years of age and:
  1. Have graduated from high school or been awarded a certificate equivalent to graduating from high school;
  2. Have completed a formal vocational training program;
  3. Have received a statement from school authorities agreeing with their preference for employment rather than continuing their education; or
  4. Be currently enrolled in a secondary school and either work only during school vacation periods or work part-time during the school year under a formal employment program;
- C. Must comply with selective service registration for males born after 12/31/59;
- D. Must satisfy fitness requirements for the position to which appointed;<sup>5</sup> and
- E. Must agree to accept an Incident Management or Incident Support assignment.<sup>6</sup>

### 3-2. CORE Appointments

- A. COREs are hired under a Stafford Act appointment authority and their salaries and benefits are funded by the DRF, thus the scope of their duties must predominately carryout Stafford Act activities.
- B. Individuals appointed to CORE positions are given time-limited appointments for a period of not less than two years but not to exceed four years unless the appointment is renewed for another term. The length of the appointment requested by the Office or Directorate should be commensurate with the expected amount of work available for the CORE in question (the appointment can be less than two years if appropriate).
- C. A CORE appointment does not confer eligibility or priority consideration for a permanent appointment.
- D. A CORE's work schedule may be changed and a CORE may be assigned a Mission Essential, Incident Management, Incident Support, or Ancillary

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<sup>4</sup> See DHS Management Directive 3120.2, Employment of Non-Citizens, March 22, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> See DHS Instruction 121-01-007, DHS Personnel Suitability and Security Program, June 2009.

<sup>6</sup> See Memorandum from the Deputy Administrator, Every Employee an Emergency Manager—Action Items, January 20, 2012.

- Support title, irrespective of his or her position description, based on the operational needs of FEMA.
- E. COREs are not subject to any protection afforded by reduction-in-force provisions, re-employment rights, or adverse action procedures established under any statutory or regulatory provision.
  - F. COREs must be ready to deploy wherever FEMA needs their services and have 24 hours to respond to a deployment order and may be required to work long hours under stressful and unfavorable conditions.
  - G. A CORE's appointment will end on the Not to Exceed (NTE) date of his or her appointment, unless it is extended or renewed based on the needs of FEMA.
  - H. COREs may be appointed to supervisory positions and serve as supervisors of record for other Stafford Act employees, provided that the CORE is hired into a position description classified as supervisory and completes mandatory supervisory training. COREs may serve as a temporary duty supervisor during a deployment, so long as the work supervised arises out of the Stafford Act and the period of supervision is temporary and/or short-term.
  - I. COREs, who serve as the supervisor of record for PFTs on the date when this Manual becomes effective, may continue to serve in such capacity until the CORE's current term expires.

### **3-3. Conditions of Employment**

All CORE appointees are required to sign a Conditions of Employment statement upon appointment, and upon renewal of an appointment. COEs contain significant, but not all of, the DHS/FEMA and other rules and regulations that COREs must abide by, including but not limited to:

- A. Complying with FEMA's deployment procedures and policies;<sup>7</sup>
- B. Using electronic funds transfer for salary payments and travel reimbursements;
- C. Maintaining eligibility for a government issued travel charge card, and abiding by the terms and conditions established by the bank issuing the travel card and FEMA (see FD 122-9, Travel Charge Card, or superseding document);
- D. Presenting and conducting themselves at all times in compliance with the standards of ethical conduct provided by the Office of Governmental Ethics (see 5 C.F.R. part 2635), preserving the public trust, and adhering to DHS/FEMA rules and regulations;
- E. Traveling in the most expeditious and cost effective manner, abiding by DHS and FEMA travel policy to make all travel arrangements;

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<sup>7</sup> See FD 010-8, FEMA Incident Workforce Deployment, January 29, 2014.

- F. If authorized to use a motor vehicle for official business, complying with all applicable laws, regulations, and policies related to official motor vehicle usage;
- G. Abiding by the terms of use in all revocable licensing agreements with respect to all FEMA-issued property, and using FEMA-issued property for official purposes only; and
- H. Complying with FEMA Manual 123-9-1, Telework, if their supervisor authorizes telework.

Failure to comply with these conditions of employment, or any other standards of conduct, may result in disciplinary action, up to and including removal from Federal service (see Chapter 11).

#### **3-4. Directed Work Location**

COREs will work at their Residence of Record or other designated locations by FEMA supervisors and managers, if so directed. COREs may be directed to work at alternate locations on days when their regular worksite is closed due, but not limited to, weather closures, localized emergencies, facility safety, or for operational needs. COREs working at a Directed Work Location are not teleworking.

#### **3-5. Oath of Office**

- A. The following FEMA personnel are authorized to administer the oath of office to newly appointed COREs or to delegate this authority:
  1. The Administrator;
  2. Deputy Administrator;
  3. Regional Administrators;
  4. The Chief Component Human Capital Officer;
  5. Federal Coordinating Officers; and
  6. Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinators.
- B. The above officials may delegate authority to administer the oath of office to an employee at initial onboarding.

#### **3-6. Government Property**

- A. As soon as practicable after appointment, FEMA shall furnish each CORE with appropriate mobile communication and/or computing equipment as determined by the current property authorization list.
- B. COREs shall keep the equipment charged and accessible, and shall seek prompt assistance for malfunctioning equipment.
- C. All COREs are required to accept receipt of all FEMA-issued equipment and sign FEMA Form 119-7-1-3. By signing this form, the CORE acknowledges

acceptance of and responsibility for the equipment and becomes a Custodian of the equipment, as set forth in FEMA Directive 119-7, Federal Personal Property Management, dated September 24, 2013. Violation of this agreement may result in disciplinary action, up to and including removal.

D. COREs shall only use, display, or present their FEMA-issued government identification card for lawful and authorized purposes.

### **3-7. Reassignments to a New Position**

If a CORE is reassigned to a new position, the CORE must meet the minimum qualifications for the position and an Office or Directorate head must approve the reassignment.

### **3-8. Detail Assignments**

- A. A CORE may be temporarily placed on a detail to carry out a discrete function. If a CORE is placed on a detail, the duties and responsibilities performed by the CORE must be payable under the Stafford Act with the exception described in part C below.
- B. Details to perform Stafford Act activities. Absent approval from OPM, a CORE may not be detailed to a competitive service position. A CORE may be placed on a detail assignment for up to 120 days that may be renewed for one additional 120 day period. OCCHCO must approve a CORE detailed to a position for more than 120 days or to positions at a higher pay level. See Chapter 14 for more information on rotational assignments.
- C. A CORE may be detailed for mission and operational needs or for training to perform non-Stafford Act activities described below:
  1. Non-Stafford Act Mission and Operational Detail. Pursuant to 6 U.S.C. § 314 the Administrator is vested with the authority to carry out all authorities of FEMA. Upon a determination that urgent and compelling circumstances exist in order to carry out the FEMA mission or support to other Federal agency incident operations, a CORE may be placed on a temporary detail to perform non-Stafford Act activities under the following conditions:
    - i. The detail shall not exceed 90 days per appointment unless approved by OCC; and
    - ii. The detailed CORE's salaries, benefits, and associated expenses must be paid from the account normally charged for carrying out the gaining program or activity for the duration of the detail.
    - iii. Note that training activities and other duties needed to prepare a CORE for a mission essential detail may be conducted outside of the 90 day detail period but must be justified and approved in advance. In such circumstances, the training time and the detail time, will be charged to the receiving program or office.

2. Non-Stafford Act Training Details. FEMA may authorize a non-Stafford Act detail of COREs under the following conditions:
  - i. A determination must be made that the training of the CORE, and thus the increased ability of that CORE to carry out future Stafford Act activities, is the primary purpose and benefit of the non-Stafford Act assignment;
  - ii. The detail may not exceed 30 days without a determination that a detail of more than 30 days is warranted;
  - iii. Extensions of these details beyond 30 days are made every 30 days thereafter and shall not exceed 90 days per appointment; and
  - iv. The detailed COREs may have their salaries and benefits funded by the DRF.
3. COREs carrying-out non-Stafford Act activities must be justified as either an urgent and compelling mission/operation-related detail or a training assignment. Under no circumstances, may FEMA use both of these justifications for the same non-Stafford Act activity. In both instances, the CORE is limited to one non-Stafford Act detail per appointment, unless approved by OCC.

### **3-9. Reappointment Procedures**

- A. OCCHCO provides each Office and Directorate with a list of COREs and their expiration dates on a biweekly basis.
- B. A CORE's appointment will end on the Not-to-Exceed (NTE) date of his or her appointment, unless it is renewed by the Office or Directorate. All requests to renew the appointment of a current CORE must be submitted by the supervisor of record to OCCHCO using an SF-52, Request for Personnel Action.
- C. Two months before the end of a CORE's appointment, if a supervisor of record determines that a CORE's appointment should not be renewed, the supervisor must contact OCCHCO/Employee Relations on how to notify the CORE that the CORE's appointment will not be renewed.

### **3-10. Resignation**

COREs may resign at any time prior to the termination or expiration of their appointments. COREs must state in writing the reason for the resignation and the requested effective date of the resignation. A CORE may request rescission of the resignation prior to the effective date, but FEMA is not obligated to consider or grant such a request. FEMA is not obligated to grant the request in order to avoid removal for misconduct or poor performance. FEMA may not deny the request for any reason prohibited by Title 29, U.S. Code, or any applicable EEOC regulations.

## **CHAPTER 4: COMPENSATION PROVISIONS**

### **4-1. Applicability**

The compensation provided to COREs includes the provisions found in this Chapter regardless of the pay plan covering the CORE, unless otherwise stated.

### **4-2. Establishment of CORE Pay Plan**

COREs are paid via an administratively determined “IC” pay plan. COREs paid via the GS scale or GS based pay bands will be transferred to the IC pay plan of either grades and steps or pay bands at their current rate of pay. FEMA managers, in conjunction with OCCHCO, are given the option to utilize one of two pay scales; a pay scale consisting of pay bands or a pay scale consisting of grades and steps (see Chapters 5 and 6). Offices or Directorates may change the pay plan for all COREs assigned to the Office or Directorate with OCCHCO approval.

### **4-3. Conversion Actions**

The first-level supervisor may recommend adjustment of pay upon conversion from another FEMA appointment to a CORE appointment (see sections 5-3 and 6-3 for information on conversions that result in a decrease in pay).

### **4-4. Position Management and Classification**

The Position Management and Classification Manual, FM 252-2-1, June 19, 2014, provides guidance for the classification and position management of CORE positions. The rules and procedures for position classification reviews (i.e., desk audits) and classification appeals found in FM 252-2-1 do not apply to CORE positions.

### **4-5. Locality Pay**

- A. Locality pay is an additional sum of money administratively-determined by OCCHCO and added to a CORE’s base pay to account for the difference between the pay of government workers and private sector workers in a given geographic location. Locality pay is considered a part of basic pay and is applied to the minimum and maximum rates of each pay plan.
- B. COREs, such as IM COREs, who physically work full time from their residence of record, will receive the locality pay assigned to their residence of record’s locality pay area, even if the CORE reports or is assigned to a FEMA fixed facility with a different locality pay rate.
- C. When a CORE moves from an official duty station in one locality pay area to an official duty station in a different locality pay area, OCCHCO will adjust the CORE’s basic pay to reflect the difference in the administratively-determined locality pay rates. Pay retention is not applicable to geographic changes in locality.

#### **4-6. Cost of Living Increase**

OCCHCO may periodically recommend that the Administrator adjust pay scales for the CORE program. For example, an adjustment may be appropriate to reflect a cost of living increase, but need not coincide with changes to pay and wage schedules by Congress, OPM, or OPM's designee. In such circumstances, OCCHCO will review current CORE pay rates and recommend the proper percentage adjustment that is appropriate.

#### **4-7. Pay Ceilings and Premium Pay**

Absent a waiver for the bi-weekly pay cap, the maximum rate of basic pay for a FLSA-exempt CORE may not exceed the rate payable for Level V of the Executive Schedule or the rate for GS-15 Step 10 employees (including locality pay), whichever is higher (see FM 253-2-1, Premium Pay). The maximum aggregate amount any CORE may receive in basic pay, bonuses, and allowances is the rate for Level I of the Executive Schedule.

The rules and regulations governing premium pay, including, but not limited to, the bi-weekly and annual pay caps, overtime, compensatory time off, and night differential for COREs is found in FM 253-2-1, Premium Pay.

#### **4-8. Recruitment, Relocation, or Retention Incentives**

##### **A. In General**

1. A recruitment incentive is a one-time, lump-sum payment to a newly appointed CORE to a position that is determined to be critical to FEMA's mission and in the absence of the incentive, would be difficult to fill.
2. A relocation incentive is a one-time, lump-sum payment to a current CORE who agrees to relocate with no break in service to accept a FEMA position in a different geographic area if the position is likely to be difficult to fill in the absence of the incentive.
3. A retention incentive is paid to a current CORE if the CORE has unusually high or unique qualifications, or an Office or Directorate has a special need for the CORE's services that makes it essential to retain the CORE, and the CORE would likely leave the Federal service in the absence of a retention incentive. The CORE must have stated an intent to resign or retire, in writing, or must have submitted his or her resignation or retirement paperwork prior to authorization.
4. The employing office must consider at least the following factors, as applicable to the case at hand, when deciding whether to pay a recruitment or relocation incentive:
  - i. The success of recent efforts to recruit candidates for similar positions, including indicators such as offer acceptance rates, the proportion of positions filled, and the length of time required to fill similar positions;
  - ii. Recent turnover in similar positions;

- iii. Labor-market factors that may affect the ability of the office to recruit candidates for similar positions now or in the future;
    - iv. Special qualifications needed for the position; and
    - v. The practicality of using an advanced rate alone or in combination with a recruitment or relocation incentive.
  - 5. The employing office must consider at least the following factors, as applicable to the case at hand, when deciding whether to pay a retention incentive:
    - i. The success of recent efforts to recruit candidates and retain employees with qualifications similar to those possessed by the CORE for positions similar to the position held by the CORE; and
    - ii. The availability in the labor market of candidates for employment who, with minimal training or disruption of service to the public, could perform the full range of duties and responsibilities assigned to the position held by the CORE.
  - 6. The use of a recruitment, relocation, or retention incentive is not to be used as a substitute for traditional recruiting efforts that could yield a competent and qualified employee without the use of such an incentive.
- B. Justification and Approval. The Selecting Official or supervisor of record shall submit a justification for any request for a recruitment, relocation, or retention incentive through the head of his or her Office or Directorate for approval. Office or Directorate heads may approve an incentive amount less than \$20,000, or less than 25% of a CORE's base pay. Any incentive request with a lump sum greater than or equal to \$20,000, or greater than or equal to 25% of a CORE's base pay must be submitted by the Associate Administrator or Office Chief (if the Office Chief reports directly to the Administrator) overseeing the requesting organization and be approved by the Administrator or designee, but at least by the Chief of Staff and OCCHCO. In all cases, OCCHCO must approve the incentive request and OCFO must certify the availability of funds prior to authorizing payment. All justifications shall include, at a minimum, the following information:
- 1. The amount and timing of the approved incentive;
  - 2. For retention incentives, the payment schedule for the incentives and the maximum number of payments or end date for the payments; and
  - 3. The basis for determination that the skills and work experience of the applicant or CORE are of substantial value, or that, without such an incentive, the position would be difficult-to-fill. The basis should be based on at least one factor from subsection A.4 if a recruitment or relocation bonus, or one factor from subsection A.5 if a retention incentive.
- C. COREs who receive a recruitment, relocation, or retention incentive must sign and comply with the terms of a Continuing Service Agreement (CSA). See Chapter 15, Continuing Service Agreements, for more information.

**4-9. Offset Provision for Civilian Retirees**

- A. Retirees from the federal service who are receiving a federal retirement annuity and become reemployed by the federal government, absent a waiver, will have their salaries reduced by the amount of the annuity they are entitled to receive during the period of reemployment, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 8344(a).
- B. COREs who are reemployed annuitants must provide OCCHCO with a copy of their most recent annuity notice issued by OPM, and all subsequent notices of change, indicating the monthly annuity amount to the Payroll and Processing Operations Division, OCCHCO prior to or at the time of appointment.

## **CHAPTER 5: COMPENSATION (PAY BANDS)**

### **5-1. General**

- A. This Chapter addresses the rules and procedures associated with compensating COREs via pay bands, which is one of the pay scales under the IC pay plan.
- B. Each pay band established for the IC pay plan corresponds to a range of pay and classification levels, such that bands replace grades and steps, and series are retained. Positions are classified by title, career path, and occupational series. The pay range for each pay band is equivalent to the pay range of GS and IC grades and steps within the pay band. A CORE may not receive base pay in excess of his or her pay band unless they are promoted to a position classified at a higher pay band.
  - 1. Band 1 corresponds to GS 1 to GS 6.
  - 2. Band 2 corresponds to GS 7 to GS 9.
  - 3. Band 3 corresponds to GS 10 to GS 11.
  - 4. Band 4 corresponds to GS 12 to GS 13.
  - 5. Band 5 corresponds to GS 14 to GS 15.
- C. The major duties and responsibilities of each CORE position are included in the position description. The position description is analyzed by a Human Resources Classification Specialist to determine the title and pay band of the position. This analysis of the work to be performed and comparison of the work to established standards is referred to as position classification and applies the principle of equal pay for equal work.
- D. Exceptions to the policies and procedures contained within this Chapter may be authorized by the CCHCO to respond to an emergent and unexpected mission need arising from a Level I disaster, to alleviate severe hardship to individuals resulting from any error on the part of FEMA in effecting personnel actions, or to address unusual situations that were not anticipated when this policy was drafted.

### **5-2. Setting Basic Rate of Pay**

- A. The Selecting Official is delegated the authority to assign a yearly basic pay amount within the position classified pay band. Pay setting criteria may include:
  - 1. The prior salary of the candidate;
  - 2. The overall qualifications of the candidate;
  - 3. The recency of the individual's relevant experience;
  - 4. The qualifications and pay of employees in similar positions in the work unit;

5. Salary comparability to non-Federal pay rates for similar work;
  6. Special qualification requirements associated with the vacant position;
  7. Turnover rates for the position;
  8. Scarcity of qualified candidates; or
  9. Programmatic urgency.
- B. Any request for a rate above the minimum rate within the position classified pay band(s) must include a justification drafted by the Selecting Official and approved by the second level supervisor. This justification must include:
1. The candidate's name;
  2. The title, grade, and recommended rate of the vacant position; and
  3. The factors and determination that support the pay rate determination.
- C. Pursuant to 29 C.F.R. § 1602.14 and in accordance with Equal Employment Opportunity Commission regulations, the justification for setting pay higher than the minimum rate shall be preserved for one year from the date of its making.

### **5-3. Pay Adjustments**

Adjustments to pay within a classified pay band may be requested by the supervisor of record for review and approval by the Human Resources Specialist without written justification or approval from the second level supervisor. Such adjustments may be given under the following circumstances:

- A. Reassignment of a CORE from one position to another position within the same classified pay band if the responsibilities of the new position warrant an increase or decrease in base pay to further the principles of equal pay for equal work;
- B. A pay change, of either an increase or decrease, to compensate for an increase or decrease in locality pay in conjunction with a move to another geographic area; or
- C. Receipt of a merit-based increase (see section 5-4).

### **5-4. Merit-Based Increase**

- A. A CORE who is not already receiving the maximum basic pay for his or her position may receive a merit-based increase at the conclusion of the performance year.
- B. A CORE, who receives a rating of record of "Achieved Expectations", or equivalent, is eligible for a merit-based increase of up to 3%; a rating of record of "Exceeded Expectations" or equivalent, is eligible for a merit-based increase of up to 4%; or a rating of record of "Achieved Excellence" or equivalent, is eligible for a merit-based increase of up to 5%.

- C. A CORE, who receives a rating of “unacceptable”, or equivalent, is not eligible for a merit-based increase.<sup>8</sup>
- D. A CORE’s supervisor of record must send an SF-52, approved by the second level supervisor, to the Payroll and Processing Division, OCCHCO for processing, certifying that the CORE has received an annual rating of record for the most recent performance cycle and that the percentage increase to basic pay sought by the supervisor of record is in compliance with the requirements established by section 5-3 above.

#### **5-5. Promotion**

- A. A promotion is a personnel action that moves a CORE from one classified band to another in the same career path. A promotion may also be the selection and appointment of a CORE to a position in another career path or region to which the CORE applies. This may result in a combination of an increase in the CORE’s salary and a change in position description. If the CORE is moved to a different position, in the same pay band, with the same or similar duties, the personnel action is a reassignment with retained pay.
- B. The CORE’s supervisor of record must certify that the CORE’s most recent performance rating was at least “Achieved Expectations” or equivalent, next higher graded work exists for the CORE to perform, the CORE’s new position description captures the duties to be performed, and the higher graded position is approved and funded. A CORE may be hired into a position in a higher pay band via vacancy announcement or a name request, if the Office or Directorate has an existing higher position available or creates a new position according to the procedures detailed in section 2-2.
- C. The new basic pay rate upon promotion may be set at any level in the new band, but the CORE must receive at least a six percent minimum pay increase over his or her previous salary. If the CORE moves to a different career path, any band in the new career path would be considered a “new band” for the purposes of determining his or her salary.

#### **5-6. Change to a Lower Pay Band**

When a CORE moves from his or her current position to a position at a lower pay band the action is referred to as a change to a lower pay band. The circumstances underlying the supervisor’s recommendation to initiate a change to a lower pay band will determine how pay is set.

- A. A CORE who exhibits poor performance and fails to improve acceptably will be terminated (see Chapter 11 for more information). In rare occasions, COREs may be demoted in lieu of removal due to poor performance. In such circumstances, pay is set at a lower pay band such that there is a reduction in

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<sup>8</sup> Supervisors who encounter poor performance should consult Chapter 11: Procedures for Misconduct and Poor Performance.

- pay equivalent to at least two steps (using the pay intervals from the grades and steps scale) below the higher banded position.
- B. When a CORE requests a change to lower pay band for personal reasons or convenience, including through application for an announced vacancy at a lower pay band, the action is considered a voluntary change to a lower pay band. For voluntary changes to a lower pay band, the new rate will be set according to the procedures in section 5-2, and should include any merit based increases that the CORE would have received during the qualified period.
  - C. The reclassification of a position by OCCHCO to a lower pay band will result in a reduction in pay and pay will be set in accordance with the classification decision. Pay will be set according to the procedures detailed in section 5-2. No appeal of the reclassification decision or pay retention is permitted, subject to any applicable collective bargaining agreement.

## **CHAPTER 6: COMPENSATION (GRADES AND STEPS)**

### **6-1. General**

- A. A CORE may be paid via an administratively-determined “IC” grades and steps pay scale, as described in this Chapter. The pay scale consists of 15 pay grades (IC-1 to IC-15) with 10 steps per grade. The pay sums associated with the IC pay scale mirror the GS scale.

For example, a CORE hired at IC-11, Step 1 under the IC pay plan would be paid at the same basic rate of pay as a GS-11, Step 1 employee under the GS scale.

- B. Exceptions to the policies and procedures contained within this Chapter may be authorized by the CCHCO to respond to an emergent and unexpected mission need arising from a Level 1 disaster, to alleviate severe hardship to individuals resulting from any error on the part of FEMA in effecting personnel actions or to address unusual situations that were not anticipated when this policy was drafted.

### **6-2. Setting Basic Rate of Pay**

- A. The position description is the primary source of information used in setting pay in the IC pay series. Other information used in setting pay is (1) the geographic location (official duty station) of the position; and, (2) the individual's prior employment, salary history, and qualifications.
- B. The major duties and responsibilities of each CORE position are included in its position description. The position description is analyzed by a Human Resources Specialist to determine the title and grade range of the position. This analysis of the work to be performed and comparison of the work to established standards is referred to as position classification and applies the principle of equal pay for equal work.
- C. A new appointment is an individual's first appointment as an employee of the Federal government. Pay for all new COREs will be set at the minimum rate (Step 1) of the grade of the position, unless the CORE is approved for an advanced rate (see part E Advanced to a Higher Step).
- D. If the CORE has prior federal service (including as a current or former FEMA employee), OCCHCO sets the basic rate of pay at the minimum rate for the position, unless they receive an advanced rate (as discussed below) or the highest pay rate previously received during Federal service, whichever is higher.<sup>9</sup> Before setting pay at the highest pay rate previously received during Federal service, the Selecting Official should consider:
1. The overall qualifications of the individual;
  2. The recency of the individual's relevant experience;

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<sup>9</sup> If the employee's highest previously-received pay rate falls between two steps of the IC pay scale, the Selecting Official may request that the employee's pay be set at the higher step.

3. The qualifications and pay of employees in similar positions in the work unit; and
  4. The potential impact on the morale of those employees if the candidate were to receive the maximum payable rate.
- E. Advanced to a Higher Step.
1. Prior to a candidate entering on duty, the Selecting Official will consider whether pay above the minimum rate of the grade should be made for a CORE.
  2. Pay rate decisions maintain equity between the pay of the new hire and that of current employees, including COREs, performing comparable work. The advanced rate may not exceed step 10 of the applicable grade to which the candidate will be hired.
  3. Required documentation and approval:
    - i. A request to advance a CORE up to step four may be submitted by the first or second level supervisor to OCCHCO for approval. A request to advance a CORE to step five and above must be submitted by the head of an Office or Directorate to OCCHCO for approval. The request must be accompanied by a written justification that includes:
      - a. The candidate's name;
      - b. The title, grade, and recommended rate of the vacant position; and
      - c. The factors and determination that support the pay rate determination. This may include, but is not limited to, salary comparability, special qualification requirements, turnover rates, scarcity of qualified candidates, or programmatic urgency.
    - ii. The first or second level supervisor must submit a recommendation for an advanced rate appointment well in advance of establishing an entrance on duty date to ensure sufficient time for OCCHCO to act on the request before the appointment becomes effective.
    - iii. Pursuant to 29 C.F.R. § 1602.14 and in accordance with EEOC regulations, the justification shall be preserved for one year from the date of its making.

### **6-3. Pay Adjustments**

Adjustments to pay within a grade after the pay rate is initially set may be given under the following circumstances:

- A. Reassignment of a CORE from one position to another position if the responsibilities of the new position warrant an increase or decrease in base pay to further the principles of equal pay for equal work;

- B. A pay change, of either an increase or decrease, to compensate for an increase or decrease in locality pay in conjunction with a move to a different official duty station in another geographic area; or
- C. Receipt of a step increase (see section 6-4).

#### **6-4. Step Increases**

- A. A CORE who is not already at the highest step of his or her current grade may be advanced to the next higher step at the conclusion of the waiting period assigned to their current rate.
  - 1. While FEMA's Stafford Act authorities permit FEMA the authority to compensate without regard to Title 5, FEMA adopts the waiting periods for advancement to the next highest step established by 5 U.S.C. § 5335 and its implementing regulation at 5 C.F.R. § 531.405 as a matter of policy for all COREs paid via grades and steps.
  - 2. A CORE is not automatically entitled to receive a step increase at the conclusion of his or her waiting period.
  - 3. To receive the step increase, the CORE's supervisor of record must sign the step increase document and return to OCCHCO for processing, certifying that the CORE:
    - i. Has completed the requisite waiting period;
    - ii. Has not received an equivalent increase during the waiting period; and
    - iii. His or her summary rating level for the most recent performance was at least "Achieved Expectations" or equivalent.
  - 4. If a supervisor determines that a CORE's performance is not at an acceptable level, the supervisor should contact OCCHCO/Employee Relations at least two months before the end of the required waiting period for a step increase, to draft a notification to the CORE stating that the CORE's next step increase is being withheld, the reason for the negative determination, and what the CORE must do to improve his or her performance to be granted the step increase.
- B. Prior to the completion of the requisite waiting period, a supervisor may recommend one additional step increase if warranted by the CORE's performance. To receive the additional step increase, the CORE's supervisor of record must send a justification describing the accomplishments and performance exhibited by the CORE that would warrant an increase in pay, and an SF-52 approved by the second level supervisor to OCCHCO for processing. OCCHCO will review the request to ensure COREs who exhibit similar performance receive similar pay.

## **6-5. Promotion**

- A. A promotion is a personnel action that moves a qualified CORE from one grade to another in the same career path or to a grade in another career path in combination with an increase in the CORE's salary.
- B. The CORE's supervisor of record must certify that the CORE's most recent performance rating was at least "Achieved Expectations" or equivalent, next higher graded work exists for the CORE to perform, the CORE's new position description captures the duties to be performed, and the higher graded position is approved and funded. A CORE may be hired into a position at a higher grade via vacancy announcement or a name request, if the Office or Directorate has an existing higher graded position available or creates a new position according to the procedures detailed in section 2-2.
- C. For promotions, pay is set at the lowest pay rate in the new grade; however, the new pay rate must exceed the CORE's existing pay rate by at least two steps. If the annual rate of the new position falls between two steps of the new grade, the higher step may be used. For example, an IC-7, Step 3 at FEMA HQ, with an annual pay rate of \$45,473, who is promoted to an IC-8, is entitled to at least an increase in pay equal to two steps from the position from which she was promoted at IC-7 Step 5, or \$48,315. Because the annual pay rate for an IC-8, Step 1 is \$47,212, it does not satisfy the two-step increase requirement. Therefore, pay is set at IC-8, Step 2 or \$48,786.

## **6-6. Change to Lower Grade**

When a CORE moves from his or her current position to a position at a lower grade the action is referred to as a change to lower grade. The circumstances underlying the supervisor's recommendation to initiate a change to lower grade will determine how pay is set.

- A. A CORE who exhibits poor performance and fails to improve acceptably will be terminated (see Chapter 11 for more information). In rare occasions, COREs may be demoted in lieu of removal due to poor performance. Upon demotion, the pay rate must be set at least two steps below the current pay rate. If the two-step reduction results in a rate that falls between two steps of the lower grade, the lower step must be used.
- B. When a CORE requests a change to lower grade for personal reasons or convenience, including through application for an announced vacancy at a lower grade, the action is considered a voluntary change to a lower grade. For voluntary changes to a lower grade, the new rate should include any step increase that the CORE would have received during the qualifying period and pay should be set at:
  1. The minimum payable rate of basic pay for the lower grade; or
  2. The highest previous rate received under Federal service, if the action is fair and equitable after considering the factors listed in section 6-2, and if the action serves the convenience of the Government.

C. The reclassification of a position by OCCHCO to a lower grade range will result in a reduction in pay and pay will be set in accordance with the classification decision. Pay will be set according to the procedures detailed in section 6-2. No appeal of the reclassification decision or pay retention is permitted, subject to any applicable collective bargaining agreement.

## **CHAPTER 7: BENEFITS**

### **7-1. General**

- A. With certain exceptions that apply to individuals such as reemployed annuitants, CORE are eligible for Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB), Federal Employees Dental/Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP), Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI), Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), Flexible Spending Account (FSA), Federal Long Term Care Insurance (FLTCIP), and participation in the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP).
- B. COREs must review their benefit options and make selections within prescribed election periods. OCCHCO, Employee Services Division, will provide timely information to COREs with regard to available benefit options, election periods, and technical direction regarding how to apply for these options.
- C. OCCHCO staff is prohibited from making any type of recommendation that may influence a CORE's benefit election. COREs need to evaluate cost, personal needs, and eligible family members and their needs when preparing to make a benefits selection.
- D. FEMA applies guidance contained within OPM Benefits Administration Letter, No. 13-203, when extending benefits to legally married same-sex spouses and common law marriages in certain states, of Federal employees and annuitants, and to the children of those marriages.

### **7-2. Health Benefits**

- A. COREs are given an opportunity to enroll in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHB) at the time of appointment to a CORE position.
- B. A CORE must decide whether to elect to enroll in FEHB within 60 days after the effective date of appointment. A CORE who elects to enroll must submit SF-2809 to his or her HR Specialist. A CORE who fails to return the completed form within the prescribed time frame, or who cancels enrollment will not have another opportunity to enroll until an FEHB open season is offered (generally once per year), or as a result of a Qualifying Life Event (QLE).
- C. The CORE's share of the premium for the benefits plan chosen will be deducted from the CORE's bi-weekly pay on a pre-tax basis. A CORE may cancel health benefits coverage during an extended period of non-pay status or may continue the coverage and pay the premium each pay period or upon return to pay status. Effective dates for enrollment, changes in enrollment, and cancellation of enrollment will be established in accordance with guidance prescribed by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

### **7-3. FEDVIP (Dental and Vision) Program**

- A. The Federal Employees' Dental/Vision Program (FEDVIP) is a supplemental program offering vision and dental coverage to Federal employees, retirees, and their eligible family members on an enrollee-pay-all basis.
- B. COREs, retirees, and their eligible family members are eligible to enroll in FEDVIP if they are eligible to enroll in FEHB and the CORE's position is not excluded by law or regulation.<sup>10</sup> COREs who are not enrolled in FEHB may still be eligible for FEDVIP, providing they are eligible to enroll in FEHB.
- C. New and newly eligible COREs may enroll within 60 days after they become eligible. COREs may also enroll during the annual Federal Benefits Open Season in November and December.

### **7-4. Life Insurance**

Unless a CORE elects to waive coverage prior to the end of the pay period in which appointed, eligible COREs are automatically insured for basic life coverage on the day the CORE enters on duty in a pay status. Within 60 days after the effective date of appointment to a CORE position, a CORE who has basic life insurance coverage may also elect standard, additional, and/or family optional insurance. A CORE may decrease or waive all life insurance coverage at any time. Effective dates of life insurance coverage and waivers will be in accordance with the Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) program and OPM guidance. FEGLI is not included in the annual benefits open season and open season periods are rare.

### **7-5. Retirement**

- A. As a general rule, employees appointed to CORE positions are automatically covered by the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). Exceptions include certain former Federal employees who were hired prior to January 1, 1984, and were covered under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS). Retirement coverage, whether FERS, CSRS, or CSRS Offset, begins on the effective date of appointment to a CORE position.
- B. COREs who are covered by FERS, and first appointed:
  1. Before 2013, contribute 0.8% of pay to the Civil Service Retirement and Disability Fund (CSRDF);
  2. In 2013, contribute 3.1% of pay to the CSRDF; or
  3. After December 31, 2013, contribute 4.4% of pay to the CSRDF.
  4. Employee contributions to the CSRDF may change according to changes in the FERS program.

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<sup>10</sup> See 5 C.F.R. § 894.302 or an HR Specialist to determine whether a position is excluded from FEDVIP.

## **7-6. Thrift Savings Plan**

- A. The Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) is a tax-deferred retirement savings and investment plan that provides COREs with an opportunity to save a portion of their income for retirement and reduce current taxes.
- B. Eligibility for participation is determined by FEMA in accordance with law and TSP regulations published by the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board.
- C. COREs, covered by FERS, appointed after July 31, 2010, are automatically enrolled in the TSP.
- D. COREs can elect, change their election, or stop their contributions at any time through the Employee Personal Page (EPP) or by completing and submitting a TSP-1 Election form.

## **7-7. Federal Long-Term Care Insurance Program**

Long-Term Care insurance provides financial protection to enrollees who are in need of assistance with their daily activities due to a lengthy or lifelong illness, injury, or cognitive impairment. Long-Term Care insurance is medically underwritten; therefore, a CORE and eligible family members must qualify for the insurance. Eligible COREs can enroll at any time; however, newly-hired COREs and their spouses receive a 60-day window to enroll using an abbreviated underwriting process.

## **7-8. Flexible Spending Accounts**

Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA) allows COREs to set aside money on a pre-tax basis to cover out-of-pocket health care or dependent care expenses. A newly eligible CORE has 60 days from the date of his or her appointment to elect to set aside this money by payroll deduction. A CORE who wishes to participate or continue to participate from one plan year to the next must make a positive election during the annual open season, which runs concurrent with the health insurance open season. Changes can be made outside of the benefits open season as a result of a Qualifying Life Event (QLE).

## **7-9. Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**

COREs have access to confidential work life enhancement services through the EAP, free of charge. The EAP is a professional resource available to help COREs resolve life challenges. A CORE may call the toll-free EAP number at 1-800-222-0364, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. A CORE can also access EAP services online at [www.FOH4you.com](http://www.FOH4you.com).

## **7-10. Transit Subsidy Program**

Subject to the availability of funds, all COREs who are currently using public transportation to commute to work are eligible for transit subsidy benefits. The Office of the Chief Administrative Officer (OCAO), Support Services and Facilities Management Division (SSFMD), administers the transit subsidy program.

COREs interested in receiving a transit subsidy must complete FEMA Form 254-1-1, Public Transportation Benefit Program Application, and email it to the Transit Subsidy Program at [FEMA-Transit-Subsidy@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-Transit-Subsidy@fema.dhs.gov).

## **CHAPTER 8: PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

### **8-1. General**

- A. CORE performance management shall comply with the Employee Performance Management Program as established by FM 255-1-1.
- B. A CORE who receives a rating of unacceptable, or equivalent, on his or her most recent appraisal (rating of record) may be subject to removal in accordance with Chapter 11 of this Manual. Such removal should be effected regardless of the timing of the CORE's NTE date. However, a supervisor is not precluded from terminating a CORE prior to issuance of a performance appraisal, so long as the supervisor has sufficient documentation to justify the action and has consulted with an OCCHCO Employee Relations Specialist.

### **8-2. Performance Management for CORE-Is**

The performance of IMAT members appointed as CORE-Is are subject to FD 010-7, and are not covered by FEMA Manual 255-1-1 or this Chapter.

### **8-3. Deployment Performance Management**

- A. When deployed to a disaster for twenty days or more, a CORE qualified in a FQS position, and deployed to that position, will receive an evaluation of the CORE's deployment performance by a temporary duty supervisor. The evaluation period consists of the entire time the CORE is deployed.
- B. COREs will be evaluated on their performance based on the performance goals developed by Cadre Coordinators for each position within a Cadre. The goals will align with the position-specific knowledge of program and technical protocols contained in the position's PTB, and the core competencies for deployed personnel.
- C. The temporary duty supervisor will complete a deployment evaluation in a timely manner and transmit the evaluation to the CORE's supervisor of record. Additionally, the HR Unit Leader and his or her staff will ensure that any demobilized CORE who is deployed for at least twenty days is issued a performance evaluation prior to departing the incident work site.
- D. If a CORE's deployment performance does not meet achieved expectations, the CORE's supervisor of record in coordination with the Cadre Coordinator and/or temporary duty supervisor will collaborate with OCCHCO to determine the appropriate course of action.
- E. A CORE's progress review and appraisal (rating of record) should include input received after a deployment from the temporary duty supervisor. However, the supervisor of record has the discretion to consider the deployment performance evaluation as he or she deems appropriate when completing progress reviews and the annual appraisal (rating of record) subsequent to the deployment.

F. If the CORE is deployed at the time that the CORE's quarterly progress review should take place, the supervisor of record will work with the CORE and his or her temporary duty supervisor to obtain feedback on the CORE's performance during the applicable quarter.

## **CHAPTER 9: AWARDS AND RECOGNITION**

### **9-1. Awards and Recognition Program**

The Awards and Recognition program applicable to Title 5 employees and captured in FEMA Manual 255-4-1 is also applicable to COREs, with the exception of CORE-Is. Awards and recognition policy applicable to CORE-I IMATs is found in FD 010-7.

## **CHAPTER 10: SCHEDULING OF WORK AND TELEWORK**

### **10-1. Scheduling of Work and Telework**

- A. FM 106-1-1, Scheduling of Work, applies to all COREs. To establish a work schedule a CORE must submit a copy of FEMA Form 106-1-1-1, Request for Work Schedule, to his or her supervisor of record for approval.
- B. COREs will use FEMA approved timekeeping policies and procedures to account for all hours of work.
- C. FM 123-9-1, Telework Manual, applies to all COREs. To establish a telework agreement and schedule a CORE must submit a copy of FEMA Form 123-9-0-1, Telework Application and Agreement Form, and FEMA Form 123-9-0-2, Employee Self-Certification Safety and Health Checklist, to his or her supervisor of record for approval.
- D. COREs whose Residence of Record is their permanent duty station are not teleworking when on duty. However, all COREs whose Residence of Record is their official duty station must have a completed and approved Employee Self-Certification Safety and Health Checklist forms on-file with FEMA prior to being permitted to work.

## CHAPTER 11: PROCEDURES FOR MISCONDUCT AND POOR PERFORMANCE

### 11-1. General

- A. COREs are non-Title 5 employees and, therefore normally do not have appeal rights to the Merit Systems Protection Board.
- B. Supervisors must communicate proper conduct and performance standards. Supervisors must also set an example for proper conduct and performance for their subordinates.
- C. Supervisors must identify and deal with misconduct and unacceptable performance as they occur.
- D. Supervisors must document problems as they occur and follow up with COREs to ensure they understand the seriousness of their behavior and/or performance deficiencies. Documentation does not have to be lengthy. It can be a brief summary of key facts and issues, with names, dates and times that the incident(s) occurred. This documentation must be created in a timely manner and preserved for potential litigation and may be subject to discovery.
- E. Supervisors should immediately contact their servicing Employee Relations Specialist when misconduct or performance issues occur to obtain advice and guidance before taking any official action. If this issue involves misconduct, supervisors must report the matter as required by FD 123-19, paragraph III.D.
- F. When making a determination of lack of fitness to encumber a FEMA position, or that the CORE's security clearance is being suspended or revoked under DHS Instruction 121-01-007, OCSO shall immediately notify Employee Relations.

### 11-2. Addressing Misconduct

- A. Misconduct must be reported to FEMA HQ in accordance with FD 123-19, Administrative Investigations Directive (AID), and, depending on the status of the CORE and the alleged misconduct, to the DHS OIG. It can be difficult to determine whether a CORE's actions constitute misconduct or poor performance, or whether suspected misconduct triggers the requirements to report the suspected misconduct to DHS OIG or the AID Committee. As such, consultation with OCCHCO is critical to determining the proper course of action. The Employee Relations Specialist will recommend the appropriate option and provide the required documentation to the manager for issuance to the CORE. FD 123-19 and its accompanying Manual, FM 123-19-1, provide procedures for reporting misconduct and investigating it prior to determining if disciplinary action for any substantiated misconduct is to be recommended.

#### B. Options to Address Misconduct

- 1. **Counseling**. A counsel is an informal verbal advisement by a supervisor to a CORE of misconduct that must be corrected, yet which avoids any lasting adverse effect on a CORE's personnel record. The purpose of counseling is to correct misconduct problems soon after they occur in

order to prevent the need for formal discipline. Counseling is an appropriate response to minor misconduct when the CORE has a generally good record, with no prior instances of misconduct, and is committed to correcting the problem. Documentation is not required; however, a follow-up e-mail recounting the conversation entitled "Discussion dated XX" can be provided to the CORE and is strongly recommended. At a minimum the supervisor shall send an email to himself or herself to document the content of the conversation. Counseling can be used to demonstrate that the CORE was put on notice about the problem and knew of the potential for a harsh penalty if the problem continued. A memorandum documenting the counseling is not placed in the CORE's Official Personnel Folder (OPF).

2. **Reprimand**. A written reprimand is the lowest level of formal discipline addressed to the CORE and signed by the immediate supervisor (or higher level supervisor in the chain of command). Depending on the severity of the misconduct, it may be appropriate for a first offense of misconduct, when written formal discipline is necessary or, when verbal counseling has been ineffective in correcting misconduct. The reprimand should include, as a minimum, the following information:
  - i. Reference previous counseling or other action that was relied on to support the action (if any);
  - ii. Advise the CORE of any applicable appeal rights, such as the right to file an appeal with the next higher level supervisor within five calendar days after receipt of the reprimand;
  - iii. Advise the CORE of the potential negative consequences of future misconduct;
  - iv. Advise the CORE of Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services available to assist with any work-related or personal concerns that may have an impact on performance and/or behavior at work;
  - v. Inform the CORE of the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Program and of his or her right to seek counseling with an EEO advisor if he or she believes the reprimand is based on a prohibited factor;
  - vi. State whether a copy of the reprimand will be placed in the CORE's OPF, which may be for a period not to exceed 3 years;
  - vii. Identify the servicing Employee Relations Specialist to contact for questions concerning the reprimand; and
  - viii. Provide a signature line upon which the CORE will acknowledge receipt of the notice of reprimand.
3. **Suspension**. A suspension temporarily removes the CORE from the performance of duties without pay for a specified period, and is recorded in the CORE's official personnel record. A notice of suspension is a memorandum on FEMA letterhead, addressed to the CORE, and signed

by the immediate supervisor (or higher level supervisor in the chain of command).

- i. The supervisor of record forwards a copy of the notice (signed and dated by the supervisor) and the SF-52 to the Employee Relations Specialist. The Specialist codes the SF-52 and forwards it to the OCCHCO for processing.
- ii. The notice of a suspension should include, as a minimum, the following information:
  - a. Identify the specific charge(s), supporting information, regulations or policies violated;
  - b. Identify the effective date of the action;
  - c. Advise the CORE of any applicable appeal rights, such as the right to appeal the suspension to the next-higher level supervisor within five calendar days of receipt of the notice, and of the CORE's right to file a grievance under any applicable collective bargaining agreement;
  - d. Inform the CORE of his or her right to seek counseling with an EEO advisor if he or she believes the suspension is based on a prohibited factor;
  - e. Advise the CORE how to contact the EAP to assist with any work-related or personal concerns that may have an impact on the CORE's conduct at work;
  - f. Provide the name and telephone number of the servicing Employee Relations Specialist whom the CORE may contact for questions; and
  - g. Provide a signature line upon which the CORE will acknowledge receipt of the notice of suspension.
4. **Removal from Federal Service.** A removal from federal service is recorded in the CORE's personnel record, and is the most severe form of discipline available to a manager. Removal may be appropriate when the facts and supporting information cause the supervisor to conclude that the CORE has demonstrated an unwillingness or refusal to conform to acceptable standards of conduct, a lesser penalty would not deter future misconduct, or there is little probability of the CORE's rehabilitation.
  - i. A notice of removal is a memorandum on FEMA Letterhead addressed to the CORE from the immediate supervisor (or higher level supervisor in the chain of command). The notice should include the same items identified in section 11-2.B.3.ii. (Content of a suspension notice).
  - ii. The CORE's immediate supervisor, or any higher-level supervisor in the CORE's chain of command, should give the notice to the CORE at or before the effective date of the notice and request that the CORE

acknowledge receipt at the bottom of the last page of the notice. If the CORE refuses to sign the notice acknowledging receipt, the supervisor should place a note on the last page to indicate that the notice was given to the CORE and the CORE refused to acknowledge receipt. Failure to acknowledge receipt has no impact on implementation of the decision.

5. **Removal Based on a Determination of Lack of Fitness for a FEMA Position.** All COREs must meet fitness standards established in DHS Instruction 121-01-007.
  - i. OCSO has the authority to determine a CORE's fitness, based on a background investigation at the time of entry on duty and every five years thereafter (or more frequently as circumstances warrant).
  - ii. When OCSO has determined that a CORE does not meet the fitness standard, in accordance with the procedures in DHS Instruction 121-01-007, OCSO shall notify OCCHCO/Employee Relations, which shall coordinate with the CORE's supervisor and OCSO to deny the CORE unescorted access to DHS/FEMA facilities. In addition, DHS Sensitive Systems Policy Directive 4300A requires that DHS employees have a favorably adjudicated background investigation to be granted access to DHS Information Technology systems. Therefore, COREs who do not meet the fitness standard are normally required to turn in their FEMA equipment (e.g., laptop, Blackberry, etc.) and are placed on non-duty, non-pay status. The CORE may request to use any available accrued leave during this period.
  - iii. With the concurrence of OCCHCO/Employee Relations and the Office of Chief Counsel, the supervisor of record issues a removal decision to a CORE under his or her supervision deemed unfit to encumber a FEMA position. The notice should include the same items identified in section 11-2.B.3.ii. (content of a suspension notice).
  - iv. The removal decision shall include the right to appeal within five calendar days after the removal is effective. Appeals from removal decisions are decided by the Associate or Deputy Associate Administrator, Mission Support.
6. **Recovery of Government Equipment.** Supervisors shall collect all government equipment prior to the effective date of the removal.

### **11-3. Addressing Poor Performance**

CORE supervisors and managers should consult FM 255-1-1, Employee Performance Management Program, for more information on dealing with poor performance. Most performance problems can be resolved through effective communication between the supervisor and CORE. The supervisor should, at a minimum, take the following steps:

- A. Discuss performance deficiencies with any CORE whose performance is substandard. This discussion provides the supervisor the opportunity to clarify job expectations, and to identify performance deficiencies. It provides the CORE with clear direction as to what he or she needs to do to improve his or her performance to an acceptable level. The supervisor should document the discussion and provide the CORE with a copy of the documentation to prevent misunderstandings, or mischaracterization of the discussion.
- B. Monitor the CORE's performance following the discussion, and document the CORE's progress toward improving his or her performance.
- C. The supervisor must discuss the CORE's performance deficiencies with the Employee Relations Specialist for guidance on (1) whether to remove a CORE for substandard performance immediately or (2) to provide the CORE time to demonstrate improvement, and if so, the length of time to do so. A "performance expectations" memorandum is a helpful tool that the supervisor can issue to the CORE. The Employee Relations Specialist will assist the supervisor with drafting any correspondence regarding performance problems. The supervisor will provide the Specialist with a signed and dated copy of the final document. The supervisor must document the deficiencies with memoranda, emails, work products and any other documentation that demonstrates the deficiencies. COREs are not placed on formal Performance Improvement Plans (PIPs).
- D. Removal from Federal Service.
  - 1. A removal from federal service is recorded in the CORE's personnel record, and is the most severe form of discipline available to a manager. A notice of removal is a memorandum on FEMA Letterhead addressed to the CORE from the immediate supervisor (or higher level supervisor in the chain of command).
  - 2. The notice should include the same items identified in section 11-2.B.3.ii (content of a suspension notice).
  - 3. The CORE's immediate supervisor, or any higher-level supervisor in the CORE's chain of command, must give the notice to the CORE at or before the effective date of the notice and request that the CORE acknowledge receipt at the bottom of the last page of the notice. If the CORE refuses to sign the notice acknowledging receipt, the supervisor should place a note on the last page to indicate that the notice was given to the CORE and the CORE refused to acknowledge receipt. Failure to acknowledge receipt has no impact on implementation of the decision.
- E. In rare circumstances, the supervisor may initiate a reassignment to another position in a lower pay band or IC pay grade, whichever is applicable, in lieu of removal, to address poor performance after receiving concurrence from the Employee Relations Specialist and the Office of Chief Counsel. In such circumstances, the CORE's rate of pay will be reduced in accordance with Chapters 5 and 6.

#### **11-4. Deployment Scenarios**

COREs may be assigned to perform incident management and incident support duties based on the operational needs of FEMA and subject to the policies contained within FD 010-8, FEMA Incident Workforce Deployment. During deployment, supervisors of record receive feedback on the performance of COREs during deployments from the CORE's temporary duty supervisors. Temporary duty supervisors provide day-to-day supervision of the performance of deployed COREs.

- A. Temporary duty supervisors must consult with the supervisor of record and OCCHCO/Employee Relations Branch when they encounter poor performance, and provide all documents to the supervisor of record.
- B. Temporary duty supervisors who become aware of allegations of misconduct shall notify the supervisor of record of the allegation. The supervisor of record shall consult with OCCHCO/Employee Relations before initiating disciplinary action. The supervisor of record will notify the temporary duty supervisor of any impending disciplinary action. In all cases in which misconduct is alleged, the Employee Relations Branch shall provide advice to the Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO) and the supervisor of record as to the propriety of the following options:
  1. Releasing the CORE from the deployment into a non-duty, non-pay status;
  2. Releasing the CORE and returning him or her to the official duty station, or
  3. Keeping the CORE deployed pending completion of any needed investigation or issuance of disciplinary action.
- C. If the supervisor of record and FCO disagree whether to demobilize the CORE, the issue will be resolved by the Associate Administrator of Response and Recovery.

#### **11-5. Arrest, Indictment, and other Allegations of Misconduct**

- A. FEMA may receive information that a CORE has been arrested, indicted for a crime, used an illegal drug, or has allegedly committed other serious misconduct. Supervisors may learn of this information in a variety of ways, including the CORE's self-report or via other employees, the Office of the Chief Security Office (OCSO), or press reports. Upon receipt of such information, the supervisor of record, FCO, or temporary duty supervisor shall contact Employee Relations for guidance.
- B. If the CORE is incarcerated or otherwise unable to come to work, the supervisor must first address the leave status. COREs may use available leave, if requested and approved by the supervisor. If the request is denied, the CORE shall be placed in a non-duty, non-pay status. The supervisor is not obligated to approve a leave request submitted by the CORE.

- C. If the CORE is available for duty following arrest, or, if not arrested, but is under investigation for alleged misconduct, the following factors must be considered in determining whether the CORE shall be permitted to return to duty pending resolution of the criminal action or other serious misconduct:
1. If the CORE has a security clearance, OCSO, Personnel Security Division (PSD), may suspend a CORE's security clearance upon receipt of adverse information, such as an arrest or indictment. If PSD suspends the CORE's clearance, or revokes it, PSD shall notify ER. Normally, COREs would be placed in non-duty, non-pay status until a recommendation on removal can be made by ER to the supervisor of record.
  2. For COREs without security clearances, OCSO must determine if the CORE is fit for continued employment. Thus, until OCSO has rendered a determination on the CORE's fitness, the supervisor of record must determine whether the CORE should be allowed to continue to work (including telework), be placed in a non-duty, non-pay status or be terminated pending the outcome of the criminal case, considering the following factors after consultation with ER, OCC's Personnel Law Branch, and OCSO:
    - i. What is the nature of the offense or other serious misconduct? The more serious the offense, the more likely that the CORE should not return to duty.
    - ii. What evidence is there as to the commission of the offense? The lack of corroboration or confession especially with a minor offense, may weigh in favor of the CORE's retention on duty.
    - iii. Does the known evidence suggest that the CORE is a physical or logical security risk?
    - iv. Impact on the Mission: Are there other factors that indicate that the mission will be adversely affected if the CORE is returned to duty, such as notoriety? Is the offense known, causing perceived damage to a Directorate's, Office's, or JFO's ability to conduct business or its credibility due to the CORE's continued presence?
  3. Authority to return the CORE to duty pending resolution of criminal matters: After consultation with ER, and subject to approval, if required, by the Office of Inspector General:
    - i. For COREs who are deployed, the FCO shall make the final decision as to whether the CORE shall remain at the JFO, after consultation with the supervisor of record (see section 11-4 for resolution of disputes on this matter between FCO and the supervisor of record).
    - ii. For COREs at their official duty station, the supervisor of record shall make the final decision as to whether the CORE shall return to duty.

## **11-6. The Appeal Process**

A CORE who wishes to appeal a reprimand, suspension, or removal decision may do so in writing to his or her second level supervisor no later than 5:00 p.m. (the local time of the second level supervisor) on the fifth calendar day following the effective date of the disciplinary action. COREs included within collective bargaining units must follow the procedures for that unit. Oral appeals are not permitted. This appeal process is not applicable to non-disciplinary actions, such as right-sizing, demobilization, or the expiration of appointments.

- A. The CORE may provide a narrative and any documentation that he or she considers relevant for the second level supervisor to consider prior to issuing his or her final decision.
- B. The second level supervisor may gather additional documents that he or she deems necessary to make a final decision. The second level supervisor should complete any additional investigation within five working days of the receipt of a timely appeal and issue a decision within five working days after finishing an investigation.
- C. The Employee Relations Specialist will review the written decision drafted by the second level supervisor prior to its issuance to the CORE. Additionally, the Employee Relations Specialist will gather and preserve any and all additional documents acquired by the second level supervisor to issue the final decision and the final decision itself.

## **11-7. Allegations of Discrimination**

If a CORE alleges discrimination to his or her supervisor, the CORE must be referred to the Office of Equal Rights for appropriate guidance on the EEO complaint process. The supervisor may contact the Office of Chief Counsel's Personnel Law Branch with any questions concerning the EEO process.

## **11-8. Allegations of Fraud, Waste, Abuse, and Mismanagement**

Supervisors must not ignore allegations of fraud, waste, abuse, or mismanagement, and must take steps to inquire into the allegations or refer them to appropriate management officials for investigation. Allegations of misconduct against COREs at the IC-15 or equivalent level or higher must be referred to the Office of Inspector General (ref: DHS Management Directive 0810.1) for investigation.

## **CHAPTER 12: RIGHTSIZING**

### **12-1. General**

- A. COREs receive temporary appointments that do not confer eligibility or priority consideration for permanent appointment. They may be removed from Federal service at any time for poor performance, misconduct, reduction in work, or for other agency mission needs, so long as adequate documentation exists to justify the removal, and are not subject to protection afforded by reduction-in-force provisions or reemployment rights established under any statutory or regulatory provision.
- B. When FEMA requires reductions in staff levels in one or more functional areas due to a lack of work or funding, FEMA may conduct a rightsizing of its CORE workforce. A rightsizing may occur when an Office or Directorate anticipates needing fewer positions through the annual workload analysis and staffing plan process, or if an immediate need to reduce positions or workload is realized between annual workload analyses.
- C. Rightsizing results in termination of appointment prior to the expiration date of an appointment, unless the CORE is selected for or is reassigned to another vacant position in FEMA.
- D. Rightsizing procedures should not be used to remove CORE employees due to poor performance or misconduct.
- E. A Rightsizing does not occur when FEMA declines to renew a CORE's appointment at the end of a CORE's appointment term.
- F. Program Areas shall be clearly defined, with appropriate justification, in the Plan. The Plan shall be in writing and approved by OCCHCO prior to implementation.

### **12-2. Rightsizing Plan**

- A. The second level supervisor, in coordination with OCCHCO, develops a Rightsizing Plan to affect the rightsizing procedures described in this Chapter that will impact the COREs under his or her supervisory authority. The Plan shall be in writing and approved by OCCHCO prior to implementation.
- B. Based on the Office or Directorate's most recent workload analysis and staffing plan, the second level supervisor will identify the activities that will cease to be performed or require an adjustment in the amount of time for performance.
- C. Using this adjusted workload analysis, the supervisor or manager will develop a revised Staffing Plan for the positions under his or her authority that will propose the number of CORE positions by title, series, grade, and duty station that will continue to be needed. The remaining positions will be identified for rightsizing.

- D. The Rightsizing Plan will consist of the updated staffing plan, any Functional Area SMEs identified for retention (see section 12-4.B.), the proposed timeline for providing the general and specific notices of rightsizing to the affected COREs, and the proposed effective date of the rightsizing.

### **12-3. Notice**

The second level supervisor will issue both general and specific notice of upcoming rightsizing efforts.

- A. General Advance Notice. COREs will be given a 30 calendar day advance official notification concerning decisions which may result in their being affected by a rightsizing effort. This notification will be in writing and will include: the reasons for the rightsizing effort, such as lack of work or funds, reorganization, or a realignment of functions; and, whom to contact about assistance available for affected employees.
- B. Specific Notice. Specific written notice of separation will be issued to individual affected COREs prior to the proposed date of their release. FEMA's goal is to provide notice no less than 30 calendar days from their date of release unless extenuating circumstances dictate a shorter notice period.

### **12-4. Retention Criteria**

Upon determining that rightsizing procedures are required, the second level supervisor, in consultation with OCCHCO, shall utilize the following criteria to determine the order in which COREs will be released. An incumbent will only be compared to other incumbents under the supervision of that second level supervisor.

- A. **Position**. Identify (1) the affected area; (2) the existing positions staffing that area; and (3) pay levels within each position. Each position is reviewed and listed by pay and location, and positions are identified for retention based on lack of work or funds, reorganization, or a realignment of functions. The determination as to the number of needed positions to staff the reduced workforce must be documented in the Rightsizing Plan.

**Example.** In this example, the program area is identified as "Applicant Services" and the existing positions are "Applicant Services Specialists." There are currently 10 IC-12s, 15 IC-11s, and 15 IC-9s Applicant Services Specialist positions. The remaining work only requires 3 IC-12s, 10 IC-11s, and no IC-9s Applicant Services Specialists.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, 7 IC-12s, 5 IC-11s, and all IC-9s will be released. Consequently, the second level supervisor must examine the incumbent IC-12s and IC-11s to determine who will fill the

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<sup>11</sup> For this example, substitute the pay band numbers for grade level if the COREs with positions targeted for rightsizing are paid via an administratively-determined pay scale utilizing pay bands.

remaining positions utilizing the following retention criteria. OCCHCO must approve this Plan prior to implementation.

Current Staffing	Needed	Release	Remaining
10 – Applicant Services Specialists, IC-12	3 – Applicant Services Specialists, IC-12	7 – Applicant Services Specialists, IC-12	3 – Applicant Services Specialists, IC-12
15 – Applicant Services Specialists, IC-11	10 – Applicant Services Specialist, IC-11	5 – Applicant Services Specialists, IC-11	10 – Applicant Services Specialists, IC-11
15 – Applicant Service Specialists, IC-9	0 – Applicant Services Specialists, IC-9	15 –Applicant Services Specialists IC-9	0 – Applicant Services Specialists, IC-9

- B. **Functional Area SME.** To ensure accomplishment of mission objectives, the supervisor of a functional area subject to rightsizing procedures may identify one SME from the supervisor's functional area that should be excluded from rightsizing procedures because of the SME's subject matter expertise. Any request for a SME's exclusion from rightsizing must be accompanied by a justification that establishes that a need exists for this SME position, and that the requested employee is most qualified for the SME position. This request must be approved by the supervisor's chain of command with the final concurrence of the Head of the Office or Directorate, who will then inform OCCHCO of the SME designation and transmit to OCCHCO all documents justifying his or her selection. OCCHCO must review and approve the SME designation as part of the review of the Rightsizing Plan. A SME who is thereafter reassigned to a different functional area will lose his or her SME designation, thereby losing his or her exemption from rightsizing procedures.
- C. **Performance Evaluation.** The second level supervisor will provide to OCCHCO the summary rating level of all COREs in positions that must be rightsized, based on their most recent annual performance appraisals. Incumbents will be released in inverse order of performance rating (lowest to highest). Normally, incumbents with summary rating levels of Achieved Excellence (or equivalent) will be excluded from release unless the total number of positions that must be released exceeds the number of incumbents who received a summary rating below Achieved Excellence (or equivalent).
- D. **Service Computation Date (SCD).** If reviewing the performance evaluations of all COREs in positions that must be rightsized has not distinguished the incumbents for release from those who will be excluded from release for the current round of rightsizing, OCCHCO shall further review incumbents by SCD and shall identify those with the most recent SCDs for release.
- E. **Ties.** The official who would normally make the selection for the position from which the CORE is being released will determine, on the basis of

qualifications and competencies for the specific position, which employee(s) will be retained when two or more employees have identical service computation dates. The rationale for retention versus removal must be documented with the specific reasons for each decision. OCCHCO must review and approve the stated rationale.

**F. Recovery Office Closure.**

1. Some COREs will remain in their positions until the closure of the Recovery Office.
2. Upon the closure of the Recovery Office, the remaining COREs must have applied and been selected for a vacant FEMA position or they will be released from their employment with FEMA, using the notice procedures above.

**12-5. Transitional Options for Released COREs**

CORE staff identified for release will not be automatically reassigned directly into vacant positions elsewhere in FEMA and must apply and be appointed through the hiring procedures identified in this Manual. COREs will be released from their current appointments for lack of work if, by the date of their release, they have not been selected for another vacant position within FEMA. The Director of the Recovery Office or the Head of the Office or Directorate may assist COREs identified for release with career transition, as appropriate, by arranging for assistance with resume writing and interview preparation.

## **CHAPTER 13: ABSENCE AND LEAVE**

### **13-1. Absence and Leave Policy**

FEMA administratively applies FM 3300.3, FEMA Absence and Leave Policy to COREs, with the exception of CORE-Is, whose absence and leave policies are governed by FD 010-7, Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT) Program Directive.

## **CHAPTER 14: TRAINING AND ETHICS**

### **14-1. Training Provisions**

- A. The CORE and his or her supervisor of record share the responsibility for ensuring the CORE's professional development.
- B. OCCHCO, Employee Development Division, is responsible for drafting guidance on various topics, including but not limited to, continuing service agreements relating participation in employee development programs, supervisory training, and individual and executive development plans.
- C. A CORE may be temporarily placed on a rotational assignment as part of a professional development program. In such circumstances, the duties and responsibilities performed by the CORE must be authorized under the Stafford Act. A CORE may be placed on a rotational assignment for up to 120 days that may be renewed for one additional 120 day period. As the CORE IMAT program maintains its own professional development program, CORE IMATs are not eligible for rotational assignments.
- D. Eligibility for training programs for a CORE paid via the grades and steps system is determined by the applicable grade and years of service requirement. Eligibility for training programs for a CORE paid via the pay band system is determined by comparing the current salary level of the CORE to the salary range of the GS levels eligible for the training program and the years of service requirement. The CORE will be eligible for a training program if the CORE's salary is within the salary range of the GS employees eligible for the training and satisfying the years of service requirement.
- E. IM COREs are eligible to participate in applicable leadership development programs so long as the training program does not have an impact on mission requirements. If an IM CORE is directed to deploy during a training program the CORE must deploy and may not finish the training program.
- F. COREs participating in a leadership development program will be required to sign and comply with the terms of a three year Continuing Service Agreement (CSA). See Chapter 15, Continuing Service Agreements, for more information.

### **14-2. Ethics Requirements**

- A. All COREs are subject to the federal ethics laws and regulations, including the criminal conflict of interest statutes, the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch, and any supplemental ethics regulations promulgated by DHS.
  - 1. Federal ethics laws and regulations apply to COREs at all times and may affect a CORE's ability to seek and enter into outside employment.
  - 2. A CORE's outside employment may also create a real or apparent conflict of interest with his or her FEMA duties.

3. COREs must be informed of these rules and regulations prior to hiring.
- B. All COREs shall receive training in fraud detection and prevention, equal rights, privacy, and security.
- C. All COREs must complete Initial Ethics Orientation provided by OCC Ethics within 90 days of their date of entry, in accordance with 5 C.F.R. § 2638.703.
- D. Confidential financial disclosure filers must complete one hour of annual ethics training per calendar year, as required by 5 C.F.R. § 2638.705. All other COREs must complete annual ethics training per FEMA policy.
- E. All annual ethics training is provided by OCC Ethics.

## **CHAPTER 15: CONTINUING SERVICE AGREEMENTS**

### **15-1. Service Agreement**

- A. An applicant or CORE who receives a recruitment, relocation, or retention incentive is required to sign a two-year CSA prior to receiving the incentive. The Selecting Official or supervisor of record will preserve a signed copy of the service agreement and transmit a copy to OCCHCO.
- B. A CORE participating in a leadership development program will be required to sign a three-year CSA.
- C. A CORE must fulfill the terms of the CSA, including when the appointment is renewed for another appointment period.

### **15-2. Terminations of a CSA**

- A. If a CORE voluntarily separates from FEMA prior to completing the service obligation period, to begin employment with DHS Headquarters or another DHS Component, the CORE must give his or her supervisor of record at least 30 days advance notice in writing, during which time the supervisor shall notify OCCHCO to transfer the remaining service obligation to the gaining agency. If the CORE separates from the Federal service or begins employment with another Federal agency, the CORE will be indebted to FEMA for the remaining service period.
- B. A CORE who is demoted, removed from Federal service for misconduct or poor performance, or receives a rating of record lower than Achieved Expectations or equivalent, before fulfilling the terms of a CSA will be indebted to the Federal Government for the remaining service period.
- C. Repayment is not required when a CORE is involuntarily separated for reasons other than misconduct or poor performance, or when the circumstances are otherwise beyond the CORE's control.
- D. A CSA may be unilaterally terminated by the head of an Office or Directorate based solely on management needs. Examples of discretionary removals include, but are not limited to, rightsizings or insufficient funds to continue planned payments. When a removal is based on management needs, the employee is entitled to all payments attributable to completed service and to retain any portion of a payment received that is attributable to uncompleted service.

### **15-3. Debt Recovery**

- A. When reimbursement is required, the repayment amount will be reduced on a pro rata basis for the percentage of completion of the obligated service period.
- B. If a CORE's appointment is not renewed, and the CORE is not appointed to a different position within FEMA, recovery is waived.

C. An indebted CORE may request a waiver of any debt relating to a CSA to his or her Office or Directorate head. The Officer or Directorate head must send the request along with his or her recommendation through OCCHCO to the Administrator, who will render a written decision. Waivers in whole or in part will be rare and will be based on a determination that the recovery would be against equity and good conscience, or against the public interest.

# Affirmative Action Plan for the Recruitment, Hiring, Advancement, and Retention of Persons with Disabilities

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# Affirmative Action Plan for the Recruitment, Hiring, Advancement, and Retention of Persons with Disabilities

To capture agencies' affirmative action plan for persons with disabilities (PWD) and persons with targeted disabilities (PWT), EEOC regulations (29 C.F.R. § 1614.203(e)) and MD-715 require agencies to describe how their affirmative action plan will improve the recruitment, hiring, advancement, and retention of applicants and employees with disabilities.

## Section I: Efforts to Reach Regulatory Goals

EEOC regulations (29 C.F.R. § 1614.203(d)(7)) require agencies to establish specific numerical goals for increasing the participation of persons with reportable and targeted disabilities in the federal government.

1. Using the goal of 12% as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWD by grade level cluster in the permanent workforce? If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box.
  - a. Cluster GS-1 to GS-10 (PWD) Answer: Yes
  - b. Cluster GS-11 to SES (PWD) Answer: Yes

Based on the utilization analysis of the DHS workforce by disability grouping, PWDs are participating at a rate of 8.79 percent in the GS-1 to GS-10 grades, and a rate of 10.24 percent in the GS-11 to SES grade clusters. Both rates are lower than expected, when compared to the 12 percent onboard goal.

\* For GS employees, please use two clusters: GS-1 to GS-10 and GS-11 to SES, as set forth in 29 C.F.R. § 1614.203(d)(7). For all other pay plans, please use the approximate grade clusters that are above or below GS-11 Step 1 in the Washington, DC metropolitan region.

2. Using the goal of 2% as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWT by grade level cluster in the permanent workforce? If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box.
  - a. Cluster GS-1 to GS-10 (PWT) Answer: Yes
  - b. Cluster GS-11 to SES (PWT) Answer: Yes

Based on the utilization analysis of the DHS workforce by disability grouping, PWTs (IWTD) are participating at a rate of 1.43 percent in the GS-1 to GS-10 grades, and at a rate of 1.18 percent in the GS-11 to SES grade clusters, which is lower than expected, when compared to the 2 percent onboard regulatory goal.

3. Describe how the agency has communicated the numerical goals to the hiring managers and/or recruiters.

Annual hiring goals for individuals with disabilities and targeted disabilities are formally announced in conjunction with the Veterans hiring goals on an annual basis from the DHS OCHCO to all DHS Components via the Human Capital Leadership Council (HCLC), which is composed of the senior human capital officials in OCHCO, the DHS Components, and other lines of business. The goals are further communicated to the

Components' EEO and Diversity officials and staff, to be socialized and implemented throughout the Components with human resources, EEO, and Diversity practitioners and hiring officials.

## Section II: Model Disability Program

Pursuant to 29 C.F.R. § 1614.203(d)(1), agencies must ensure sufficient staff, training and resources to recruit and hire persons with disabilities and persons with targeted disabilities, administer the reasonable accommodation program and special emphasis program, and oversee any other disability hiring and advancement program the agency has in place.

### A. PLAN TO PROVIDE SUFFICIENT & COMPETENT STAFFING FOR DISABILITY PROGRAM

- Has the agency designated sufficient qualified personnel to implement its disability program during the reporting period? If "no", describe the agency's plan to improve the staffing for the upcoming year.

Answer: Yes

CRCL's, Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity Division, has a full-time Departmental Disability Employment Program Manager who is responsible for implementing and maturing the DHS Disability Employment Program. Also at the DHS level, (OCHCO's SRDI) has two assigned employees to support disability recruitment, career development, and retention programs across DHS. All DHS Components have identified personnel for the following programs: Selective Placement Program, Disability Employment Program, Reasonable Accommodation Program, and the Operations Warfighter Program.

- Identify all staff responsible for implementing the agency's disability employment program by the office, staff employment status, and responsible official.

Disability Program Task	# of FTE Staff by Employment Status			Responsible Official (Name, Title, Office, Email)
	Full Time	Part Time	Collateral Duty	
Processing applications from PWD and PWT	123	9	28	See full report for list of responsible officials.
Answering questions from the public about hiring authorities that take disability into account	132	9	29	See full report for list of responsible officials.
Processing reasonable accommodation requests from applicants and employees	18	0	25	See full report for list of responsible officials.
Section 508 Compliance	62	0	0	See full report for list of responsible officials.
Architectural Barriers Act Compliance	110	0	0	See full report for list of responsible officials.
Special Emphasis Program for PWD and PWT	8	0	0	See full report for list of responsible officials.

- Has the agency provided disability program staff with sufficient training to carry out their responsibilities during the reporting period? If "yes", describe the training(s) that disability program staff have received. If "no", describe the training(s) planned for the upcoming year.

Answer: Yes

DHS CRCL/EEOD provided continuous training and guidance to all responsible staff to ensure they have the most up-to-date information and resources to carry out their responsibilities effectively, to include:

- Leading Quarterly Disability Employment Advisory Council meetings covering ongoing program guidance, updates, and sharing of best practices across DHS Components.

- Participation in the Federal Exchange on Employment & Disability (FEED), a Federal Interagency working group focused on information sharing, best practices, and collaborative partnerships designed to make the Federal Government a model employer of people with disabilities.

Developed and delivered DHS Selective Placement Program Coordinator training to all identified Selective Placement Program Coordinators and Disability Program Managers.

## B. PLAN TO ENSURE SUFFICIENT FUNDING FOR THE DISABILITY PROGRAM

Has the agency provided sufficient funding and other resources to successfully implement the disability program during the reporting period? If “no”, describe the agency’s plan to ensure all aspects of the disability program have sufficient funding and other resources.

Answer: Yes

Eight of the nine DHS Components responded Yes.

Additionally, in support of meeting this measure, CRCL continued efforts during FY 2017, to encourage all DHS Components to utilize the Accessibility Compliance Management System (ACMS) to manage and track reasonable accommodations. As of January 2018, six out of nine Components are successfully using ACMS.

## Section III: Program Deficiencies in the Disability Program

In Part G of its FY 2017 MD-715 report, the agency identified the following program deficiencies involving its disability program:

Program Deficiencies	Agency Comments
Have the procedures for reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities been made readily available/accessible to all employees by disseminating such procedures during orientation of new employees and by making such procedures available on the World Wide Web or Internet?	HQ has not met this measure.
Are 90% of accommodation requests processed within the frame set forth in the agency procedures for reasonable accommodation?	CBP and ICE have not met this measure.

Program Deficiencies	Agency Comments
Does the agency review disability accommodation decisions/actions to ensure compliance with its written procedures and analyze the information tracked for trends, problems, etc.?	FEMA and HQ have not met this measure.

## Section IV: Plan to Recruit and Hire Individuals with Disabilities

Pursuant to 29 C.F.R. § 1614.203(d)(1)(i) and (ii), agencies must establish a plan to increase the recruitment and hiring of individuals with disabilities. The questions below are designed to identify outcomes of the agency's recruitment program plan for PWD and PWTD.

### A. PLAN TO IDENTIFY JOB APPLICANTS WITH DISABILITIES

1. Describe the programs and resources the agency uses to identify job applicants with disabilities, including individuals with targeted disabilities.

DHS implemented a CRC, comprising recruiting personnel from DHS Components and led by OCHCO, Strategic Recruitment, Diversity and Inclusion to identify and monitor disability recruiting programs and resources. The Recruitment Outreach Marketing Matrix (ROMM) is used to monitor all DHS activities. The CRC also assists with the implementation of the Strategic Outreach and Recruitment Plan (SOAR). In FY 2017, the CRC continued to maintain a Top 25 list of recruiting events to attend. From this list, OCHCO identified a priority subset for DHS-wide coordination, focusing on DHS mission-critical occupations (predominantly law enforcement).

In FY 2017, DHS participated in 91 events targeting veterans with disabilities and 14 events targeting individuals with disabilities (IWD) and targeted disabilities (IWTD). Events targeting IWD and IWTD included:

- Illinois Vocational Rehabilitation, Chicago, IL
- Minnesota Vocational Rehabilitation Agency, Saint Paul, MN
- Rotary Career Fair, Bellingham, WA
- Snohomish Career Fair, Marysville, WA
- Non-Competitive Hiring Fair, St. Paul, MN
- Advancement Via Individual Determination Classes, San Antonio, TX
- Gallaudet University Spring Career Fair, Washington, DC (multiple Component attendance)
  - Employment Opportunity Information Sessions at Gallaudet, Washington, DC
  - International Technology & Persons with Disabilities Conference, San Diego, CA
  - Bender Disability Virtual Career Fair, Virtual
  - Schedule A Targeted Hiring Event, Lyndhurst, NJ

Additionally, DHS conducted the following activities:

- Provided two information sessions for three classes in February 2017 and September 2017 at Gallaudet University to discuss objectives with college students including the Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP), the Pathways program, how to apply non-competitive jobs via USAJOBS, how to obtain a Schedule A letter from medical professionals or rehabilitation offices, and professionalism.

- In support of the DOL's Workforce Recruitment Program, conducted approximately 40 telephone interviews with students from the National Technology Institute of the Deaf, Touro Law School, and the University of San Francisco. As WRP recruiters, candidate profiles were developed, as well as recommendations for further referral for the WRP 2018 database.

2. Pursuant to 29 C.F.R. § 1614.203(a)(3), describe the agency's use of hiring authorities that take disability into account (e.g., Schedule A) to recruit PWD and PWTD for positions in the permanent workforce.

DHS uses the following hiring authorities to hire individuals with disabilities into temporary and permanent positions:

- 30 percent or More Disabled Veteran (5 U.S.C. 3112; 5 C.F.R. 316.302, 316.402, and 315.707)
- Schedule A Appointing Authority (5 C.F.R. § 213.3102(u))

3. When individuals apply for a position under a hiring authority that takes disability into account (e.g., Schedule A), explain how the agency (1) determines if the individual is eligible for appointment under such authority and (2) forwards the individual's application to the relevant hiring officials with an explanation of how and when the individual may be appointed.

Each DHS Component utilizes both the Schedule A appointing authority, and the 30 percent or More Disabled Veteran authority. Component Selective Placement Program Coordinators and Veterans Employment Program Managers handle coordination of applicants who qualify under non-competitive authorities.

The Department recognizes that while it has an established policy on administering the employment of veterans, it does not currently have a policy covering the Schedule A Appointment Authority for Individuals with Disabilities. DHS will continue to explore the feasibility of developing a DHS Schedule A policy during FY 2018.

For detailed procedures on how DHS Components are handling and processing applicants eligible under both Schedule A and the 30 percent or More Disabled Veteran authority, please refer to each Component's MD-715 report.

4. Has the agency provided training to all hiring managers on the use of hiring authorities that take disability into account (e.g., Schedule A)? If "yes", describe the type(s) of training and frequency. If "no", describe the agency's plan to provide this training.

Answer: Yes

DHS developed training for all hiring managers and human resources professionals entitled, "Employment of People with Disabilities: A Roadmap to Success," which includes information on Schedule A hiring authority as well as Veterans hiring authorities that take disability into account. The training is mandatory and must be taken sixty (60) days from employment and every two years thereafter.

The Roadmap to Success training was updated during FY 2017 to include the provision of the Final Rule covering Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act, as well as other necessary revisions. DHS plans to revise this training course over the next two years.

## B. PLAN TO ESTABLISH CONTACTS WITH DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT ORGANIZATIONS

Describe the agency's efforts to establish and maintain contacts with organizations that assist PWD, including PWT, in securing and maintaining employment.

The CRC coordinated participation in recruiting events at Gallaudet University, California State Northridge, the National Technical Institute for the Deaf, the Bender Virtual Career Fair, and recruiting and outreach events for disabled veterans through Operation Warfighter and Wounded Warrior programs.

A pilot non-paid internship program was also initiated during the summer in FY 2017, with CRCL and the Maryland Department of Rehabilitation Services, resulting in three offers of full-time employment. DHS plans to expand and encourage Component participation to increase employment opportunities throughout DHS.

## C. PROGRESSION TOWARDS GOALS (RECRUITMENT AND HIRING)

1. Using the goals of 12% for PWD and 2% for PWT as the benchmarks, do triggers exist for PWD and/or PWT among the new hires in the permanent workforce? If "yes", please describe the triggers below.

- a. New Hires for Permanent Workforce (PWD)      Answer: No
  - b. New Hires for Permanent Workforce (PWT)      Answer: Yes

During FY 2017, DHS exceeded the 12 percent hiring goal for IWD, representing 12.04 percent of all new hires. DHS did not reach the 2 percent hiring goal for IWTD. IWTD represented 1.14 percent of all new hires, which falls below the 2 percent hiring goal.

Disability workforce data includes employees who self-identify as having a disability and employees appointed under Schedule A and 30 percent or more Disabled

2. Using the qualified applicant pool as the benchmark, do triggers exist for PWD and/or PWT among the new hires for any of the mission-critical occupations (MCO)? If "yes", please describe the triggers below.

- a. New Hires for MCO (PWD)      Answer: No
  - b. New Hires for MCO (PWT)      Answer: Yes

Based on a review of B7 Applications and Hires which represents AFD and hires for Components (CBP, HQ, ICE, USCIS, and FEMA) that are using USA Staffing Cognos, triggers exist for the following occupations of the 10 Major Occupational Classifications for IWTDs:

1802-Compliance Inspection and Support: Qualified 1.54 percent; Selections 0.69 percent

1895-Customs and Border Protection: Qualified 0.51 percent; Selections 0.00 percent

1896-Border Patrol Agent: Qualified 0.73 percent; Selections 0.00 percent

0343-Management and Program Analysis: Qualified 2.35 percent; Selections 1.98 percent

2210-Information Technology Management: Qualified 1.16 percent; Selections 0.90 percent

3. Using the relevant applicant pool as the benchmark, do triggers exist for PWD and/or PWT among the qualified *internal* applicants for any of the mission-

critical occupations (MCO)? If “yes”, please describe the triggers below.

- |  |            |
|--|------------|
| a. Qualified Applicants for MCO (PWD)  | Answer: No |
| b. Qualified Applicants for MCO (PWTD) | Answer: No |

Relevant applicant pool data is not available. Identifying which current DHS employees would qualify for a job series they are not currently in is a difficult undertaking. The Human Capital offices do not adjudicate applicant qualifications until an applicant applies for a specific position, and the applicant may qualify based on experience obtained prior to entry into their current job series, or into DHS. DHS has not attempted to develop an estimate for job series-relevant applicant pools to date. In FY 2018, DHS will work to determine whether there is a way to develop the relevant internal applicant pool percentages for each series.

4. Using the qualified applicant pool as the benchmark, do triggers exist for PWD and/or PWTd among employees promoted to any of the mission-critical occupations (MCO)? If “yes”, please describe the triggers below.

- |                              |             |
|------------------------------|-------------|
| a. Promotions for MCO (PWD)  | Answer: Yes |
| b. Promotions for MCO (PWTd) | Answer: Yes |

Based on a review of B9 Selections for Internal Competitive Promotions for Major Occupations, which represents AFD and selections for Components (CBP, HQ, ICE, USCIS, and FEMA) that are using USA Staffing Cognos, triggers exist for the following occupations for IWD and IWTDs when comparing the qualified applicant pool to the number of selections for promotions:

IWD

1896-Border Patrol Agent: Qualified 2.98 percent; Selections 2.30 percent

IWTD

1801-General Inspection, Investigation, & Compliance: Qualified 3.56 percent; Selections 1.95 percent

1895-Customs and Border Protection: Qualified 1.69 percent; Selections 0.06 percent

1896-Border Patrol Agent: Qualified 1.53 percent; Selections 0.31 percent

## Section V: Plan to Ensure Advancement Opportunities for Employees with Disabilities

Pursuant to 29 C.F.R §1614.203(d)(1)(iii), agencies are required to provide sufficient advancement opportunities for employees with disabilities. Such activities might include specialized training and mentoring programs, career development opportunities, awards programs, promotions, and similar programs that address advancement. In this section, agencies should identify, and provide data on programs designed to ensure advancement opportunities for employees with disabilities.

### A. ADVANCEMENT PROGRAM PLAN

Describe the agency's plan to ensure PWD, including PWTd, have sufficient opportunities for advancement.

All managers and supervisors are encouraged to promote the career development of all employees, including individuals with disabilities and individuals with targeted disabilities.

## B. CAREER DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

1. Please describe the career development opportunities that the agency provides to its employees.

DHS hosted the Third Annual DHS Education Fair on September 21, 2017 in Washington, D.C., which included over 30 colleges and universities offering information on degrees and certifications available to DHS employees and family members. 225 employees and family members attended in person, and 100 employees participated by webinar. DHS Components continue to promote participation in their training and career development and academic programs through their internal Component websites and employee communications channels. Additionally, DHS employees have access to training/career development courses such as DHS's Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program. DHS, in partnership with SkillSoft, offers approximately 20,000 online learning resources. Employees can use these online resources as quick references, practical job aids to gain in-depth knowledge, or skill practice. These resources are mapped to support competencies, job roles, or blended learning offerings.

The DHS Mentoring Program is a formal program that provides enriching experiences through reciprocal relationships and opportunities for personal and professional growth while sharing knowledge, leveraging skills, and cultivating talent. The DHS Mentoring Program is open to all DHS federal employees. The Undersecretary for Management announces mentoring opportunities and provides training to mentors. Types of mentoring include: Speed Mentoring, Flash Mentoring, Situational Mentoring, Reverse Mentoring, Group Mentoring, and Peer Mentoring. The program is evaluated, and feedback is provided on its successes, along with areas requiring improvement. The OCHCO Strategic Learning Development and Engagement Division is exercising option year four (2017-2018) of the Mentoring Connection contract. In FY 2017, the DHS Mentoring programs coordinated over ninety (90) mentoring/mentee partnerships.

2. Do triggers exist for PWD among the applicants and/or selectees for any of the career development programs? (The appropriate benchmarks are the relevant applicant pool for applicants and the applicant pool for selectees.) If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box.

a. Applicants (PWD)

Answer: No

b. Selections (PWD)

Answer: No

Detailed applicant flow data (AFD) for the career development programs identified above are not available at the DHS level. DHS CRCL will continue to coordinate efforts with OCHCO and OPM to acquire access to applicant flow data as identified in the planned activities.

During FY 2017, AFD data were not available to conduct an analysis of the applicants and selections for development programs identified above by the required benchmarks. However, when comparing the number of selections for PWD to the 12 percent goal, PWD (IWD) were selected at rates significantly below those expected in the reported mentoring programs and the SES CDP program.

3. Do triggers exist for PWTD among the applicants and/or selectees for any of the career development programs identified? (The appropriate benchmarks are the relevant applicant pool for applicants and the applicant pool for selectees.) If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box.

- a. Applicants (PWTd)                          Answer: No

b. Selections (PWTd)                          Answer: No

Detailed applicant flow data (AFD) for the career development programs identified above are not available at the DHS level. DHS CRCL will continue to coordinate efforts with OCHCO and OPM to acquire access to applicant flow data as identified in the planned activities.

During FY 2017, AFD data were not available to conduct an analysis of the applicants and selections for development programs identified above by the required benchmarks. When comparing the number of selections for PWTs (IWTD) to the 2 percent goal, PWTs (IWTD) are exceeding in all programs with the exception of the Pathways-Recent Graduates program.

### **C. AWARDS**

1. Using the inclusion rate as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWD and/or PWTD for any level of the time-off awards, bonuses, or other incentives? If "yes", please describe the trigger(s) in the text box.

a. Awards, Bonuses, & Incentives (PWD)      Answer: Yes

b. Awards, Bonuses, & Incentives (PWTD)      Answer: Yes

Based on a review of MD-715 Table B13: Employee Recognition and Awards - Distribution by Disability, PWD (IWD) and PWTD (IWTD) are not receiving awards at the expected rates when compared to the corresponding inclusion rate. DHS-wide, this was identified for the following categories:

IWD		Benchmark
1-9 hours: 34.52%	IWD Inclusion Rate: 26.87%	IWOD Inclusion Rate:
Cash awards 1 – \$500: 26.63%	IWD Inclusion Rate: 21.65%	IWOD Inclusion Rate:
Cash awards \$500 +: 59.85%	IWD Inclusion Rate: 50.41%	IWOD Inclusion Rate:
IWTD		Benchmark
1-9 hours: 34.52%	Inclusion Rate: 34.03%	IWOD Inclusion Rate:
9+ hours: 26.49%	Inclusion Rate: 25.40%	IWOD Inclusion Rate:
Cash awards \$500 +: 59.85%	Inclusion Rate: 47.37%	IWOD Inclusion Rate:

2. Using the inclusion rate as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWD and/or PWTd for quality step increases or performance-based pay increases? If "yes", please describe the trigger(s) in the text box.

a. Pay Increases (PWD)                          Answer: No

b. Pay Increases (PWTd)                          Answer: No

Based on a review of MD-715 Table B13: Employee Recognition and Awards - Distribution by Disability, PWDs (IWD) and PWTD (IWTD) are exceeding the inclusion rate benchmark for quality step increase (QSI).

QSI Awards Benchmark	IWD Inclusion Rate: IWTD Inclusion Rate: IWOD Inclusion Rate:	1.16% 1.53% 0.74%
Further review indicates 4 out of 9 Components have triggers in this award category.		

3. If the agency has other types of employee recognition programs, are PWD and/or PWTD recognized disproportionately less than employees without disabilities? (The appropriate benchmark is the inclusion rate.) If "yes", describe the employee recognition program and relevant data in the text box.
- a. Other Types of Recognition (PWD)                          Answer: N/A
- b. Other Types of Recognition (PWTD)                          Answer: N/A

DHS did not have any other types of recognition programs during FY 17.

## D. PROMOTIONS

1. Does your agency have a trigger involving PWD among the qualified internal applicants and/or selectees for promotions to the senior grade levels? (The appropriate benchmarks are the relevant applicant pool for qualified internal applicants and the qualified applicant pool for selectees.) For non-GS pay plans, please use the approximate senior grade levels. If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box.
- a. SES
- i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD)                          Answer: No
- ii. Internal Selections (PWD)                                  Answer: No
- b. Grade GS-15
- i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD)                          Answer: Yes
- ii. Internal Selections (PWD)                                  Answer: No
- c. Grade GS-14
- i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD)                          Answer: Yes
- ii. Internal Selections (PWD)                                  Answer: No
- d. Grade GS-13
- i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD)                          Answer: Yes
- ii. Internal Selections (PWD)                                  Answer: No

Based on a review of MD-715 Table B11: Internal Selections for Senior Level Positions (GS 13, 14, 15, and SES) - Distribution by Disability, PWD (IWD) participation rates within the Qualified Internal Applicants indicate triggers for Grades GS-13 through GS-15. However, data shows rates for these selections exceeded their corresponding qualified applicant percentages, indicating no trigger for internal selections.

DHS SES positions were all announced and open to the public during FY 2017. DHS is unable to determine the percentage of qualified internal applicants by disability

distribution, due to limited applicant flow data available. However, when comparing the percentage of SES selections to the relevant applicant pool as an alternative comparator, selections for PWD (IWD) were lower than expected.

IWD SES Selections: 3.57% IWD Relevant Applicant Pool:  
12.00%

2. Does your agency have a trigger involving PWTD among the qualified *internal* applicants and/or selectees for promotions to the senior grade levels? (The appropriate benchmarks are the relevant applicant pool for qualified internal applicants and the qualified applicant pool for selectees.) For non-GS pay plans, please use the approximate senior grade levels. If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box.
  - a. SES
    - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer: No
    - ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer: No
  - b. Grade GS-15
    - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer: Yes
    - ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer: No
  - c. Grade GS-14
    - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer: Yes
    - ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer: No
  - d. Grade GS-13
    - i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer: Yes
    - ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer: No

Based on a review of MD-715 Table B11: Internal Selections for Senior Level Positions (GS 13, 14, 15, and SES) - Distribution by Disability, PWTD (IWTD) participation rates within the Qualified Internal Applicants indicate triggers for Grades GS-13 through GS-15. However, as with IWD, data reveal rates for these selections exceeded their corresponding qualified applicant percentages, indicating no trigger for internal selections.

DHS SES positions were all announced and open to the public during FY 2017. DHS is unable to determine, due to limited applicant flow data available, the percentage of qualified internal applicants by disability distribution. However, when comparing the percentage of SES selections to the relevant applicant pool as an alternative comparator, selections for PWTD (IWTD) were lower than expected.

IWTD SES Selections: 0.00% IWTD Relevant Applicant Pool:  
1.00%

3. Using the qualified applicant pool as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWD among the new hires to the senior grade levels? For non-GS pay plans, please use the approximate senior grade levels. If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box.

- a. New Hires to SES (PWD) Answer: No
- b. New Hires to GS-15 (PWD) Answer: No
- c. New Hires to GS-14 (PWD) Answer: No
- d. New Hires to GS-13 (PWD) Answer: No

DHS was unable to analyze new hires for PWD (IWD), as compared to the required benchmark using applicant flow data.

However, based on a review of MD-715 Table B8: New Hires by Type of Appointment, filtered down by hires for Senior Level Positions (GS 13, 14, 15, and SES) - Distribution by Disability, PWD (IWD) exceeded the 12 percent goal for all grades with the exception of SES new hires.

	Hires	Qualified Applicant Pool	
Regulatory Goal			
New Hires to SES	9.52%	Not Available	12%
New Hires to GS-15	20.73%	Not Available	12%
New Hires to GS-14	20.41%	Not Available	12%
New Hires to GS-13	21.00%	Not Available	12%

4. Using the qualified applicant pool as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWTD among the new hires to the senior grade levels? For non-GS pay plans, please use the approximate senior grade levels. If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box.

- a. New Hires to SES (PWTD) Answer: No
- b. New Hires to GS-15 (PWTD) Answer: No
- c. New Hires to GS-14 (PWTD) Answer: Yes
- d. New Hires to GS-13 (PWTD) Answer: Yes

DHS was unable to analyze new hires for PWTD (IWTD), as compared to the required benchmark using applicant flow data.

However, based on a review of MD-715 Table B8: New Hires by Type of Appointment, filtered down by hires for Senior Level Positions (GS 13, 14, 15, and SES) - Distribution by Disability, PWTD (IWTD) exceeded the 2 percent goal for grades GS 15 and SES. While the percentages of new hires for GS-13 and GS-14 were notable, DHS did not meet the 2 percent goal.

	Hires	Qualified Applicant Pool	
Regulatory Goal			
New Hires to SES	4.76%	Not Available	2%
New Hires to GS-15	2.59%	Not Available	2%
New Hires to GS-14	1.54%	Not Available	2%
New Hires to GS-13	1.98%	Not Available	2%

5. Does your agency have a trigger involving PWD among the qualified *internal* applicants and/or selectees for promotions to supervisory positions? (The appropriate benchmarks are the relevant applicant pool for qualified internal applicants and the qualified applicant pool for selectees.) If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box.
- a. Executives
- i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD)                          Answer: No
- ii. Internal Selections (PWD)                                  Answer: Yes
- b. Managers
- i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD)                          Answer: No
- ii. Internal Selections (PWD)                                  Answer: Yes
- c. Supervisors
- i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWD)                          Answer: No
- ii. Internal Selections (PWD)                                  Answer: No

Due to the limited availability of applicant flow data, DHS is unable to identify the participation rates by disability distribution for qualified internal applicants. When reviewing the internal selections, and using the relevant applicant pool as an alternative comparator, triggers were identified for promotions to Executive (GS 15 and above) and Manager (Mid-Level Grades 13-14) positions. No trigger was identified for Supervisors (First-Level Grades 12 and Below) positions.

PWD (IWD) Executive Selections: 2.58%  
Pool:                          9.00%

PWD (IWD) Relevant Applicant

PWD (IWD) Manager Selections: 7.58%  
Pool:                            10.00%

PWD (IWD) Relevant Applicant

6. Does your agency have a trigger involving PWTD among the qualified *internal* applicants and/or selectees for promotions to supervisory positions? (The appropriate benchmarks are the relevant applicant pool for qualified internal applicants and the qualified applicant pool for selectees.) If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box.

a. Executives

i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer: No

ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer: No

b. Managers

i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer: No

ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer: No

c. Supervisors

i. Qualified Internal Applicants (PWTD) Answer: No

ii. Internal Selections (PWTD) Answer: No

Due to the limited availability of applicant flow data, DHS is unable to identify the participation rates by disability distribution for qualified internal applicants. When reviewing the internal selections and using the relevant applicant pool as an alternative comparator, no triggers were identified for promotions to supervisory positions.

7. Using the qualified applicant pool as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWD among the selectees for new hires to supervisory positions? If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box.

a. New Hires for Executives (PWD) Answer: No

b. New Hires for Managers (PWD) Answer: No

c. New Hires for Supervisors (PWD) Answer: No

Due to the limited availability of applicant flow data, DHS is unable to identify the participation rates by disability distribution for qualified applicants. When reviewing the new hires and using the relevant applicant pool as an alternative comparator, no triggers were identified for hires to supervisory positions for PWD (IWD).

8. Using the qualified applicant pool as the benchmark, does your agency have a trigger involving PWTD among the selectees for new hires to supervisory positions? If "yes", describe the trigger(s) in the text box.

a. New Hires for Executives (PWTD) Answer: No

b. New Hires for Managers (PWTD) Answer: No

c. New Hires for Supervisors (PWTD) Answer: No

Due to the limited availability of applicant flow data, DHS is unable to identify the participation rates by disability distribution for qualified applicants. When reviewing

the new hires and using the relevant applicant pool as an alternative comparator, no triggers were identified for hires to supervisory positions for PWT (IWTD).

## Section VI: Plan to Improve Retention of Persons with Disabilities

To be a model employer for persons with disabilities, agencies must have policies and programs in place to retain employees with disabilities. In this section, agencies should: (1) analyze workforce separation data to identify barriers retaining employees with disabilities; (2) describe efforts to ensure accessibility of technology and facilities; and (3) provide information on the reasonable accommodation program and workplace personal assistance services.

### A. VOLUNTARY AND INVOLUNTARY SEPARATIONS

1. In this reporting period, did the agency convert all eligible Schedule A employees with a disability into the competitive service after two years of satisfactory service (5 C.F.R. § 213.3102(u)(6)(i))? If "no", please explain why the agency did not convert all eligible Schedule A employees.

Answer: No

During FY 2017, DHS converted a total of 101 of 189 eligible Schedule A employees (Permanent and Temporary) to the Competitive Service, representing 53 percent conversion rate.

DHS will continue to educate supervisors and monitor progress.

Based on DHS Component-level reporting, three out of nine Components indicated no trigger.

2. Using the inclusion rate as the benchmark, did the percentage of PWD among voluntary and involuntary separations exceed that of persons without disabilities? If "yes", describe the trigger below.

- a. Voluntary Separations (PWD)                          Answer: Yes
- b. Involuntary Separations (PWD)                          Answer: No

Based on a review of MD-715 Table B14: Separations by Type of Separation - Distribution by Disability, IWD are exceeding the inclusion rate benchmark for voluntary separations.

Voluntary Separations      PWD (IWD) Inclusion Rate:      6.75%

Benchmark                      PWOD (IWOD) Inclusion Rate:      5.71%

Further review indicates four out of nine DHS Components have triggers in both voluntary and involuntary separations.

3. Using the inclusion rate as the benchmark, did the percentage of PWT among voluntary and involuntary separations exceed that of persons without targeted disabilities? If "yes", describe the trigger below.

- a. Voluntary Separations (PWT)                          Answer: Yes
- b. Involuntary Separations (PWT)                          Answer: Yes

Based on a review of MD-715 Table B14: Separations by Type of Separation - Distribution by Disability, IWTDs are exceeding the inclusion rate benchmark for both voluntary and involuntary separations.

Voluntary Separations      PWT (IWTD) Inclusion Rate:      8.16%

Benchmark                      PWT (IWOD) Inclusion Rate:      5.71%

Involuntary Separations PWTD (IWTD) Inclusion Rate: 0.93%  
Benchmark PWOD (IWOD) Inclusion Rate: 0.73%

Further review indicates four out of nine DHS Components have triggers in voluntary separations, and two out of nine indicate triggers for involuntary separations.

4. If a trigger exists involving the separation rate of PWD and/or PWTD, please explain why they left the agency using exit interview results and other data sources.

Based on a limited analysis of the DHS exit survey data, which includes all Components with the exception of TSA and USSS, approximately 12 percent of all employees separating completed the exit survey during the first and second quarters of FY 2017 resulting in a total of 3611 response. Of those responses, only 398 or 11 percent of the respondents, indicated they had a disability.

Of the respondents who indicated they had a disability, the top three reasons for leaving other than retirement included:

Supervision/Management –11.3%

**Personal/Family Related – 9.6%**

#### **Advancement Opportunities – 9.3%**

The top reasons mentioned above are the same as PWOD (IWOD), with the exception of moving to another DHS Component/Office at 10.1%.

When comparing the response rates for leaving based on health-related reasons, PWD (IWD) had an 8% response rate compared to a 1.1% response rate for IWODs. Further review revealed a 3% response rate for employees indicating they had a targeted disability.

Of the respondents who indicated they had a targeted disability, the top three reasons for leaving included:

for leaving included:

Salary/Pay – 11.0%

Personal/Family Related and Work Environment – tied at 9.2%

Advancement opportunities and health related reasons are next at 8.3%.

## **B. ACCESSIBILITY OF TECHNOLOGY AND FACILITIES**

Pursuant to 29 C.F.R. § 1614.203(d)(4), federal agencies are required to inform job applicants and employees of their rights under Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. § 794(b)), concerning the accessibility of agency technology, and the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. § 4151 – 4157), concerning the accessibility of agency facilities. In addition, agencies are required to inform individuals where to file complaints if other agencies are responsible for a violation.

1. Please provide the internet address on the agency's public website for its notice explaining employees' and applicants' rights under Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, including a description of how to file a complaint.

DHS Accessibility Website address: <https://www.dhs.gov/accessibility>

The DHS web page for accessibility does not currently include a description of how to file a Section 508 complaint. However, the page does provide an option for the user to submit an automated comment to describe the user's accessibility issue and offers the user an option to provide recommendations to improve accessibility.

DHS CRCL will collaborate with the Office of Accessible Systems and Technology to update the page to include a notice of rights under Section 508, including a

description of how to file a complaint during FY 2018. Currently, Section 508 complaints from the public are processed under Section 504, and complaints from employees can be processed using the EEO Complaint Process or procedures under Section 504. Links to both procedures are provided below:

Filing an EEO Complaint: <https://www.dhs.gov/filing-equal-employment-opportunity-eeo-complaint>

Disability Access in the Department of Homeland Security (Section 504)  
<https://www.dhs.gov/disability-access-department-homeland-security>.

All DHS Components maintain an accessibility webpage:

CBP:	<a href="http://www.cbp.gov/site-policy-notices/accessibility">http://www.cbp.gov/site-policy-notices/accessibility</a>
USCIS:	<a href="https://www.uscis.gov/website-policies/accessibility">https://www.uscis.gov/website-policies/accessibility</a>
HQ:	<a href="https://www.dhs.gov/accessibility">https://www.dhs.gov/accessibility</a>
OIG:	<a href="https://www.oig.dhs.gov/accessibility">https://www.oig.dhs.gov/accessibility</a>
FEMA:	<a href="https://www.fema.gov/accessibility">https://www.fema.gov/accessibility</a>
FLETC:	<a href="https://www.fletc.gov/accessibility-statement">https://www.fletc.gov/accessibility-statement</a>
ICE:	<a href="https://www.ice.gov/site-policies">https://www.ice.gov/site-policies</a>
USCG:	<a href="http://www.overview.uscg.mil/access/">http://www.overview.uscg.mil/access/</a>
TSA:	<a href="https://www.tsa.gov/accessibility">https://www.tsa.gov/accessibility</a>
USSS:	<a href="https://www.secretservice.gov/section508/">https://www.secretservice.gov/section508/</a>

2. Please provide the internet address on the agency's public website for its notice explaining employees' and applicants' rights under the Architectural Barriers Act, including a description of how to file a complaint.

DHS currently has the following procedure covering rights under the Architectural Barriers Act:

[https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/dhs-instruction-nondiscrimination-individuals-disabilities\\_03-07-15.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/dhs-instruction-nondiscrimination-individuals-disabilities_03-07-15.pdf)

Additionally, DHS employs Disability Access Coordinators at each Component to coordinate and provide support for compliance with Section 504.

In FY 2018, CRCL will coordinate DHS efforts with the DHS Office of the Chief Readiness Support Officer and Office of Facilities and Operational Support (OCRSO/FOS), to develop language required by Section 501, then socialize and implement the process throughout the Components.

The United States Access Board enforces the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA). Complainants may file an ABA complaint with the Access Board using an Online ABA Complaint Form or by e-mail, fax, or mail (please see the contact information below). For more information on how to file an ABA complaint, visit the Access Board's Complaint Form page.

3. Describe any programs, policies, or practices that the agency has undertaken, or plans on undertaking over the next fiscal year, designed to improve accessibility of agency facilities and/or technology.

DHS issued the policy and procedures for Nondiscrimination for Individuals with Disabilities in DHS-Conducted Programs and Activities (Non-Employment). Directive

Number 065-01 outlines DHS' policy and Instruction Number 065-01-001 provides implementing its instruction. This policy requires all Components to identify Disability Access Coordinators and requires each Component to conduct a self-evaluation of DHS programs and activities to ensure accessibility.

As previously stated, CRCL will collaborate with OAST, OCRSO/FOS, and DHS Components to implement standardized language to meet the requirements for posting notices on the internal and external websites that define the rights of individuals with disabilities under Section 508 and the ABA.

## C. REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION PROGRAM

Pursuant to 29 C.F.R. § 1614.203(d)(3), agencies must adopt, post on their public website, and make available to all job applicants and employees, reasonable accommodation procedures.

1. Please provide the average time frame for processing initial requests for reasonable accommodations during the reporting period. (Please do not include previously approved requests with repetitive accommodations, such as interpreting services.)

During FY 2017, the overall average time frame for processing initial requests for reasonable accommodations was approximately 20 days.

The average number of days reported by DHS Components for FY 2017 are as follows:

CBP:	41.7 Days
USCIS:	17 Days
HQ:	21 Days
FEMA:	2.5 Days
ICE:	24.37 Days
TSA:	35 Days
USCG:	16.41 Days
USSS:	11.65 Days

2. Describe the effectiveness of the policies, procedures, or practices to implement the agency's reasonable accommodation program. Some examples of an effective program include timely processing requests, timely providing approved accommodations, conducting training for managers and supervisors, and monitoring accommodation requests for trends.

DHS is committed to providing effective reasonable accommodations to employees and applicants with disabilities. The overall average processing time for reasonable accommodation requests during FY 2017 was eighteen (18) days.

DHS developed the Employment of People with Disabilities: Roadmap to Success training in 2008, updated the materials in 2012, and more recently during FY 2017 to include the provision of the final rule implementing Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. All supervisors, hiring officials and human capital professionals are required to complete the training within sixty (60) days of appointment and every two years after appointment. All Components use the DHS training module.

In 2016, CRCL issued DHS Instruction Number 259-01-002, Procedures for Conducting a Department-Wide Search for a Reassignment as a Reasonable Accommodation of Last Resort. This Instruction outlines the procedures used to conduct a DHS-wide search for a position that will be used in a reassignment that is a reasonable accommodation of last resort. During FY 2017, to support the implementation of the Instruction, CRCL partnered with OCHCO, then developed and

delivered training to all Component-level Reasonable Accommodation Coordinators and human capital points of contact.

DHS continues to partner with the Department of Defense (DoD), Computer/Electronic Accommodation Program (CAP) to provide assistive technology accommodation solutions. During FY 2017, CAP provided 357 accommodations to 148 employees, totaling \$126,658.90 in cost savings to DHS.

## **D. PERSONAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES ALLOWING EMPLOYEES TO PARTICIPATE IN THE WORKPLACE**

Pursuant to 29 C.F.R. § 1614.203(d)(5), federal agencies, as an aspect of affirmative action, are required to provide personal assistance services (PAS) to employees who need them because of a targeted disability, unless doing so would impose an undue hardship on the agency.

Describe the effectiveness of the policies, procedures, or practices to implement the PAS requirement. Some examples of an effective program include timely processing requests, timely providing approved services, conducting training for managers and supervisors, and monitoring PAS requests for trends.

In FY 2017, DHS posted an updated notice to CRCL Connect Page, covering the requirement to provide personal assistance services (PAS). The language reads: Consistent with the EEOC's guidance until further notice, requests for Personal Assistance Service (PAS) will be processed under reasonable accommodations procedures. In addition, a link to the EEOC guidance on providing PAS was also added.

DHS plans to revise existing Reasonable Accommodation procedures during FY 2018, to include PAS.

## **Section VII: EEO Complaint and Findings Data**

### **A. EEO COMPLAINT DATA INVOLVING HARASSMENT**

1. During the last fiscal year, did a higher percentage of PWD file a formal EEO complaint alleging harassment, as compared to the government-wide average?

Answer: Yes

2. During the last fiscal year, did any complaints alleging harassment based on disability status result in a finding of discrimination or a settlement agreement?

Answer: Yes

3. If the agency had one or more findings of discrimination alleging harassment based on disability status during the last fiscal year, please describe the corrective measures taken by the agency.

DHS had two findings alleging harassment based on disability status during FY 2017. A summary of the corrective measures taken are as follows:

Finding # 1:

1. Post notice for 120 consecutive days.
2. Within 60 days of the date the decision is final, pay \$500 in non-pecuniary compensatory damages.
3. Provide training to the two EEO Specialists who processed the complaint.

**Finding # 2:**

1. Within 60 days of date of decision, provide at least three hours of training to the three named supervisors.
2. Within 90 days of date the decision becomes final, consider taking disciplinary action against the coworker and supervisor. Report who considered the disciplinary action, what factors were considered, and what action was taken. If no action is taken, report the reasons why.
3. Entitled to compensatory damages.
  - a. On September 9, 2017, a FAD awarded \$25,000 in non-pecuniary compensatory damages.
4. Entitled to attorney's fees and costs.
  - a. On September 9, 2017, a FAD awarded no attorney's fees.
5. Post notice for 60 days.

**B. EEO COMPLAINT DATA INVOLVING REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION**

1. During the last fiscal year, did a higher percentage of PWD file a formal EEO complaint alleging failure to provide a reasonable accommodation, as compared to the government-wide average?

Answer: No

2. During the last fiscal year, did any complaints alleging failure to provide reasonable accommodation result in a finding of discrimination or a settlement agreement?

Answer: Yes

3. If the agency had one or more findings of discrimination involving the failure to provide a reasonable accommodation during the last fiscal year, please describe the corrective measures taken by the agency.

DHS had two findings alleging failure to provide a reasonable accommodation based on disability status during FY 2017. A summary of the corrective measures taken are as follows:

**Finding # 1: (same as Finding # 1 for Harassment above)**

1. Post notice for 120 consecutive days.
2. Within 60 days of the date the decision is final, pay \$500 in non-pecuniary compensatory damages.
3. Provide training to the two EEO Specialists who processed the complaint.

**Finding #2:**

1. Within 60 days of receipt of the decision, provide EEO training for the HR Specialist with a focus on the correct procedures and processing of reasonable accommodations.
2. Determine back pay from June 9, 2016 to January 26, 2017.
3. Within 90 days of date decision becomes final, consider taking disciplinary action against the HR Specialist. Report who considered the disciplinary action, what factors were considered, and what action was taken. If no action is taken, report the reasons why.
4. \$7,500 in non-pecuniary compensatory damages.

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 5. | \$13,195 in attorney's fees and \$317.70 in costs. |
| 6. | Post notice for 60 days.                           |

## Section VIII: Identification and Removal of Barriers

Element D of MD-715 requires agencies to conduct a barrier analysis when a trigger suggests that a policy, procedure, or practice may be impeding the employment opportunities of a protected EEO group.

- Has the agency identified any barriers (policies, procedures, and/or practices) that affect employment opportunities for PWD and/or PWTD?

Answer: Yes

- Has the agency established a plan to correct the barrier(s) involving PWD and/or PWTD?

Answer: Yes

- Identify each trigger and plan to remove the barrier(s), including the identified barrier(s), objective(s), responsible official(s), planned activities, and, where applicable, accomplishments.

<b>Trigger 1</b>	Lower than expected participation for individuals with disability (IWD) and targeted disabilities (IWTD) when compared to the regulatory goals of 12 percent for IWD and 2 percent for IWTD in grade clusters GS 1 – 10 and GS 11 – SES.	
<b>Barrier(s)</b>		
<b>Objective(s)</b>	Increase workforce participation rates of IWD and IWTD at all grade levels.	
<b>Responsible Official(s)</b>		<b>Performance Standards Address the Plan? (Yes or No)</b>
CRCL, OCHCO, OAST		Yes
<b>Barrier Analysis Process Completed? (Yes or No)</b>		<b>Barrier(s) Identified? (Yes or No)</b>
No		No
<b>Sources of Data</b>	<b>Sources Reviewed? (Yes or No)</b>	<b>Identify Information Collected</b>
Workforce Data Tables	Yes	
Complaint Data (Trends)	No	
Grievance Data (Trends)	No	
Findings from Decisions (e.g., EEO, Grievance, MSPB, Anti-Harassment Processes)	No	
Climate Assessment Survey (e.g., FEVS)	No	
Exit Interview Data	No	
Focus Groups	No	

<b>Sources of Data</b>		<b>Sources Reviewed? (Yes or No)</b>	<b>Identify Information Collected</b>		
Interviews		No			
Reports (e.g., Congress, EEOC, MSPB, GAO, OPM)		No			
Other (Please Describe)		No			
<b>Target Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</b>	<b>Planned Activities</b>		<b>Sufficient Staffing &amp; Funding (Yes or No)</b>	<b>Modified Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</b>	<b>Completion Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</b>
12/30/2017	Issue Annual Hiring Goals for IWD and IWTD and socialize throughout DHS.		Yes		
09/30/2018	Update DHS Disability training module for managers and HR Professionals (Employment of People with Disability: A Roadmap to Success Training)		Yes		
03/30/2018	Develop mid-year reporting requirements to monitor Component progress with implementing the revised rule on Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act.		Yes		
09/30/2018	Collaborate with OCHCO to revise DHS standard language on all vacancy announcements to encourage applicants with disabilities to apply, and to clearly explain Schedule A process and requesting reasonable accommodations.		Yes		
09/30/2018	Revise Reasonable Accommodation procedures and include procedures for providing Personal Assistance Services.		Yes		
09/30/2018	Develop and post notice of rights for employees and applicants under Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Architectural Barriers Act on the internal and external websites.		Yes		
03/30/2018	Implement and post Affirmative Action plan for Individuals with Disabilities to the DHS website internally and externally.		Yes		
<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Accomplishments</b>				

<b>Trigger 2</b>	Individuals with disabilities and targeted disabilities are receiving recognition and awards at rates lower than expected when compared to individuals without disabilities.
<b>Barrier(s)</b>	
<b>Objective(s)</b>	Collaborate with OCHCO to review recognition and awards policy, practices and procedures, and determine next steps.

<b>Responsible Official(s)</b>		<b>Performance Standards Address the Plan? (Yes or No)</b>		
CRCL, OCHCO		Yes		
<b>Barrier Analysis Process Completed? (Yes or No)</b>		<b>Barrier(s) Identified? (Yes or No)</b>		
No		No		
<b>Sources of Data</b>		<b>Sources Reviewed? (Yes or No)</b>	<b>Identify Information Collected</b>	
Workforce Data Tables		Yes		
Complaint Data (Trends)		No		
Grievance Data (Trends)		No		
Findings from Decisions (e.g., EEO, Grievance, MSPB, Anti-Harassment Processes)		No		
Climate Assessment Survey (e.g., FEVS)		No		
Exit Interview Data		No		
Focus Groups		No		
Interviews		No		
Reports (e.g., Congress, EEOC, MSPB, GAO, OPM)		No		
Other (Please Describe)		No		
<b>Target Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</b>	<b>Planned Activities</b>		<b>Sufficient Staffing &amp; Funding (Yes or No)</b>	<b>Modified Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</b>
09/30/2018	Collaborate with OCHCO to review recognition and awards policy, practices and procedures, and determine next steps.		Yes	
<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Accomplishments</b>			

<b>Trigger 3</b>	Unavailability of applicant flow data by disability distribution to effectively analyze percentage of qualified applicants for career development opportunities, promotions and new hires. Limited access to Applicant Flow data using current systems (USA Staffing/Cognos, Monster Government Solutions, and Learning Management Systems).
<b>Barrier(s)</b>	
<b>Objective(s)</b>	Acquire accurate and reliable applicant flow data to analyze, monitor and inform program enhancements to increase representation of IWD and IWTD in all programs and hires.

<b>Responsible Official(s)</b>		<b>Performance Standards Address the Plan? (Yes or No)</b>		
CRCL, OCHCO, SRDI, OCHCO Reports and Analysis		Yes		
<b>Barrier Analysis Process Completed? (Yes or No)</b>		<b>Barrier(s) Identified? (Yes or No)</b>		
No		No		
<b>Sources of Data</b>		<b>Sources Reviewed? (Yes or No)</b>	<b>Identify Information Collected</b>	
Workforce Data Tables		No		
Complaint Data (Trends)		No		
Grievance Data (Trends)		No		
Findings from Decisions (e.g., EEO, Grievance, MSPB, Anti-Harassment Processes)		No		
Climate Assessment Survey (e.g., FEVS)		No		
Exit Interview Data		No		
Focus Groups		No		
Interviews		No		
Reports (e.g., Congress, EEOC, MSPB, GAO, OPM)		No		
Other (Please Describe)		No		
<b>Target Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</b>	<b>Planned Activities</b>		<b>Sufficient Staffing &amp; Funding (Yes or No)</b>	<b>Modified Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</b>
09/30/2020	CRCL and OCHCO will work with OPM and Monster Government Solutions to modify data collection and reporting capabilities to match MD-715 data reporting requirements.		Yes	
09/30/2019	Coordinate with OCHCO to develop AFD framework for the SES Career Development Program, Pathways Program, and mentoring programs at the DHS level.		Yes	
<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Accomplishments</b>			

<b>Trigger 4</b>	Lower than expected conversion rates of eligible Schedule A employees into competitive service.
<b>Barrier(s)</b>	
<b>Objective(s)</b>	Increase conversion rates of eligible Schedule A employees.

<b>Responsible Official(s)</b>		<b>Performance Standards Address the Plan? (Yes or No)</b>		
CRCL, OCHCO		Yes		
<b>Barrier Analysis Process Completed? (Yes or No)</b>		<b>Barrier(s) Identified? (Yes or No)</b>		
No		No		
<b>Sources of Data</b>		<b>Sources Reviewed? (Yes or No)</b>	<b>Identify Information Collected</b>	
Workforce Data Tables		Yes		
Complaint Data (Trends)		No		
Grievance Data (Trends)		No		
Findings from Decisions (e.g., EEO, Grievance, MSPB, Anti-Harassment Processes)		No		
Climate Assessment Survey (e.g., FEVS)		No		
Exit Interview Data		No		
Focus Groups		No		
Interviews		No		
Reports (e.g., Congress, EEOC, MSPB, GAO, OPM)		No		
Other (Please Describe)		No		
<b>Target Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</b>		<b>Planned Activities</b>	<b>Sufficient Staffing &amp; Funding (Yes or No)</b>	<b>Modified Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</b>
09/30/2018		Review and analyze current policies and procedures for excepted service appointments.	Yes	
01/30/2018		Monitoring Schedule A Conversions on a quarterly basis.	Yes	
09/30/2018		Coordinate efforts with OCHCO to develop DHS Schedule A policy and procedures.	Yes	
<b>Fiscal Year</b>		<b>Accomplishments</b>		

<b>Trigger 5</b>	Higher than expected separation rates for individuals with disabilities.
<b>Barrier(s)</b>	
<b>Objective(s)</b>	Increase retention rates of individuals with disabilities and targeted disabilities.
<b>Responsible Official(s)</b>	
<b>Performance Standards Address the Plan? (Yes or No)</b>	

<b>Responsible Official(s)</b>		<b>Performance Standards Address the Plan? (Yes or No)</b>		
CRCL, OCHCO		Yes		
<b>Barrier Analysis Process Completed? (Yes or No)</b>		<b>Barrier(s) Identified? (Yes or No)</b>		
No		No		
<b>Sources of Data</b>		<b>Sources Reviewed? (Yes or No)</b>	<b>Identify Information Collected</b>	
Workforce Data Tables		Yes		
Complaint Data (Trends)		No		
Grievance Data (Trends)		No		
Findings from Decisions (e.g., EEO, Grievance, MSPB, Anti-Harassment Processes)		No		
Climate Assessment Survey (e.g., FEVS)		No		
Exit Interview Data		No		
Focus Groups		No		
Interviews		No		
Reports (e.g., Congress, EEOC, MSPB, GAO, OPM)		No		
Other (Please Describe)		No		
<b>Target Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</b>	<b>Planned Activities</b>	<b>Sufficient Staffing &amp; Funding (Yes or No)</b>	<b>Modified Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</b>	<b>Completion Date (mm/dd/yyyy)</b>
01/30/2018	Review and analyze exit surveys to identify barriers to retention.		Yes	
01/30/2018	Monitor separations on a quarterly basis by disability distribution.		Yes	
06/30/2018	Collaborate with OCHCO to explore feasibility of implementing new retention programs specifically for IWD and IWTD.		Yes	
<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Accomplishments</b>			

4. Please explain the factor(s) that prevented the agency from timely completing any of the planned activities.

Activities are new for FY17.

5. For the planned activities that were completed, please describe the actual impact of those activities toward eliminating the barrier(s).

Activites are new for FY17.

6. If the planned activities did not correct the trigger(s) and/or barrier(s), please describe how the agency intends to improve the plan for the next fiscal year.

Activities are new for FY17.

**Date:** 4/26/2019 9:50:17 AM  
**From:** "Obasa, Babajide" [babajide.obasa@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:babajide.obasa@fema.dhs.gov)  
**To:** "Meindl, Max" [max.meindl@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:max.meindl@fema.dhs.gov)  
**Subject:** Automatic reply: Timesheet FMLA

Hello,

I'll be out of the office and will return on Tuesday April 30, 2019. For any urgent requests please reach out to the following individuals:

**Austin – CORE Questions:**

Patricia "Patty" David – [Patricia.David@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:Patricia.David@fema.dhs.gov)

Nicole Guelzow – [Nicole.Guelzow@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:Nicole.Guelzow@fema.dhs.gov)

**Houston and Branch III– CORE Questions:**

Jacqueline Gause – [Jacqueline.Gause@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:Jacqueline.Gause@fema.dhs.gov)

**Reservists and Local Hire Questions:**

Beverly Smooth - Beverly [Smooth@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:Smooth@fema.dhs.gov)

Saif-Eddeen Abu-Esba - [Saif-eddeen.abu-esba@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:Saif-eddeen.abu-esba@fema.dhs.gov)

Sandra "Marlene" Chafin - [Sandra.Chafin@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:Sandra.Chafin@fema.dhs.gov)>

Kathy Davis – [Kathydavis.fema.dhs.gov](mailto:Kathydavis.fema.dhs.gov)

**TRO Records Management Questions:**

Ria Griffin - [Ria.Griffin@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:Ria.Griffin@fema.dhs.gov)

Thanks

Jide Obasa  
Supervisory Program Specialist  
Texas Recovery Office | 11000 North I-35 | Austin, Texas 78753  
202-812-6049 FEMA iPhone  
[babajide.obasa@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:babajide.obasa@fema.dhs.gov)

Mission: *Helping people before, during, and after disasters.*

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**Date:** 10/28/2019 1:40:05 PM  
**From:** "Meindl, Max" max.meindl@fema.dhs.gov  
**To:** "femamax@gmail.com" femamax@gmail.com  
**Subject:** fmla  
**Attachment:** RE: FMLA;RE: FMLA;FMLA;RA;

**Date:** 10/28/2019 1:28:03 PM  
**From:** "Meindl, Max" max.meindl@fema.dhs.gov  
**To:** femamax@gmail.com  
**Subject:** FW: WebTA  
**Attachment:** image001.png;

---

Max J Meindl, PMP  
Program Delivery Manager | Houston TRO  
DHS | FEMA-Recovery Directorate  
Public Assistance Division  
FEMA/HQ  
202-374-9426  
max.meindl@fema.dhs.gov<mailto:max.meindl@fema.dhs.gov>  
[fema]

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or other personnel who do not have a valid "need-to-know" without prior  
approval of an authorized DHS official.

From: Meindl, Max  
Sent: Wednesday, May 29, 2019 1:53 PM  
To: Gause, Jacqueline <jacqueline.gause@fema.dhs.gov>; Atchison, Randy  
<Randy.Atkison@fema.dhs.gov>  
Cc: Terry, Detra <detra.terry@fema.dhs.gov>  
Subject: RE: WebTA

My understanding also.

Max J Meindl, PMP  
Program Delivery Manager | Houston TRO  
DHS | FEMA-Recovery Directorate  
Public Assistance Division  
FEMA/HQ  
202-374-9426  
max.meindl@fema.dhs.gov<mailto:max.meindl@fema.dhs.gov>  
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disposed of in accordance with DHS policy relating to FOUO/PII information  
and is not to be released to the public or other personnel who do not have  
a valid "need-to-know" without prior approval of an authorized DHS  
official.

From: Gause, Jacqueline  
Sent: Wednesday, May 29, 2019 9:56 AM  
To: Meindl, Max <max.meindl@fema.dhs.gov>; Atchison, Randy  
<Randy.Atkison@fema.dhs.gov>  
Cc: Terry, Detra <detra.terry@fema.dhs.gov>  
Subject: RE: WebTA

Good morning,

FMLA does not carry any leave. FMLA allows an employee to take up to 480 hours of unpaid for a personal or family medical situation.

Excerpt from OPM:

Under the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA), most Federal employees are entitled to a total of up to 12 workweeks of unpaid leave during any 12-month period.

An employee may elect to substitute annual leave and/or sick leave, consistent with current laws and OPM's regulations for using annual and sick leave, for any unpaid leave under the FMLA.

The employee can request FMLA LWOP, but will not receive any compensation. If the employee wishes to be paid while out on leave they will need to use their annual or sick leave with the FMLA code.

If you have additional questions or need me to go into further detail please let me know.

Regards,

Jacqueline Gause, MSc  
Human Resources  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
Department of Homeland Security  
Hurricane Harvey-DR4332-TX  
Texas Recovery Office  
Houston, TX  
Mobile: 202-322-6241

From: Meindl, Max  
Sent: Friday, May 24, 2019 9:39 AM  
To: Atchison, Randy <Randy.Atkison@fema.dhs.gov>  
Cc: Gause, Jacqueline <jacqueline.gause@fema.dhs.gov>; Terry, Detra <detra.terry@fema.dhs.gov>  
Subject: WebTA

Randy,  
My understanding is that with approved MFLA I am not required to use up my sick days or annual leave.  
I requested MFLA leave without pay which I have been doing for several weeks now.  
Please advise soonest.

"Cannot take TWOP until all your leave has been used. Also please put the hours in the day block of the calendar. Thank You Randy Atchison"

Max J Meindl, PMP  
Program Delivery Manager | Houston TRO  
DHS | FEMA-Recovery Directorate  
Public Assistance Division  
FEMA/HQ  
202-374-9426  
max.meindl@fema.dhs.gov<mailto:max.meindl@fema.dhs.gov>  
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**Date:** 3/2/2020 11:30:06 AM  
**From:** "Meindl, Max" max.meindl@dhs.gov  
**To:** "femamax@gmail.com" femamax@gmail.com  
**Subject:** fmla  
**Attachment:** FW: FMLA;RE: FMLA;RE: Update;RE: Update;RE:  
Update;FMLA;fmla;fmla;FW: FMLA;FMLA;FW: FMLA;FW:  
FMLA;FW: FMLA;FW: FMLA Determination ;FW: FMLA  
Determination ;FW: Reasonable accommodation ;FMLA  
Determination ;Automatic reply: Timesheet FMLA;RE:  
Timesheet FMLA;

**Date:** 3/3/2020 12:20:17 PM  
**From:** "Meindl, Max" max.meindl@fema.dhs.gov  
**To:** femamax@gmail.com  
**Subject:** webta fmla  
**Attachment:** image003.png;image006.jpg;image007.png;

[cid:image006.jpg@01D5F156.176341C0]

---

Max J Meindl, PMP  
Program Delivery Manager | Houston TRO  
DHS | FEMA-Recovery Directorate  
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202-374-9426  
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or other personnel who do not have a valid "need-to-know" without prior  
approval of an authorized DHS official.

[REG 6]

**Date:** 4/1/2020 8:18:59 AM  
**From:** "Max" [femamax@gmail.com](mailto:femamax@gmail.com)  
**To:** "Jones, Gregory E - Allentown, PA - Contractor"  
Gregory.E.Jones2@usps.gov  
**Subject:** Re: Fw: [EXTERNAL] FW: 2nd Request MEINDL FORMAL  
EEOC COMPLAINT-E-SIGNED: FEMA EMPLOYEE

will do

On Tue, Mar 31, 2020 at 8:39 PM Jones, Gregory E - Allentown, PA - Contractor <[Gregory.E.Jones2@usps.gov](mailto:Gregory.E.Jones2@usps.gov)> wrote:

Good evening Mr. Meindl,

Please review and sign that attached forms that were sent to you on Tuesday, March 24, 2020. I do not believe that I have received them yet.

If you have reviewed, signed and sent them, please forward that email to me again.

Thanks

Gregory E. Jones, Sr.  
Independent EEO Specialist  
Phone: 610-797-6475  
Fax: 610-797-6453

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---

From: Jones, Gregory E - Allentown, PA - Contractor

Sent: Tuesday, March 24, 2020 2:41 PM  
To: [femamax@gmail.com](mailto:femamax@gmail.com)  
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] FW: MEINDL FORMAL EEOC COMPLAINT-E-SIGNED: FEMA EMPLOYEE

Good afternoon Max,

Please review the attached forms. Please sign and date the extension form, ADR consent form, counselor's checklist form and Complainant's Rights and Responsibilities and designation of representative form if you have one.

Gregory E. Jones, Sr.  
Independent EEO Specialist  
Phone: 610-797-6475  
Fax: 610-797-6453

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---

From: [femamax@gmail.com](mailto:femamax@gmail.com) <[femamax@gmail.com](mailto:femamax@gmail.com)>  
Sent: Tuesday, March 24, 2020 2:32 PM  
To: Jones, Gregory E - Allentown, PA - Contractor  
Subject: [EXTERNAL] FW: MEINDL FORMAL EEOC COMPLAINT-E-SIGNED: FEMA EMPLOYEE

Max

“No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.” —  
Aesop<<http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/12452.Aesop>>  
“A spoon cannot taste of the food it carries. Likewise, a foolish man cannot understand the wise man’s wisdom even if he associates with a sage.” – Dalai

Lama

From: [femamax@gmail.com](mailto:femamax@gmail.com) <[femamax@gmail.com](mailto:femamax@gmail.com)>  
Sent: Thursday, February 27, 2020 5:01 PM  
To: 'Congressman Michael T. McCaul' <[TX10IMA@mail.house.gov](mailto:TX10IMA@mail.house.gov)>  
Subject: MEINDL FORMAL EEOC COMPLAINT-E-SIGNED: FEMA  
EMPLOYEE

For information, review, consideration, comment, action.

Max

“No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.” —  
Aesop<<http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/12452.Aesop>>  
“A spoon cannot taste of the food it carries. Likewise, a foolish man cannot  
understand the wise man’s wisdom even if he associates with a sage.” – Dalai  
Lama

From: Congressman Michael T. McCaul  
<[TX10IMA@mail.house.gov](mailto:TX10IMA@mail.house.gov)<mailto:[TX10IMA@mail.house.gov](mailto:TX10IMA@mail.house.gov)>>  
Sent: Thursday, February 27, 2020 3:22 PM  
To: [femamax@gmail.com](mailto:femamax@gmail.com)<mailto:[femamax@gmail.com](mailto:femamax@gmail.com)>  
Subject: Reply from Congressman Michael T. McCaul

This is an automatically-generated response from Congressman McCaul:

Thank you for emailing me with your thoughts and comments. Knowing your views will be very helpful as I continue to work to represent the needs and concerns of the 10th District of Texas in the United States House of Representatives. I am glad you took an active part in our government by contacting me to share your thoughts, and I appreciate your patience in awaiting a detailed response to your specific concerns.

Every day, I receive a large number of e-mails on a variety of issues. For this reason, I can only respond to those e-mails I receive from residents of the 10th District of Texas. The online form you completed before submitting this e-mail will enable me to know which messages are from citizens of the 10th District. If you are a constituent, please be assured that I will respond to your message as soon as I am able to do so. If you are not a constituent, I would encourage you to contact the Member who represents your area.

Again, thank you for writing. Please feel free to visit my Web site  
<http://mccaul.house.gov/> to follow my work in the House of Representatives.

--  
Regards,

Max J. Meindl III

"Exuberance is easily corrected; dullness is incurable." Quintilian

"I don't make mistakes. I have unintentional improvisations." ~unknown

Texas  
832-293-3671

**Date:** 4/14/2020 9:16:19 AM  
**From:** "Cvijanovic, Marko" MCvijanovic@osc.gov  
**To:** "Max" femamax@gmail.com  
**Subject:** OSC Case No. MA-20-1288

Hello Mr. Meindl:

As you are aware, I have been investigating the above referenced OSC complaint in which you allege that you were retaliated against for filing an EEO complaint to FEMA's Director of Civil Rights and the Department of Homeland Security's EEOC Office, and for e-mailing FEMA's Chief of Staff Sandra Cooley regarding issues you had with management's processing of your FMLA request. Specifically, you were retaliated against by not being selected for a position of Task Force Lead and were written up for copying and pasting a co-worker's written response and sending it to another co-worker.

While discrimination based on handicapping conditions, as well as reprisal for filing an EEO complaint, are prohibited personnel practices, OSC's regulation 5 C.F.R. § 1810.1 notes that it was not intended for OSC to duplicate or bypass the procedures established by the agencies and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for resolving such allegations. Therefore, it is the general policy of the Special Counsel not to take action on such allegations as they are more appropriately resolved through the EEO process. Because of these constraints, we have made a determination to close your case. Please understand that we are not saying your circumstances have been easy, ideal or completely fair.

Best,

Marko Cvijanovic  
Attorney  
U.S. Office of Special Counsel  
Dallas Field Office

*NOTICE: This message and any attachments may contain information that is sensitive, confidential, or legally privileged. If you are not the intended recipient, please immediately notify the sender and delete this email from your system; you should not copy, use, or disclose its contents. Thank you for your cooperation.*

**Date:** 1/7/2021 11:01:19 AM  
**From:** "Meindl, Max" max.meindl@fema.dhs.gov  
**To:** "femamax@gmail.com" femamax@gmail.com  
**Subject:** FMLA  
**Attachment:** RE: MEINDL-FMLA PAPERWORK-NEW REQUEST;RE:  
MEINDL-FMLA PAPERWORK-NEW REQUEST;RE:  
MEINDL-FMLA PAPERWORK-NEW REQUEST;RE:  
MEINDL-FMLA PAPERWORK-NEW REQUEST;

**Date:** 10/25/2021 12:51:04 PM  
**From:** "Meindl, Max" max.meindl@fema.dhs.gov  
**To:** "Max" femamax@gmail.com  
**Subject:** RA CONFIRMATION  
**Reasonable Accommodation Request-Rev2;Read: Reasonable Accommodation Request-Rev2;Your request for Reasonable**  
**Attachment: Accommodation Request has been received;RAR0020089 has been assigned to your group;RE: Reasonable Accommodation Request-Rev2;New RA submittal verification;**

**Date:** 1/9/2025 9:42:00 AM  
**From:** "Sean Boughey" [sboughey@forthepeople.com](mailto:sboughey@forthepeople.com)  
**To:** "femamax@gmail.com" [femamax@gmail.com](mailto:femamax@gmail.com)  
**Subject:** Update on your Employee Rights claim.

## MORGAN & MORGAN

Dear Max Meindl,

Thank you for considering **Morgan & Morgan** for your employment law inquiry. After careful review of your potential case, we recommend seeking counsel from another source who can better cater to your claim.

**Here are some credible resources to assist you in finding the right fit:**

- Employment Lawyers: [National Employment Lawyers Association](#)
  - Costs and legal fees assistance: [Law Help](#)
  - If you're filing discrimination charges contact the [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#) to receive a positive determination letter and you may resubmit your claim to our office.
- 
- Morgan & Morgan has a long-standing mission of being **For The People** and will always make recommendations that best serve you, even if it is with another firm. This message only applies to your labor dispute claim, and not to any other claims you may have with our firm.

If you have further questions or comments please email  
[contact@forthepeople.com](mailto:contact@forthepeople.com).

Sincerely,  
Employment Law Dept.  
Morgan & Morgan, P.A.  
[844-256-4522](tel:844-256-4522)  
[www.forthepeople.com](http://www.forthepeople.com)

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Morgan & Morgan, P.A. 20 N. Orange Ave. Suite 1600 Orlando, FL, 32801, US

[\(877\) 357- 3092](tel:8773573092)      [forthepeople.com](http://forthepeople.com)      [contact@forthepeople.com](mailto:contact@forthepeople.com)

This is a system-generated message. Do not reply.

**Date:** 2/16/2025 12:08:22 PM  
**From:** "Max" [femamax@gmail.com](mailto:femamax@gmail.com)  
**To:** "Elisabeth Meindl" [missmeindl@gmail.com](mailto:missmeindl@gmail.com)  
**Cc:** "Brent Smith" [brent@guerradays.com](mailto:brent@guerradays.com)  
**Subject:** Re: Revision 2 of scan

FYI, WORKING WITH GROK TODAY, HE OFFERED A NEW SUMMARY...  
JUST FYI..

Below is an improved version of your affidavit, enhanced with additional clarity, structure, and legal citations where appropriate, while maintaining the perspective of the complainant, Max J. Meindl. I have added case law citations to strengthen the legal arguments, updated the days for the Reasonable Accommodation Request (RAR) entries based on the current date (February 16, 2025) and the original snapshot date (February 24, 2024), and addressed gaps in the original document. The revised affidavit is more precise, legally robust, and persuasive, while remaining aligned with the original content.

#### AFFIDAVIT OF COMPLAINANT MAX J. MEINDL

I, MAX J. MEINDL, a resident of Bellville, Texas, in the County of Austin, submit this sworn statement regarding my Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint against the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), on the grounds of discrimination based on my age (73, born in 1951), physical disability, race, and retaliation for engaging in protected EEO activity.

#### I. Background Information

- Full Name: Max J. Meindl
- Position at Termination: Emergency Management Specialist, Program Delivery Task Force Leader (PDTFL)
- Series & Grade: 089/GS-12
- Employment Period: August 2017 – January 6, 2025
- Placement: Denton County – Remote Placement, Recovery/Public Assistance
- Agency: DHS/FEMA
- Home Address: 5 E. Austin St., Bellville, TX 77418
- Contact Information: Telephone during working hours: 832-293-3671
- Supervisors:
  - First-Line Supervisor: Anthony In (Email: [Anthony.in@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:Anthony.in@fema.dhs.gov))

- Second-Line Supervisor: Jodi Hunter
- Period Under Supervision: Approximately 1 year

## II. Job Responsibilities

As a Program Delivery Task Force Leader (PDTFL), my responsibilities included:

1. Serving as an intermediary between the Public Assistance Group Supervisor (PAGS) and Program Delivery Managers (PDMGs).
2. Communicating Joint Field Office (JFO) operational priorities to PDMGs.
3. Ensuring workload balance for PDMGs to facilitate efficient customer service to applicants.
4. Managing and mentoring PDMGs throughout the Public Assistance (PA) grant delivery process.
5. Overseeing workflow and performance within the Infrastructure Branch, Recovery Division.

During my tenure, I successfully performed these duties remotely for over four years (March 2020 – January 2025) without any complaints about my work performance, demonstrating that physical deployment was not an essential function of my role.

## III. Statement of Understanding

I acknowledge my obligation to cooperate fully with the investigator assigned to conduct a thorough and impartial investigation of my complaint. My statement is made under oath in accordance with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and DHS Civil Rights regulations. I am aware that:

- My statement may be shown to the accused individuals, who will have the right to respond.
- Agency officials responsible for processing complaints will have full access to the investigative report.
- Any retaliation for participation in the EEO process is strictly prohibited under:
  - Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. § 2000e et seq.), protecting against race discrimination and retaliation.
  - Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) (29 U.S.C. § 621 et seq.), protecting against age discrimination.
  - Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 501 (29 U.S.C. § 791), protecting against disability discrimination.

I have chosen a personal representative at this stage of my complaint. If I obtain a different representative at a later date, I will advise the investigator and the Director of Civil Rights in writing. I have reviewed this statement prior to signing and understand my right to make initial corrections if it is incomplete or inaccurate. I am entitled to receive a copy of the signed statement.

Having reviewed the preceding information with the investigator, I solemnly swear that the statement that follows is true and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief and fully addresses the issues and allegations raised in my EEO complaint.

#### IV. Claims of Discrimination and Retaliation

I allege that FEMA discriminated against me based on my age (73), physical disability, race, and retaliated against me for engaging in protected EEO activity. Below are the specific incidents and legal violations supporting my claims, bolstered by relevant case law.

##### A. Failure to Provide Reasonable Accommodation (August 16, 2024)

1. Denied Accommodation Request: My request for 100% telework due to my physical disability was denied.

2. Denial Rationale Provided by FEMA:

- August 5, 2024: Anthony In stated, "Mr. Max Meindl's reasonable accommodation to seek 100% telework cannot be granted. It is understood that Mr. Meindl's indication that he could deploy close to his home; however, I cannot consider that in a decision to grant the request. The option presented by Mr. Meindl is not a viable solution as I cannot grant him the ability to limit his deployment location. Given that Mr. Meindl would need to be sent wherever the disaster is located and his inability to do so would limit my ability, therefore, I must deny his request."
- August 15, 2024: Jodi Hunter reaffirmed the denial, stating, "After careful consideration, Mr. Max Meindl's request to telework 100% of the time is denied. The approval to allow Mr. Meindl to telework 100% of the time would require that the Agency remove the essential function of deployment from his duties and responsibilities. Mr. Meindl signed his onboarding, acknowledging that his position required that he deploy. While I understand that Mr. Meindl has a disability; however, his acknowledgment that he cannot leave his house to deploy under any circumstances contributes to my decision. Finally, his branch (Infrastructure Branch, Recovery Division) supports disaster deployments on an almost daily basis. His temporary accommodation cannot continue as assignments of duties are totally unrelated to his current position of record and cannot be continued."

3. Legal Violations and Discrepancies:

- Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 501: Requires federal agencies to provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities unless doing so would cause undue hardship (29 U.S.C. § 791; 29 C.F.R. § 1614.203). FEMA failed to demonstrate undue hardship, as required under EEOC v. Ford Motor Co., 782 F.3d 753 (6th Cir. 2015), which held that employers must engage in an interactive process to determine effective accommodations. FEMA's failure to engage in a meaningful interactive process violates this precedent.
- Delay in Adjudication: My Reasonable Accommodation Requests (RARs) were ignored for over 190 days, violating EEOC regulations mandating timely processing (29 C.F.R. § 1614.203(d)(3)). As of February 16, 2025, the updated days since the RARs were opened are:
  - RAR0046767: Opened 53 days ago on February 24, 2024 → Now 358 days ago (opened December 15, 2023).
  - RAR0042452: Opened 570 days ago on February 24, 2024 → Now 875 days ago (opened September 24, 2022).
  - RAR0023278: Opened 848 days ago on February 24, 2024 → Now 1,153 days ago (opened December 21, 2021).
  - RAR0023261: Opened 849 days ago on February 24, 2024 → Now 1,154 days ago (opened December 20, 2021).
 These delays are egregious and violate the EEOC's expectation of prompt resolution, as emphasized in EEOC Enforcement Guidance on Reasonable Accommodation and Undue Hardship Under the ADA (2002).
- Failure to Justify Denial: FEMA failed to clearly state:
  - Why the requested accommodation (100% telework) would not be effective, despite my successful performance of essential duties remotely for over four years.
  - Why the accommodation would result in undue hardship, as required under US Airways, Inc. v. Barnett, 535 U.S. 391 (2002), which clarified that employers must prove undue hardship with specific evidence.
  - Whether my medical documentation was inadequate to establish my disability and need for accommodation, despite my documented disclosures to HR.
  - Whether the accommodation would require the removal of an essential function, ignoring my history of virtual deployments (e.g., 4611DR, September 2021 – May 2023).
  - Whether the accommodation would lower performance standards, which is unsupported given my consistent performance evaluations.

4. Harm Caused:

- Physically, I experienced increased mental discomfort and exacerbated health issues due to FEMA's refusal to accommodate my disability.
- Professionally, I was sidelined, marginalized, and assigned very little work, which affected my career progression, self-esteem, and financial stability.

5. Evidence of Discrimination:

- Younger, non-disabled employees received flexible work accommodations without excessive scrutiny, while my requests were denied.
- Employees of other races were given more prominent roles and projects, while I was isolated and underutilized, suggesting intersectional discrimination under Title VII and the Rehabilitation Act.

6. Witnesses:

- Traci Brasher ([traci.brasher@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:traci.brasher@fema.dhs.gov)): Can provide information on FEMA's pattern of denying accommodations to disabled employees.
- Mark Underhill ([markbunderhill@yahoo.com](mailto:markbunderhill@yahoo.com)): Former supervisor, aware of systemic patterns of discrimination against older and disabled employees.
- Darla Dickerson ([Darla.Dickerson@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:Darla.Dickerson@fema.dhs.gov)): Former supervisor, can attest to differential treatment based on age and disability.
- Russel Towndrow ([Russell.Towndrow@FEMA.DHS.GOV](mailto:Russell.Towndrow@FEMA.DHS.GOV)): Co-worker, aware of institutional discrimination patterns.

B. Wrongful Termination (January 6, 2025)

1. Decision Maker and Involved Parties:

- Decision Maker: Anthony In
- Other Involved Individuals: Jodi Hunter, Don Simko, and FEMA legal counsel (unnamed).

2. Termination Reason Given: FEMA stated it could not provide reasonable accommodation anywhere within the agency, citing a blanket policy against remote work.

### 3. Legal Violations and Retaliation Evidence:

- Rehabilitation Act Violation: FEMA's reliance on a blanket policy against remote work violates the requirement to provide accommodations on an individual basis, as established in *Vande Zande v. Wisconsin Dep't of Admin.*, 44 F.3d 538 (7th Cir. 1995), which emphasized that accommodations must be tailored to the individual's needs. My four years of successful remote work (March 2020 – January 2025) prove that physical deployment was not an essential function, and FEMA failed to explore alternative accommodations.
- ADEA Violation: FEMA's policy disproportionately impacted older employees, as evidenced by my isolation and lack of professional growth opportunities. In *Smith v. City of Jackson*, 544 U.S. 228 (2005), the Supreme Court held that policies with a disparate impact on older workers can violate the ADEA, even without intent. FEMA's failure to consider alternative positions within the agency further supports this claim.
- Retaliation: My termination followed my formal complaints about delayed accommodation requests, demonstrating a direct link between my protected EEO activity and the adverse action. This violates Title VII and Rehabilitation Act protections against retaliation, as reinforced by *Burlington Northern & Santa Fe Ry. Co. v. White*, 548 U.S. 53 (2006), which defined retaliation as any action that might deter a reasonable employee from engaging in protected activity.

### 4. Harm Caused:

- The termination ended my career, severely impacted my health and well-being, and caused significant financial hardship.
- The cumulative effect of FEMA's actions—denial of accommodations, isolation, and retaliation—has left me emotionally distressed and physically debilitated.

### 5. Evidence of Discrimination:

- Younger, non-disabled employees were not terminated despite similar performance issues, such as email formatting, which I successfully addressed.
- Employees of other races were not marginalized or underutilized, unlike me, suggesting race-based discrimination under Title VII.

### 6. Witnesses:

- Mark Underhill ([markbunderhill@yahoo.com](mailto:markbunderhill@yahoo.com)): Can attest to the pattern of marginalization I experienced compared to non-disabled, younger employees.
- Darla Dickerson ([Darla.Dickerson@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:Darla.Dickerson@fema.dhs.gov)): Can confirm differential treatment based on age and disability.
- Russel Towndrow ([Russell.Towndrow@FEMA.DHS.GOV](mailto:Russell.Towndrow@FEMA.DHS.GOV)): Aware of institutional patterns of discrimination and retaliation.

## V. Requested Remedies

I seek the following remedies to address the injustices I have suffered:

### 1. Financial Compensation:

- Full medical/disability benefits in the amount of \$6,500.00 per month, net, to compensate for the significant health and financial impact caused by FEMA's discrimination and retaliation.
- Full family health benefits paid for by the employer.
- Compensatory and punitive damages for emotional distress, as permitted under 42 U.S.C. § 1981a and EEOC v. Waffle House, Inc., 534 U.S. 279 (2002), which affirmed the availability of punitive damages for intentional discrimination.

### 2. Policy Revisions:

- A formal review of FEMA's Reasonable Accommodation policies to ensure compliance with the Rehabilitation Act and EEOC regulations.
- Mandatory bias training for leadership regarding ADEA, Title VII, and Rehabilitation Act compliance, as recommended by EEOC Enforcement Guidance on Retaliation (2016).
- Expansion of employment for Reasonable Accommodation representatives within the agency to prevent future delays in adjudication.

## VI. Final Affirmation

The cumulative effect of FEMA's actions has not only ended my career but also severely impacted my health, well-being, and financial stability. I seek recognition and redress for these injustices under the protections afforded by Title VII, the ADEA, and the Rehabilitation Act.

I have reviewed this statement, consisting of 22 pages, and hereby solemnly swear that it is true and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that the information I have provided will not be held confidential and may be shared with the relevant parties in the investigative process.

Signed:  
Max J. Meindl  
Date: February 14, 2025

Witness:  
Investigator Name  
Date: February 14, 2025

Initials:  
Page: 22 of 22

This revised affidavit strengthens your claims by integrating relevant case law, clarifying legal violations, and updating the RAR timelines. It maintains your perspective as the complainant while enhancing the legal and factual arguments to support your EEO complaint. If you have additional documents or evidence, consider submitting them to the investigator to further substantiate your claims.

On Fri, Feb 14, 2025 at 2:34 PM Elisabeth Meindl <[missmeindl@gmail.com](mailto:missmeindl@gmail.com)> wrote:

Please see attached

Ta Kala Diokomen, KΔ

--  
Regards,

Max J. Meindl III

"Exuberance is easily corrected; dullness is incurable." Quintilian

"I don't make mistakes. I have unintentional improvisations." ~unknown

Texas  
832-293-3671

**Date:** 3/1/2025 8:45:03 AM  
**From:** "Max" femamax@gmail.com  
**To:** "Pieter Panne" femamax@gmail.com  
**Subject:** RA  
**RA;RA;RA;ra;RE: FW: Notice to Employees Enrollment in COVID-19 Testing Program;Re: new from from FEMA;RE: Attachment: ra;RA;RE: ra-sign;RA CONFIRMATION;INFO;Fwd: FW: Reasonable Accommodation Request# RAR0017691;RA;RE: MEINDL;**



Chief of Staff comms.eml



FMLA.eml

--  
Regards,

Max J. Meindl III

"Exuberance is easily corrected; dullness is incurable." Quintilian

"I don't make mistakes. I have unintentional improvisations." ~unknown

Texas  
832-293-3671

**Date:** 3/1/2025 8:54:41 AM  
**From:** "Max" femamax@gmail.com  
**To:** "Pieter Panne" femamax@gmail.com  
**Subject:** RA  
**FMLA;HR;FW: MEINDL-FMLA PAPERWORK-NEW REQUEST;FMLA;FW: ;OSC Case No. MA-20-1288;Re: OSC Case No. MA-20-1288;RE: MEINDL;FW: Consideration;FW: FMLA/Reasonable accommodation ;FW: FMLA**  
**Attachment:** Recertification - M. Meindl;Chief of Staff comms;RE: FMLA;ra;webta fmla;FW: FMLA RECERTIFICATION;Fwd: FMLA;fmla;FW: WebTA;fmla;FW: FMLA Determination ;FMLA;RA;FW: WebTA;FMLA;Family Medical Leave Act form;Fwd: WebTA;RE: Case #460.2016.01937;



--  
Regards,

Max J. Meindl III

"Exuberance is easily corrected; dullness is incurable." Quintilian

"I don't make mistakes. I have unintentional improvisations." ~unknown

Texas  
832-293-3671

Dear Associate,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to SSC Service Solutions (“the Company”). As a new member of the Company, you are now part of the nation’s leading support services company. Our Associates are the foundation of our continued success, so attracting, retaining, and developing great people is our top business priority. Our phenomenal growth, dynamic divisions and competitive packages has enabled us to create many new opportunities for our Associates.

With such a diverse workforce, we listen to our Associates’ needs to create a desirable place to work, competitive wages, and a choice of quality benefits. Through the Associate survey, we enable our Associates to voice their concerns, responding in ways that maintains our client base, and retains and develops our Associates, all while growing our business.

Our commitment to your future within SSC Service Solutions began the moment you accepted your new position. As you begin your journey within the Company, I am confident that you will quickly notice the rewards of being part of a company with national experience, resources, extraordinary benefits, and promising career prospects. We strive to promote from within. This is a place where people can build careers and have better prospects for the future. Our dedication to developing the skills and talents of qualified individuals like you spans the continent, making each of you an integral part of our Company. This handbook is designed to provide you with resources and information related to the Company.

As our organization continues to grow, our focus remains the same – In the markets we serve, we will be recognized as the premier provider of the best quality, customer focused support services. I hope you will take pride in the organization you have joined - where our achievements are measured not just by the bottom line, but also by our people.

Bobby Kutteh  
Chief Executive Officer

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# I. WELCOME TO SSC SERVICE SOLUTIONS

## About This Handbook

This handbook is the property of SSC Service Solutions (hereinafter referred to as “Company”) and is intended to help you understand the Company as a whole and your place within the Company family. It will also ensure that by following the same policies and guidelines throughout our entire organization, we will all achieve the same goals - no matter where we work. This handbook is strictly confidential and its contents are not to be reproduced or made available to anyone outside the Company.

The contents of this handbook are intended only as an outline and working guide for some of our policies and procedures. It is, however, important that all Associates read and understand this handbook. The Company may change these policies and outlined benefits, whether included in this handbook or not, at any time with or without notice, and it may choose not to apply a policy in certain circumstances. Although the Company will always try to keep you advised of any changes to the policies and guidelines found within the handbook, changes may occur before any written revisions are distributed to everyone in the organization.

For those Associates covered by a collective bargaining agreement, please refer to that agreement for additional information on the topics covered in this handbook.

*This handbook is not intended to be nor does it constitute an express or implied contract of any kind in favor of Associates nor shall any Associate or applicant for employment have any contractual rights, claims or privileges against the Company by virtue of this handbook. Nothing in this handbook is intended to create any type of agreement for employment or continued employment or guaranteed hours of work.*

We are constantly working towards improving our policies and the positive relationship that we have with our Associates. If you have any questions about anything in this handbook or about your employment with the Company, do not hesitate to see your supervisor. He/she will see to it that all your questions are answered.

## **Our Mission**

In the markets we serve, we will be recognized as the premier provider of the best quality, customer focused support services.

## **Our Values**

- **Integrity**  
*A commitment to forthright, honest communication in all of our encounters.*
- **Collaboration**  
*An unyielding commitment to consistent teamwork in order to achieve collective goals.*
- **Accountability**  
*As a company and as individuals, we accept full responsibility for our actions and the associated outcomes.*
- **Professional Development**  
*Providing the right tools, training and support for professional growth.*
- **Leadership**  
*Displaying the passion to exceed expectations in all that we do.*

## **Corporate Profile**

Headquartered in Knoxville, TN, SSC Service Solutions joined Compass Group in 2010. With over 40 years of industry experience and highly trained skilled professionals, we specialize in three distinct market segments:

- K-12 Schools
- Higher Education
- Shopping Centers

SSC Service Solutions believes great managers are the key to consistent, reliable, high-quality programs. That's why we invest more resources than any other provider to train every one of our managers in both the technical and customer service skills our customers demand. We have built a culture based on hiring for attitude and developing through training and mentoring, and always pushing ourselves to learn and improve. Our primary service offering includes:

- Custodial & Campus Services
- Plant Operations & Maintenance
- Grounds Management

*Sustaining a Learning Environment.*

## **Your Role as an Associate**

One objective of the Company is to strive to achieve quality service through Associate performance and good customer relations. By becoming an Associate of the Company, you have accepted the responsibility of maintaining those high standards.

You are the link between us and our customer and its visitors. It is our actions and attitudes toward customers, the public, and our fellow Associates that influence the reputation of the Company and will make a difference. To strengthen our customer relations skills, the Company provides training, recognition, team-building, education, and awareness programs. Exceptional customer relations will help you more clearly understand the important role you play toward the continued success of our company.

## **Equal Employment Opportunity and Non-Discrimination Policy**

The Company stands committed to its philosophy that all Associates are entitled to equal employment opportunities. The Company will affirmatively recruit, hire, train, and promote Associates based on their abilities, achievements, experience, and other bona-fide job-related criteria without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, national origin, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation or any other factors unrelated to individual merit or qualifications. This policy applies to all other personnel actions, including compensation, benefits, discipline, transfer, education, leaves of absence, and participation in company administered activities. The Company will adhere to all applicable federal, state, and local laws pertaining to equal employment opportunity.

All Associates of the Company are responsible for adhering to and enforcing the Company's policy and commitment to Equal Employment Opportunity. Each Associate has the responsibility to immediately contact the Human Resources department with any complaint or notification of possible discrimination.

If you feel you are being unlawfully discriminated against or harassed, report this immediately to your supervisor. If you are not comfortable discussing the situation with your immediate supervisor then you may approach any manager or go directly to Human Resources. The Company abides by a strict anti-retaliation policy. Associates may report EEO related problems, concerns, and/or complaints without fear of reprisal.

## **Commitment to Diversity**

Diversity is the hallmark of the Company. It is the policy of the Company to value and manage the diversity of our Associates and customers by doing what is right in the work environment and communities we serve. The Company stands committed to a diverse workforce because we believe that a diverse workforce provides advantages both internally, in terms of the human resources potential offered by a variety of diverse perspectives, and externally, in increasing the Company's ability to serve an equally diverse global community. We value our Associates, who have varied backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. Diversity is key to our success and we will support diversity in our recruitment, selection, retention, and development of our Associates.

## **Zero Tolerance Discrimination and Harassment Policy**

It is the policy of the Company to provide a work environment for all Associates that is free from discrimination and harassment based on sex, sexual orientation, race, religion, color, disability, age, pregnancy, child-birth, national origin, veteran status, genetic information, or any other unlawful basis. The Company will comply with and strictly enforce federal, state, and local laws that prohibit discrimination or harassment based on sex, sexual orientation, race, religion, color, disability, age, pregnancy, child-birth, national origin, veteran status, genetic information, or any other unlawful basis.

Associates who by act or omission discriminate against or harass any Associate based upon such classifications shall be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Without limiting the applicability or coverage of this Policy to the conduct hereinafter described, the following conduct shall be deemed a violation of this Policy:

1. Making any decision regarding the hiring, firing, promotion or demotion of an Associate or making any decision that affects the wages, benefits, or working conditions of an Associate based in whole or in part on

sex, sexual orientation, race, religion, color, disability, age, pregnancy, national origin, veteran status, genetic information, or any other unlawful basis;

2. Making sexual advances or requests for sexual favors or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature in the workplace;
3. Making sexual advances or requests for sexual favors or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature outside the workplace if: (i) the conduct is directed toward another Associate, and (ii) is unwelcome or adversely affects the working conditions, morale, or environment of Associates at the Company;
4. Making submission or rejection of any conduct referred to in paragraph two or three above as a basis for any employment decision affecting an Associate; and
5. Creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment by engaging in any of the following conduct or similar conduct that offends another Associate:
  - a. Calling, addressing or referring to any person by a demeaning name that relates to that person's sex, sexual orientation, race, color, religion, age, pregnancy, disability, national origin, veteran status, genetic information, or any other unlawful basis;
  - b. Belittling or denigrating another person because of that person's sex, sexual orientation, race, color, religion, age, pregnancy, disability, national origin, veteran status, genetic information, or any other unlawful basis;
  - c. Sharing stories, jokes, experiences, or anecdotes that relate to sex, sexual orientation, race, color, religion, age, pregnancy, disability, national origin, veteran status, genetic information, or any other unlawful basis;
  - d. Displaying or otherwise publishing pictures, photographs, depictions, artwork, quotes, stories, jokes, or other media (including email, text messages, and blogging) that may reasonably offend another because of his/her sex, sexual orientation, race, color, religion, age, pregnancy, disability, national origin, veteran status, genetic information, or any other unlawful basis;
  - e. Touching an Associate in a manner that may be offensive to him/her, or making lewd or suggestive gestures or comments in the presence of another Associate; and
  - f. Engaging in any conduct that tends to harass, annoy, or inflame another Associate, customer or vendor based on sex, sexual orientation, race, color, religion, age, pregnancy, disability, national origin, veteran status, genetic information, or any other classification protected by law, including, but not limited to, the use of epithets, slurs, threats, intimidation, or hostile acts.

This list is not exclusive. Other conduct that results in discrimination or harassment based upon a protected classification may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

The Company will absolutely not tolerate discrimination or harassment, and asks for its Associates' assistance in helping it meet its obligations by acting in accordance with its stated commitment and by bringing any violations of this Policy to a Company representative's attention immediately as provided in the Company's Open Communication Policy. Associates may raise concerns or complaints about matters, whether alleged, perceived or actual, made unlawful by Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; the Vietnam Era Veterans Readjustment Act of 1974; Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (as amended); the Equal Pay Act of 1963 (as amended); the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (as amended); the Family

and Medical leave Act (as amended); the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008; and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (as amended); or by equivalent state or local laws.

If an Associate feels that he/she is being harassed, the Company expects the Associate to bring his/her complaint to the Company's attention using the Open Communication Policy. Any Associate who brings a complaint to the Company's attention is assured that the matter will be fully and fairly investigated, and that it will be dealt with promptly, and in confidence to the extent possible. Only those persons who need to know will be involved or informed of the complaint and the Company will take immediate and appropriate corrective action, including disciplinary measures as warranted.

To initiate a complaint of harassment using the Open Communication Policy, an Associate should report concerns to his/her immediate supervisor. The supervisor will make recommendations for resolving the problem, and/or when appropriate, initiate an investigation. If the Associate feels his/her concern remains unresolved, or if he/she is not comfortable discussing the matter with the immediate supervisor, or if his/her concern involves the immediate supervisor, then the Associate should direct his/her concern to the next level of management. To the extent that the Associate's concern continues, the Associate should present it upward through the chain of command within the Company.

The Company expects any Associate raising a concern, and any witnesses involved, to fully cooperate in the investigation of the Associate's concern. Failure to do so may limit the Company's ability to adequately investigate the issue. If an Associate ever feels uncomfortable discussing a concern with management, he/she may at any time during the Open Communication process contact a Human Resources representative or the "SpeakUp" Hotline at 1-866-654-6626.

Retaliation against Associates who reports workplace discrimination or harassment based on a protected class, or who provide information concerning a complaint about discrimination or harassment is strictly prohibited. Any Associate, supervisor, or manager who engages in prohibited retaliatory action will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

## **II. THE WORK ENVIRONMENT**

### **At Will Employer**

The Company is an "at will" employer and operates under the provision that Associates have the right to resign their position at any time, with or without notice, and with or without cause. We, the employer, have similar rights to terminate the employment relationship at any time, with or without notice, and with or without cause.

### **Definition of Associate Status**

Associate status designations define various types of staffing requirements, which may vary by length of assignment, the number of hours an Associate is scheduled to work each week, and the type of work to be performed. Associate status designations determine eligibility for certain programs and benefits.

Employment with the Company is divided into the following classifications:

- A. **Full-Time Associates:** These Associates are scheduled 30 or more hours per week. They are entitled to all privileges and benefits as stated in the Schedule of Benefits.
- B. **Part-Time Associates:** These Associates are scheduled on average less than 30 hours per week and are eligible for only certain benefits outlined in the Schedule of Benefits.

- C. **Temporary Associates:** These Associates are utilized for specific assignments or for a predetermined period of time which usually does not exceed a maximum of six (6) consecutive months. This classification includes seasonal workers, for example associates hired to cover the holiday period. These positions may be either part-time or full-time. These Associates are not eligible for benefits.
- D. **On-Call Associates:** These Associates are scheduled on an as needed basis, based on the operational needs of the business. These Associates are not eligible for benefits.
- E. **Hourly:** Hourly Associates are paid only for hours actually worked and are always “non-exempt”.
- F. **Non-exempt:** Non-exempt Associates are required to be paid overtime at the rate of time and one-half for all hours worked in excess of forty (40) hours in a work week or according to state law.
- G. **Exempt:** Exempt Associates are not required to be paid overtime in accordance with applicable federal wage and hour laws for work performed in excess of forty (40) hours in a work week. Executives, professional associates and certain associates in administrative positions are typically exempt. This status is determined solely by the Fair Labor Standards Act and is not based on the associate’s capabilities, experience, and length of service or job title. In addition, Exempt Associates are eligible for the Company’s Salaried Non-Exempt/Exempt benefit program.

Please see your immediate supervisor if you have any questions regarding your Associate classification or exemption status.

## Introductory Periods

Associates who have been newly hired or transferred into a new position with the Company will be required to complete a ninety (90) calendar day introductory period. Associates acknowledge and fully understand that the introductory period does not change the at-will nature of the employment relationship. There is no guarantee of employment for the probationary period. An Associate’s employment may be terminated within that introductory period at any time and the Associate may choose to quit employment during that period. The purpose of this period is to determine the ability with which the Associate performs his/her new job. It also provides the Associate with the opportunity to decide if he/she is satisfied with the position.

- A. **Newly Hired Associates:** During the ninety (90) calendar day introductory period, from point of hire, an Associate has an opportunity to demonstrate his or her performance for the position for which employed. This period of time offers both the Associate and the Company the option to end the employment relationship at any time or to provide the Associate with regular status at the end of ninety (90) days. However, this introductory period is not a guarantee of employment for ninety (90) days or beyond.

Under certain circumstances, the introductory period for a new Associate may be extended by the manager. The extension of the introductory period will not affect the Associate's eligibility for benefits that are outlined in the Schedule of Benefits. This extension must be approved by Human Resources.

- B. **Transferred Associates:** All Associates who transfer into a new position are required to complete a ninety (90) day introductory period during which their performance, attendance and abilities will be evaluated (this does not include a change in shift or location within the same account). Should any transferred Associate not be meeting satisfactory performance standards during this period, the supervisor should immediately consider whether the Associate is suited for the position and either transfer the Associate back into the former position if available or begin the progressive counseling steps outlined in the Progressive Counseling Policy.

## **Right to Inspect**

In order to safeguard the personal safety and property of our Associates, customers and the Company and to help prevent the possession, use and sale of illegal drugs on Company premises, the Company reserves the right to inspect lockers. It should be noted that all offices, desks, files, lockers, etc. are the property of the Company. When it is necessary for you to carry packages or bundles from the building, you may be asked to allow inspection by either your supervisor or manager. Inspections may be done at any time at the choice of the Company unless otherwise prohibited or restricted by any local, state or federal law, ordinance or regulation.

## **Personnel File Access**

Associate records are considered confidential and access to such records is restricted. Access to Associate records is limited to the individual Associate and to members of management with a legitimate need for such information.

All Associates shall be granted the right to inspect all material within their individual personnel file (except pre-employment information) in the presence of a manager or Human Resources. Such inspections shall be made in the office by appointment at a mutually convenient time upon the request of the Associate. At the time the personnel file is reviewed, Associates may be asked to sign a statement verifying the review. This same policy shall apply with respect to the inspection of relevant payroll records and insurance records of the individual Associate.

Associates may take notes about documents in their files; however, records cannot be altered nor can a document be added or removed from the file during the Associate's review of his/her records. When requested by the Associate in writing, the Company generally will photocopy the contents of the Associate's personnel file.

Former Associates do not have the right to review their personnel files except where permitted by state law. Personnel files are business records and property of the Company. Please make all requests for file reviews in writing through your Human Resources Representative.

*Note: Policy may change in accordance with state laws.*

## **Non-Fraternization**

It is the policy of the Company to avoid and prevent misunderstandings, actual or perceived conflicts of interest, complaints of favoritism, possible claims of sexual harassment and Associate morale and dissension problems, all of which may potentially result from personal relationships involving Associates of the Company.

All supervisors and managers at all levels are strictly prohibited from dating, engaging in amorous or intimate relationships with, engaging in physical contact with or participating in sexual relations with any Associate who reports to them, either directly or indirectly, as the actual or functional supervisor or manager or in the same chain of command. Such activity may not occur in either the workplace or outside the workplace. All supervisors and managers must avoid any relationship or activity whatsoever that affects or may even be perceived as affecting the supervisor's or manager's ability to remain fair, neutral, objective and consistent in managing his or her Associates.

Associates who do not report to each other, either directly or indirectly, as the actual or functional supervisor or manager (this includes Administrative Assistants, Payroll and HR personnel, Patient Flow Coordinators and any other salaried non-exempt or hourly employee with supervisory influence) or in the same chain of command, may engage in an appropriate, consensual and voluntary relationship **if and only if both Associates disclose such a relationship to both their immediate supervisors as soon as such a relationship begins and sign documentation acknowledging that the relationship is appropriate, consensual and voluntary.** Such documentation will be maintained in both Associates' personnel files.

Failure to disclose such a relationship to both Associates' immediate supervisors as soon as such relationship begins and failure to sign such documentation will result in immediate corrective action, up to and including termination.

Sign off on said documentation, does not apply to hourly Associates who have no supervisory influence; however hourly associates should use good discretion when dating or engaging in personal relationships with other hourly associates outside of work. All Associates are required to exercise good judgment in personal conduct with other Associates and prohibit any favored treatment that results from a personal relationship between Associates. Any Associate who demonstrates poor judgment in this respect will be subject to corrective action, up to and including termination.

## **Workplace Violence**

The Company is committed to promoting a safe and healthful work environment for its Associates. The Company expressly prohibits any acts, threats, or violence by any Associate or former Associate against any other Associate, patient, client or visitor in or about client/company facilities or elsewhere at any time. You have a duty to warn supervisors and client security (if available) of any suspicious workplace activity, incidents, or violence that you may observe. Prompt remedial action up to and including immediate termination will be taken against any Associate who engages in any threatening behavior or acts of violence.

Associates are not allowed to have firearms or any other dangerous or deadly weapons or instruments in their possession while on Company business or on Company or client property.

State and local laws shall apply when applicable.

## **Company/Client Confidential**

All information concerning the Company's and the client's business that is confidential and proprietary must be held in strict confidence and must not be discussed with anyone other than those Company Associates who need the information in the performance of their work.

Due to the sensitive nature of information present within our worksites, it is of the utmost importance you observe strict confidentiality regarding information learned as you perform your job. Confidential, proprietary and private information about the Company, Associates, patients and clients is intended for use within the scope of your job. A breach of confidentiality may be a cause for corrective action, up to and including termination. This does not include information regarding an Associate's terms and conditions of employment.

## **Confidentiality**

While working at the Company, you will learn a lot about our Company, our customers, suppliers, and licensees. Any information not meant for public distribution is considered confidential and may only be revealed with written permission by the Company (a Regional Manager or higher). This information remains confidential even after your employment at the Company ends. This confidentiality includes the Company's software, algorithms, computer processing systems and techniques. All records, files, memoranda, reports, price lists, customer lists, drawings, plans, sketches, documents and equipment which Associates use, prepare or come into contact with are considered company property and must remain confidential.

Upon the Company's request or at the end of your period of employment, Associates must provide to the Company any documents, papers or other materials that they have that contain or involve confidential information. The Company retains ownership of work performed by Associates. From time to time, the Company may request that its ownership of work be documented. Associates may be asked to carry out a copyright application.

While you are employed by the Company and at all times following your termination for any reason, you agree to and will: (i) not use or disclose any Protected Health Information (“PHI”) to which you may have access unless such use or disclosure is approved by the Company and necessary to perform your job functions; (ii) not take or remove from the Company or otherwise use or retain any PHI in any form; and (iii) report any unauthorized use or disclosure of PHI by yourself or other employees of the company of which you are aware. PHI is individually identifiable health information that is created, transmitted or maintained by the Company or any of the Company’s Clients in any form or medium – electronic, oral or written, PHI includes, but is not limited to:

- medical records and charts;
- hospital bills and claim forms;
- special dietary needs;
- prescriptions and lists of medications;
- lists of patients; and
- manuals prepared by the company or any affiliated entity;
- any individual identifiable health information protected by the federal law known as HIPAA or similar State laws.

## Open Communication

From time to time, an Associate may have a concern about something in the workplace. No matter what the issue may be, the Company believes that every Associate has the right to voice any of their concerns. Although we cannot promise that every concern or problem will be solved to everyone’s satisfaction all the time, the Company does promise that it will listen and seek to resolve issues consistently.

**Discussions:** The Associate should discuss the problem or concern with her/his immediate supervisor. The supervisor will make recommendations to the Associate in resolving the problem or, when appropriate, conduct an investigation and take appropriate action.

If the Associate feels the issue is still not resolved, and if the Associate is not comfortable discussing the situation with his/her immediate supervisor, or if the issue involves his/her immediate supervisor, then the Associate may discuss the problem or concern with his/her next level supervisor.

If the issue continues to remain unresolved, the Associate should feel free to continue to present concerns upward through the chain of command within the Company.

If an Associate feels uncomfortable pursuing an issue with management, the Associate may contact a Human Resources Representative at any time during the process.

**Policy/Purpose:** It is the policy of the Company to allow all Associates to have appropriate concerns addressed in a fair, thoughtful and expeditious manner, according to the procedures outlined above, without fear of retaliation. An appropriate concern is considered to be any issue that affects the ability to conduct business in a productive and efficient manner.

**Confidentiality:** Information communicated during these procedures is to be held in strict confidence. Supervisors and other members of management are to investigate and discuss a complaint only with those individuals who have a need to know about it or who are needed to supply necessary background information.

The Associate should restrict discussion of the situation to only those individuals who have a need to know.

**Assurances to Associates:** Associates will not be penalized for proper use of the Open Communication Policy and are encouraged to promptly address any and all concerns with management or Human Resources.

As we work together to provide our clients and customers with superior service, we believe that the workplace must not only be safe, but that it must also be the kind of place where our Associates enjoy their work and enjoy working with each other.

**SpeakUp:** The Company's "SpeakUp" hotline adds an important component to our corporate compliance programs and is consistent with our preferred employer objectives. This is a toll-free hotline that is operated by trained communications specialists at Global Compliance Services, a company headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina, which specializes in staffing employee hotlines, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The purpose of the hotline is to allow Associates an opportunity to voice their concerns in as private and confidential a manner as possible. By making this hotline available to all Associates, the Company is demonstrating its commitment to complying with and enforcing its policies and procedures while promoting positive working environments for Associates to voice their concerns.

The "SpeakUp" hotline number is 1-866-654-6626. The "SpeakUp" hotline is designed to supplement the "Open Communication" policy, not circumvent it. We expect all Associates to first use the Company's "Open Communication" policy whenever they have a problem they think needs to be addressed.

## Uniforms

Associates are expected to wear their complete uniforms as directed by management. It is important the Company, through its Associates, present a professional image to our customers, as such we require that Associates keep their uniforms clean, pressed and neatly maintained at all times. Proper shoes are to be worn and they are to be maintained and polished.

Each Company Associate, whose position requires a full uniform, will be given a uniform including a name tag (where required). It is the Associate's responsibility to make sure that their uniform is clean and in good condition. Associates must sign for every item of their uniform they are issued and all items are to be returned to the Company upon separation.

*Note: Certain states require the employer to launder and maintain uniforms. Please discuss the procedures that apply in your state with your immediate supervisor.* Likewise, local facility policies may require other specific requirements regarding dress code.

Failure to adhere to the dress code with respect to clothing, jewelry and other personal effects may be grounds for corrective action.

## Dress Code

Dress regulations have been established to ensure that associates present a business-like and professional appearance. Management reserves the right to disallow clothing which would detract from a professional image. Associates with questions about the appropriateness of a particular item should speak with their supervisor before wearing the article.

1. Good grooming and personal hygiene is mandatory. Therefore, hair, hands, and nails should always be clean and neat. Accessories and jewelry should be conservative in nature, must conform to state and federal sanitation guidelines, and should complement a business-like appearance. Torn, frayed or patched clothing is not permitted at any time.
2. All associates who work in corporate or field offices are expected to dress in business-like attire, which would include:
  - a. For men – dress slacks, business shirt buttoned at collar, tie. Management associates will also have a sports coat or suit coat where appropriate.
  - b. For women – Dresses, suits, skirts, blouses and slack outfit.
3. All associates who work in field operations are expected to dress in appropriate uniforms or business-like attire.

## **Keys**

All keys must be left in your building in the place designated by your supervisor unless your supervisor gives you specific instructions otherwise. Do not mark your keys in any way or make duplicates. Keys assigned to you are your responsibility. If you misplace or lose your key(s), you are required to report the situation to supervisor immediately. Failure to report missing key(s) will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

## **Drug and Alcohol Free Work Place Policy**

It is the intent of the Company to provide a working environment as free from the use of alcohol and drugs as possible. The costs of alcohol and drug abuse are staggering and are manifested by accidents, tardiness, absenteeism, property damage, increased workers' compensation costs, increased health insurance costs, decreased productivity, the cost of replacing and retraining new Associates, and Associate theft. In an effort to curb the abuse of alcohol and drugs in the work place, the Company has adopted the following policy regarding drugs and alcohol. We ask for your full cooperation in implementing this policy and, just as important, educating other Associates and the general public to the risk of substance abuse.

- A. The sale, manufacture, distribution, purchase, use, or possession of non-prescribed controlled substances, and reporting to work or working while impaired by such substances is prohibited while on company property, during working hours, or while conducting company business outside the work place.
- B. The distribution, sale, purchase, use, or possession of equipment, products, or materials, which are used, intended for use, or designed for use with non-prescribed controlled substances also is prohibited while on client property or during work hours.
- C. Reporting to or being at work with a measurable quantity of alcohol or other intoxicants, non-prescribed narcotics, hallucinogenic drugs, marijuana, or other non-prescribed substances in blood or urine is prohibited.
- D. Reporting to or being at work with a measurable quantity of prescribed narcotics in blood or urine, or use of prescribed narcotics is also prohibited where in the opinion of the Company such use prevents the Associate from performing the duties of his/her job or poses a risk to the safety of the Associate, other persons, or property.
- E. Any Associate convicted under a criminal drug statute shall notify his/her immediate supervisor no later than five business days after such conviction. Failure to do so will result in immediate dismissal.
- F. Violations of this policy will result in corrective action up to and including termination of employment. In lieu of termination, other corrective action may apply in the judgment of the Company such as, but not limited to, suspension of an Associate or requiring the Associate's attendance and successful completion of an approved substance abuse assistance or rehabilitation program.

## **Drug and Alcohol Testing**

The Company is committed to establishing and maintaining a work environment that promotes safety, good health, and efficient work behaviors. This commitment includes taking reasonable steps to ensure that associates, clients, customers and the general public are free from harm due to the actions of associates who are under the influence of controlled substances (drugs) or alcohol.

Associates covered by this policy are subject to drug and alcohol testing.

Types of testing include:

- A. **DOT and Non-DOT Pre-Employment Drug Testing:** A drug test may be required prior to authorizing certain applicants or associates from commencing employment with the Company. The applicant shall be hired contingent upon his or her participation in a drug test and the operation's receipt of a negative result.
- B. **DOT Pre-Employment Drug Test** is required for all potential employees who operate a commercial motor vehicle with a gross vehicle weight rating of 26,001lbs or more (as defined by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations in 390.5).
- C. **Non-DOT Pre-Employment Drug Test** is required for all applicants and associates who will not be operating company vehicles or for those operating company vehicles with a gross vehicle weight rating less than 26,001lbs.
- D. **DOT and NON-DOT Post-Accident Drug and Alcohol Testing:** Certain associates may be subject to post-accident drug and alcohol testing, including, but not limited to the following:
  1. **Non-DOT Post-Accident Drug and Alcohol Testing is required when:**
    - a. A work related injury where medical treatment is required.
    - b. Any behavior that results in injury to others requiring medical attention.
  2. **DOT Post-Accident Drug and Alcohol testing is required** by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration under Section 382.303. The requirements for when tests must be conducted and the time frame under which they must be conducted are listed below
    - a. Loss of human life.
    - b. A citation issued to our driver and someone requiring medical treatment away from the scene of the accident.
    - c. A citation issued to our driver and a vehicle being towed from the scene of the accident.

Post-Accident drug testing shall be done within 24 hours following the accident, or not at all. If Post-Accident alcohol testing cannot be done within two hours of the accident, the operation shall prepare documentation stating the reason(s) the test was not promptly administered. The associate shall not consume alcohol for 8 hours following the accident or until testing is completed. If alcohol testing is not done within 8 hours following the accident, it shall not be done.

For accidents which do not involve a Company vehicle or vehicle accidents which do not meet the criteria specified above, management may require the associate to participate in drug and/or alcohol testing if it is justified due to reasonable suspicion.

- E. **Reasonable Suspicion Drug and Alcohol Testing:** Associates covered by this policy are subject to Reasonable Suspicion drug and/or alcohol testing as required by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations in section 382.307. Reasonable suspicion testing is conducted when a qualified individual believes the associate's appearance or actions indicate the probable misuse of alcohol or controlled substances. A Reasonable Suspicion Observation Record must be completed by a qualified manager or supervisor prior to sending the associate for testing.

When an associate is selected for testing based on reasonable suspicion, he or she shall be immediately removed from performing work for the Company and taken to a testing facility. Reasonable Suspicion testing shall be done within 8 hours following the observance, or not at all.

In meeting random testing requirements, a method of selection is used in which each Company associate at an account that mandates such testing requirements has an equal chance of being selected.

Once an associate has been notified that he or she has been randomly selected for testing, the associate shall proceed immediately to the assigned collection site.

All associate testing records are confidential and may only be released to authorized Company management, agents and representatives; authorized vendor Associates, agents and representatives; substance abuse professionals; and other sources as deemed necessary by the vendor or the Company.

## **Smoking and Tobacco Free Workplace**

It is the Company's objective to provide a smoke-free environment in your workplace. Employees may smoke in designated smoking areas only. Smoking is prohibited in all other areas at the worksite. This restriction applies to all Associates and visitors, at all times, including non-business hours. For professional appearance reasons, Associates will not be permitted to use tobacco products near the front entrance of the building.

In addition, some campuses in which we conduct our business are tobacco free. This includes smokeless tobacco and any other form of tobacco. Associates are expected to follow specific site policies regarding these restrictions

Failure to follow such policies will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

If a state or local law in any way contradicts with this provision, the Company will abide by the applicable state or local law.

## **Use of Company and Client Technology**

The Company provides access to Company technology and technology systems ("technology services"), such as computers, computer accounts, e-mail, internet, telephones, cell phones, and other communications technology, to Associates with a need to have accessibility to support their job performance. Only authorized Associates may use Company technology services and the Company expects Associates to take reasonable care of its technology assets.

While use of Company technology services is limited to Company business only, the Company recognizes that Associates may occasionally need to use Company technology services for personal reasons. Associates may use these technology services on a minimal basis, and only if use does not interfere with their job performance. Should Associates have authorized access to client technology services, they must adhere to client policies, as well as the Company's policies.

Associates shall not use Company technology services to send or receive information that may be offensive or harassing to others, that is in violation of federal, state, and local laws, and that which violates Company policy, or client policy. Additionally, Associates shall not use technology services to conduct any other business or commercial activities when these activities interfere with Associates' job performance, are competitive with the Company, or may be construed as a conflict of interest.

The Company's technology services are the property of the Company. Additionally, all electronic messages composed, sent, or received on Company systems are the property of the Company. Associates, therefore, should not have an expectation of privacy when using Company technology services.

The Company reserves the right to monitor Associate use of technology at any time. Should the Company find that an Associate is abusing or violating Company policies regarding technology and technology systems, the Associate may be subject to progressive counseling, up to and including termination. Additionally, the Company may revoke the Associate's privilege to use Company technology services.

The Company has established comprehensive policies regarding Company technology services. Associates must request a review of the policies with their supervisors.

## **Telephone Use**

Personal phone calls must be limited during working hours, and may be prohibited by the Company should personal calls interfere with job performance and customer service.

In some locations, all personal cell phones must be stored in the employee's car or locker during business hours. In our school locations, at no time (during work hours or not) is an Associate allowed to take photographs of any individual on the client's premises.

Should the Company issue a cell phone, I-Phone, Blackberry or any other related device to an Associate, he/she must limit use to business-related tasks. Associates must refrain from using cell phones and all related devices while operating a Company, leased, or rental vehicle, and while operating a personal vehicle while on Company business. Where state or local laws limit further the usage of cell phones and related devices while operating a motor vehicle, the Company will abide by such laws.

Failure to follow these regulations may result in progressive counseling, up to and including termination.

## **Use of Personal Technology**

Use of personal technology in the workplace can create hazards and an unsafe workplace, as well as hinder job performance and acceptable customer service. Associates therefore may not use their personal phones (such as cell phones and Blackberries), pagers, I-Pods, headphones, and other personal technology during business hours except during rest breaks and lunch periods. Pagers, cell phones, Blackberries, etc., if worn on client premises, must not be visible to Associates, clients, and guests, and must be set on vibrate or silent mode.

Failure to follow these regulations may result in progressive counseling, up to and including termination.

## **Care and Maintenance of Company Equipment and Supplies**

Responsibility for the careful and economic use of company equipment and supplies rests with the Associates. Equipment is costly. Accidental breakage or loss of equipment should be reported to your supervisor immediately.

Excessive breakage or damage of company equipment by any Associate would necessitate an investigation and action would be taken as deemed necessary. To the extent allowable under applicable state laws, Associates will be held liable for mischievous, malicious, or willful damage or destruction of company equipment and facilities.

Please use care in handling company supplies. Do not waste them. Waste affects funds available for other purposes, such as salaries. Company equipment and supplies are for recognized company business only.

## **Loitering**

To prevent interruption of the work schedules of others, you are expected to arrive on time to work for your scheduled shift and will be expected to leave the premises immediately after relief from duty. You must not leave your workstation before your tour of duty ends without the permission of your supervisor.

The practice of having children or other members of your family or friends waiting for you at the department in areas other than public waiting rooms or designated areas is against Company policy.

## **No Solicitation and No Distribution Rules**

Because of the need to maintain an atmosphere conducive to our goals of high quality service and Associate productivity, the Company has adopted regulations with regard to solicitations and distributions during working time.

The goal is to keep Associate's working time free from non-work related interference, keep work areas free from litter, maintain a neat and orderly place of business, and prevent non-Associates from soliciting Company Associates or distributing literature or material to them during working time.

Non-Associates are not allowed to solicit or distribute materials on our property without prior authorization from management.

You, as an Associate, are not permitted to encourage or solicit membership in fraternal, civic, religious, or other organizations during working time.

Bulletin boards are maintained in the office for Company information. Bulletin boards are for official Company communication; Associates may not post personal items or notices on Company bulletin boards.

## **Employment Outside of Company**

It is the policy of the Company that all Associates, with the exception of exempt managers, may engage in work outside of regular work at the Company, provided this work does not interfere with the Associate's job performance at the Company, is not detrimental to the Company's best interest, and does not create a conflict of interest. If an exempt manager seeks to work outside of the company the manager must get written approval from the RVP.

An Associate's personal activities outside working hours are a private matter. The Company's primary concern is to avoid conflict of interest directly or indirectly and the effect of such outside activities on the Associate's job performance at the Company.

If an Associate is also employed for the client at the account where the Associate works for the Company, the Associate must alert his/her manager of this employment relationship.

## **Tipping Policy/Gratuities**

In accordance with Company philosophy, every customer is entitled to receive quality service, regardless of financial status or personal generosity. As a Company Associate, you are not permitted to accept or solicit gratuities.

## **Change of Personal Information**

It is important that you report any change in the information given on your job application, such as change of name, marital status, address, telephone number, or number of dependents. Each Associate is responsible for providing any corrections to personal information to his/her immediate supervisor. This information is held as confidential unless specifically requested by the Associate to be released. Such information may be disclosed to a judicial or administrative entity under relevant rules, regulations, or statutes.

## **Working Hours**

The hours of duty have been set for each position. The Associate will be informed of specific working hours during the initial interview with the manager. The hours are subject to change as client or company business may necessitate. Efforts will be made to spread those changes equitably and give the Associates as much advance notice as possible.

## **Rest and Meal Breaks**

It is the policy of the Company to provide Associates with rest and meal breaks during the course of each workday. It is recognized that productivity is enhanced when Associates have time to rest. **There are two types of breaks that are to be provided to associates.**

### **A. Meal Breaks**

**Full-Time** Salaried non-exempt and Hourly Associates must be scheduled to take an unpaid meal break near the middle of the workday and within the first 5 hours of work. Meal breaks will be at least **one-half (1/2) hour in duration and are to be uninterrupted.**

**Part-Time** Salaried non-exempt and Hourly Associates scheduled to work more than **five (5) consecutive hours during a workday** will receive an unpaid meal break of the same duration as full-time associates and are uninterrupted.

1. If an associate works through his/her meal period or eats while working, this should be approved by the associate's supervisor and noted as such on the time record (record "NL" for No Lunch or "NM" for No Meal) and such time should be paid as time worked. Meal and/or break periods of less than twenty minutes are not to be deducted and are to be paid as time worked. *See Wage & Hour Policy to review how missed meal breaks or breaks less than 30 minutes should be paid.*

**2. Pay (Meals):** Bona fide meal periods are not work time. They do not include coffee breaks or time for snacks. During a meal period an Associate must be completely relieved from duty for the purpose of eating regular meals. The Associate is NOT considered relieved if he/she is required to perform any duties while eating. All salaried non-exempt and hourly Associates must be paid for time worked during their meal period. The meal period **must** be at least **thirty (30) minutes** in duration to qualify as a bona fide meal period.

### **B. Rest Breaks**

Each Salaried non-exempt and Hourly Associate is to be provided with a rest break of **fifteen (15) minutes** at approximately the middle of every **four (4) hours** of work not broken by a meal period, unless the nature of the work does not allow such a break and State regulations do not require this.

**1. Pay for Rest Breaks:** For the purposes of pay, time spent on rest breaks will be considered as time worked.

**2. Working Through Rest Breaks:** Associates may not work through their rest breaks in order to leave earlier than their normal quitting time; work through their breaks in order to make up time missed or time lost due to tardiness; and/or work through their breaks to gain overtime pay.

**3. Document Rest Breaks for California Employee – please see Wage Entitlements section of Wage and Hour policy.**

**Drivers of Commercial Motor Vehicles** are required to follow the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations in Section 395 pertaining to the Hours of Service of drivers.

State and child labor laws will be followed in cases where the law allows for longer or more frequent break and meal periods.

**Place for Meal and Rest Breaks.** Associates should have an area designated away from their work to take breaks. This could be a specific break area designated for sitting and eating and/or taking a coffee break, the cafeteria or a shared employee area for associates where they are not interrupted by work, (i.e. telephone ringing or pager going off). It is not acceptable to allow these breaks to be taken while sitting at the one's work desk, or in one's assigned work area.

**California Associates.** Please refer to Human Resources for further details on Meal and Rest Breaks.

#### C. Breaks for Lactating Mothers

The Company will provide reasonable break times for an Associate to express breast milk for her nursing child for 1 year after the child's birth each time such employee has need to express the milk. If you need such a break, please alert your manager or your Human Resources Representative who will work to find you a place for these breaks that is shielded from view and free from intrusion from coworkers and the public. The Company will abide by all state and local laws on lactation breaks where applicable.

## Time Keeping

All non-exempt Associates are required to complete an individual time record/time sheet (manual process) or punch into a time clock (electronic process) keeping track of daily hours worked.

- 1. Time Record/Time Sheet (Manual Process).** These time records/time sheets should show arrival time, unpaid meal periods and departure times. A Company acceptable manual time sheet is available in the Human Resources Policy and SOP Manual. The Associate must sign and record arrival time when arriving, sign in and out for meal breaks and sign out when departing. All time records/time sheets are to be completed in **ink**.
- 2. Time Clock (Electronic process).** The Associate must punch in when arriving, punch in and out for unpaid meal breaks and punch out when departing.

**Off the clock work will not be permitted.** Managers must make it clear that work off the clock is not permitted to all their hourly and salaried non-exempt Associates. This refers to but is not limited to taking phone calls and checking email from home, taking home manuals to read for business purposes, coming in early to check out assignments before clocking in, coming in early to get work area set up prior to shift start, etc. While off the clock work is not permitted, employees who do work off the clock will be paid, and could be subject to disciplinary action.

**Review of Time Record/Time Sheets or Time Clock punches.** Associates and supervisors must review and sign the time record weekly. If using a time clock, the hours should be printed out weekly so the associate and manager can review and sign off on time.

**Falsifying Time Cards or Clocking in for Co-workers:** Falsifying or altering time records/time sheets or clocking in for another Associate will ordinarily be grounds for termination.

**Supervisor's Responsibility:** It is the responsibility of the supervisor to insure that each associate required to submit a time record/time sheet or punch a time clock does so in accordance with this policy and signs timesheets in **ink**.

Additionally, supervisors are responsible for verifying the accuracy of time records/time sheets and employee punches and timesheets **on a daily basis**.

**Associate's Responsibility:** It is the responsibility of each Associate to sign his/her time record/time sheet in ink at the end of the pay period and then obtain supervisory approval. Failure to comply with requirements regarding time records/time sheets may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Non-exempt individuals that are paid out of the Corporate pay system must submit signed time record/or timesheets, and forward them to the Corporate Payroll Department via e-mail or fax at the **end of the pay period or no later than 10:00 a.m. on Monday following the end of the payroll cycle. These timesheets must also be approved and signed by the supervisor.**

Time cards and timesheets should reflect all lost time from work and the reason (i.e.: sick leave, bereavement, unexcused absence, etc.).

Writing over information on the timecards is NOT permitted, nor is changing punches in the time clock unless agreed upon by the Associate and manager. In the event of an error, a single line should be drawn through the incorrect entry, the correct information written above and initialed by the associate and the supervisor. There is a time sheet correction form to be used and signed by both manager and associate when a change is made to the time clock. (Form can be found in Human Resources Policy and SOP Manual)

Meal periods are without pay and "in" and "out" times **must** be recorded on the time record/time sheets on a daily basis.

Associates who fail to observe established policy concerning clocking in and out for unpaid meal periods or working through breaks without managerial approval, will be subject to counseling and progressive discipline if necessary. Regardless of managerial approval, any associate working through any or all of his/her scheduled unpaid meal period(s) must be paid for that time worked including overtime. *Please refer to Wage Entitlement section of this policy for paying additional pay if 30 minute break is not taken or interrupted.*

## Attendance and Lateness

It is the intent of the Company to establish definitive procedures to deal effectively with attendance and lateness issues. Unscheduled and unexcused absences and tardiness have a direct negative impact on overall morale and may cause an increase in unnecessary overtime, which accelerates staffing cost. Regular and timely attendance is a mandatory part of each job.

### Call Off Procedures

If you are going to be absent or late, let your manager know as soon as possible or at least two (2) hours before the start of your shift. If your manager is not available, contact another manager in the department. Leaving messages with other employees or on voice mail is not acceptable.

### What is considered an "absence occurrence?"

It is the Company's policy to count occurrences, not the individual number of days an Associate is absent, in applying this guideline. Therefore, a one (1) day absence or an absence of two (2) or more consecutive days caused by the same problem would be one (1) occurrence. Examples of occurrences are as follows:

- Time missed due to an illnesses, sickness and/or injury that does not qualify for an Company approved leave of absence, including leaves granted under the Family Medical Leave Act ("FMLA") or the Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA")
- All other unexcused absences (e.g. car problems, caregiver sick, overslept).

- Vacation not requested and approved in advance.
- Other days, normally not counted against attendance, when abuse of policy is confirmed (e.g. skipping training).
- Failure to report for scheduled overtime.
- No call/no show for two (2) consecutive workdays will be recorded as job abandonment and will result in termination.
- Two (2) documented occurrences of no call/no show within a 12 month period will result in termination.
- Any no call/no show occurrence will result in automatic progressive counseling.

When an Associate knows that he or she will be absent from work, the Associate must call his or her supervisor with this information unless physically unable to do so.

#### **What kind of time off does not count as an occurrence?**

Any requested authorized time off approved at least one day in advance will NOT count towards an Associate's attendance record. Examples of non-occurrences include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Any requested time off from work that is approved by the Associate's supervisor at least one (1) day in advance of the absence, this includes use of Holiday, Vacation, or Paid Time Off;
- Time missed excused by the Family Medical Leave Act ("FMLA");
- Time missed excused by the Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended ("ADA");
- Time missed excused by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended ("Title VII");
- Time missed to attend court-mandated jury duty pursuant to the *Jury Duty Leave Policy*;
- Time missed for funeral/bereavement leave pursuant to *Funeral Leave Policy*;
- Time missed for military leave as excused by Uniform Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act ("USERRA") pursuant to the *Military Leave Policy*;
- Time missed from work due to inclement weather per Sector or Account Policy;
- Time missed excused by any other federal, state, or local law; or
- Time missed expressed excused by an Account specific policy

#### **What is a "lateness occurrence?"**

It is the Company's policy to count occurrences, not the amount of time the Associate is late, in applying this guideline. Lateness is defined as when an Associate is not ready or prepared to work at the scheduled time for an unexcused reason. Lateness may include, but is not limited to, taking extended lunch breaks, excessive breaks, tardiness or leaving work early. Each of these violations will be considered one half (1/2) of an occurrence. When an Associate knows that he or she will be late to work, ***the Associate*** must call his or her supervisor with this information unless physically unable to do so.

#### **Attendance and Lateness Guidelines**

The guidelines which follow are attendance and lateness requirement recommendations for disciplinary purposes. They are as follows:

- **During the introductory period:**

- 1 occurrence	=	final progressive counseling
- 2 occurrences	=	termination

- **If employed beyond the introductory period:**

- 4 occurrences	=	first progressive counseling
- 5 occurrences	=	second progressive counseling
- 6 occurrences	=	final progressive counseling
- 7 occurrences	=	termination

### **Can occurrences ever be taken off my attendance record?**

Attendance guidelines are based on a twelve-month rolling period. For example: If an Associate has 3 occurrences (Sept. 3, 2007, Nov. 14, 2007, and Jan. 21, 2008), the Sept. 3, 2007 occurrence will be used in the attendance record until Sept. 4, 2008. Once the occurrence is more than 1 year old, the information will be retained in the personnel file, but not used for current counseling purposes.

To determine an Associates' attendance record, review his/her absence history for the 12 month period prior to the current date.

### **Important Notice**

If you believe your absence or lateness may be covered under the Family Medical Leave Act ("FMLA"), the Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA"), or any other federal, state, or local law, please promptly alert your Manager. "Occurrences" deemed covered under the FMLA, ADA, or other federal, state, or local law, may be excused under this Policy. Again, it is Associates' responsibility to promptly alert management of circumstances that may excuse an "occurrence".

### **Emergency Contact**

There will be times when unexpected events (such as inclement weather, disruption of building services, physical damage to building) may cause the closure of the office building/location. During those times, it may become necessary for the Company to make contact with an Associate's family or emergency contact.

Upon hiring, each new Associate will be required to provide the Company with the name, address, phone number, and relationship of a person to contact in case of an emergency. If at any time your emergency contact changes, please let your manager know.

### **Inclement Weather**

The Company recognizes that occasionally weather conditions may be such that it prevents an Associate from safely traveling to and from work. In order to protect the safety of our Associates we have established the following policy:

When weather conditions such as snow, ice, hurricane conditions, flooding, earthquakes or similar travel hazards appear to cause a severe problem in the early morning of a work day, a decision will be made by location management relative to opening the location. When snow or ice develops after an Associate has arrived at work

or during the course of the work day, a determination will be made by location management whether the location should close or announce conditions allowing Associates to make their own decisions as to travel.

- A. **Delayed Opening:** When the determination is made to delay opening the operation, extreme care will be exercised in setting a safe time for the office to open. Specific instructions as to where to find delayed opening information will be posted on the Associate bulletin board in each operation.
- B. **Leaving Early:** If the weather becomes inclement during work hours, the need to leave early will be under continuing consideration. If the decision is made to close the location, all Associates will be informed.
- C. **Failure to Report to Work:** Each Associate has the responsibility to notify his/her supervisor as soon as possible, but no less than two (2) hours prior to the beginning of the shift using established department/operation procedures, if they will not report to work at the rescheduled time because of inclement weather.
- D. **Compensation:** An Associate who fails to report to work by the announced opening time or elects to leave early due to severe weather conditions may elect to make up the time during the remainder of the work week that time is missed, with approval of the supervisor. If this is not possible, the Associate may be paid by charging their absence to paid leave, such as unused personal day or unused vacation

## **Emergency Closing**

There will be times when unexpected events (such as inclement weather, disruption of building services, physical damage to building) may cause the closure of the office building/location.

Some of our locations are a 24/7 operation and do not close when natural disasters occur, especially at our hospital locations. When natural disasters occur, including inclement weather, employees will be expected to report to work however schedules may be changed or abbreviated. Employees will be advised where to obtain information regarding their schedule and location status.

Employees who are late or absent in cases where weather may be extreme must immediately call their supervisor. The supervisor will determine whether the absence/lateness will be counted as an occurrence.

## **Performance Reviews**

To ensure that all Company Associates perform their jobs to the best of their abilities, the Company feels that it is important to recognize its Associates for good performance and to offer appropriate suggestions when improvement is thought to be necessary. Consistent with this goal, all Company Associates will have their performance evaluated by their supervisor on an ongoing basis.

Associates will receive periodic written evaluations of your performance. Written performance reviews of each Associate's performance are done on an annual basis. Managers also reserve the right to give their employees additional written performance evaluations periodically, which are not tied to increases.

All written performance reviews will be based upon your overall performance in relation to your job responsibilities and will also take into account your conduct, attitude, and unexcused absences and lateness. In addition to the regular performance evaluations described above, special written performance evaluations may be conducted by your supervisor at any time to advise you of the existence of performance or disciplinary issues.

## Overtime Pay Policies

Under some circumstances, the company may require the Associate to work hours in excess of those which have been scheduled. Any such additional work must be approved by the supervisor prior to the actual working of those hours. However, even in situations where approval is not provided, an Associate will be paid for all hours worked. Overtime is paid at the rate according to state and federal law. Holidays, sick days, vacation days, etc. are not included as work time on the computation of overtime pay.

## Paychecks

Paychecks will be issued weekly, bi-weekly or semi – monthly depending upon your unit contract, a collective bargaining agreement or state guidelines. Paydays and earnings are as follows:

- A. Weekly: Every Friday and earnings are one week in arrears.
- B. Bi-Weekly: Every other Friday and earnings are one week in arrears
- C. Semi-Monthly:
  - 1. For all work performed from the 1<sup>st</sup> through the 15<sup>th</sup>, a check will be issued on the 25<sup>th</sup>;
  - 2. For work performed from the 16<sup>th</sup> through the end of the month, a check will be issued on the 10<sup>th</sup> of the following month.
  - 3. If payday falls on Saturday, you will receive your check on Friday. If it falls on Sunday, you will receive your check on Monday.

Your supervisor will provide a specific pay schedule. He or she will distribute all paychecks on the specific payday. If you need to have your check mailed, please contact your supervisor. In some states, such as California, we must have written authorization prior to mailing a paycheck.

There are other payment options available, such as, direct deposit of your paycheck into a checking account or a paycard. Contact your manager for more information and availability of options.

Paychecks for terminated Associates are not issued until the next regular payroll unless state law requires otherwise. See ‘Resignation/Separation’ section for more information.

Any questions concerning your paycheck should be directed to your supervisor.

## Separation of Employment

The Company understands that there are sometimes valid reasons why an Associate must resign. It is the policy of the Company to categorize separations into voluntary and involuntary separations. Voluntary separations are considered resignations. Involuntary separations are considered terminations or layoffs. Associates who voluntarily separate should provide adequate notice of intent to separate. Involuntary separations will be dealt with as appropriate. All terminated Associates must return all company property, including but not limited to uniforms, keys, etc.

- A. **Voluntary Separation:** All Associates who voluntarily separate/resign are requested to give a **two (2) week** written advance notice no matter how long they have been employed. This notice should be given to the immediate supervisor.
- B. **Involuntary Separation:** An involuntary separation is one that is initiated by the Company and may be caused by factors including, but not limited to, reduction in work for any reason,

job performance, infraction of company rules, inability to perform the work required or any offense of a serious nature.

- C. **Wages and Salary:** All terminated Associates will be paid in full in accordance with state and local law requirements. Accrued, but unused, vacation will be paid in accordance with the Company's vacation policy and in accordance with state and local law requirements.
- D. **Benefits:** Associates may be eligible to continue benefits under COBRA. Refer to the Benefits Eligibility Policy.

## **Progressive Counseling**

All Associates of the Company are responsible and accountable for performing all tasks and activities assigned in an acceptable and appropriate manner. This is necessary to ensure the Company's ability to be competitive in the marketplace. Additionally, the Company is committed to treating Associates with respect. Each and every day the Company strives to treat Associates fairly and ensure that corrective action is prompt, consistent, and fair. When behavior and performance are not within acceptable standards, progressive counseling is to be used.

The purpose of the Progressive Counseling process is to provide clear direction for improving performance and/or behavior. Through the effective use of progressive counseling, Associates will be provided with notice of problems with their performance or conduct. This provides management and Associates the opportunity to correct the situation. Progressive counseling is a system of corrective action steps administered in a timely and consistent manner which uses increasing severity for repeated infractions or permits bypassing steps for addressing more severe conduct.

### **Introductory Period (within first 90 days of employment)**

- First Offence – Final Progressive Counseling
- Second Offense – Dismissal

### **Employed Beyond the Introductory Period**

- First Progressive Counseling
- Second Progressive Counseling
- Final Progressive Counseling
- Termination

**Skiping Steps** - Depending on the nature of the conduct or performance issue, step(s) can be skipped.

**Appeal Process** - If an Associate wants to appeal the contents of a written warning, the appeal must be presented to the next level manager or an appropriate Human Resources Representative within five (5) working days of the Associate's receipt of the written warning.

**Suspension** - Suspension of all hourly Associates will be without pay. If the suspension is the result of a pending investigation, the Company will strive to complete the investigation within three (3) working days of the suspension; however sometimes extenuating circumstances make prevent a thorough investigation within this time. If it is determined from the investigation that the Associate did not commit an offense or the offense is not serious enough to warrant termination, the Associate will be immediately returned to work and paid retroactively for all scheduled hours missed as a result of the suspension.

**Performance Management** - Performance Improvement Plans (PIP) may be developed by the Associate's supervisor at any time to advise the Associate of the existence of his/her performance deficiencies that must be corrected to ensure continued employment in the job, or possibly, with the Company. The PIP is designed to assist the Associate in improving his/her performance by providing expectations for successful performance. The PIP will be reviewed regularly by the Associate's supervisor to determine if performance is improving as required. The duration of the PIP varies in length and will be communicated to the Associate

by his/her supervisor. While on a PIP, the Associate may also be subject to progressive counseling as outlined in “Rules and Regulations - Workplace” of this Handbook.

## **Rules and Regulations - Workplace**

In order to promote a positive and safe working environment, and to deliver the best service to our customers, the Company subscribes to standards of behavior and conduct for all Associates. Conduct that interferes with fellow Associates or business operations may be subject to corrective action, up to and including termination.

- A. **Categories of Behavior and Conduct:** Listed below are types of actions and behaviors that may subject an Associate to corrective action, up to and including termination, based on the severity of the issue. This list is not all inclusive, but is intended to give general direction for the Company. The Company classifies unacceptable actions and behaviors as follows:
  1. **Class A:** Very serious offenses which will normally result in immediate discharge.
  2. **Class B:** Serious offenses which normally result in strong corrective action and possible suspension (where applicable) or discharge.
  3. **Class C:** Offenses which ordinarily will not result in immediate discharge, but warrant the use of management tools to address the performance or conduct issue.

### **Examples of very serious, Class A offenses:**

1. Dishonesty;
2. Theft of Company or client property;
3. Falsification of or tampering with your own or another's timecard or time keeping record;
4. Falsification of any reports or records;
5. Misrepresentation of facts in seeking employment;
6. Allowing unauthorized persons, including family members or friends, to enter any building in which you are working;
7. Allowing unauthorized persons, including family members or friends, to enter any building belonging to our customers;
8. Discriminatory practices such as (but not limited to): Different treatment, harassment, exclusion, or ridicule of individuals based on non-job-related personal characteristics such as race, color, religion, sex, pregnancy, child-birth, genetic information national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, marital status or any other bias protected by law;
9. Retaliatory practice such as (but not limited to): Harassment, exclusion, demotion, termination, threats, reduced hours, or ridicule due to an Associates' filing of a complaint and/or participation in an investigation, proceeding or hearing;
10. Unauthorized use or improper use of a Company vehicle;
11. Unauthorized use or deliberate waste of company cash or merchandise, materials, equipment and supplies, regardless of intent;
12. Removal of property of another Associate or a customer without permission;

13. Unauthorized use or removal of Company, client and/or government material (including records, documents, tools equipment, uniforms) from Company or client premises;
14. Misuse of any Company or client identification material (for example, work access pass or badge);
15. Reporting to work or on Company or client property under the influence of illegal drugs or other controlled substances (for example, alcohol);
16. Possession, unauthorized use, sale or distribution of illegal drugs or other controlled substances (for example, alcohol) while on client or Company business or premises (including Company owned or leased vehicles) during working hours;
17. Carrying concealed weapons or possession of firearms or weapons on client or Company premises (including Company owned or leased vehicles) unless in compliance with any law;
18. Fighting on Company time or on Company and/or client premises;
19. Willful destruction of property;
20. Indecent behavior during work hours;
21. Taking or giving bribes;
22. Instigating, counseling others, or taking part in unlawful work stoppage or slowdown;
23. Failure to protect company assets through negligence or willful misconduct (in other words, loss of funds, product or business);
24. Operating a Company vehicle without having the proper license(s) as required by law;
25. Operating a Company vehicle without an approved MVR;
26. Harassment of Company, client, supplier or vendor Associates;

**Examples of serious Class B offenses:**

1. Insubordination – Refusal to perform any job or work assignment given by an Associate's supervisor or by management when the Associate clearly understands the directive and has been advised that refusal may result in termination;
2. Use of profane or abusive language, where the language is uncivil, insulting or contemptuous;
3. Threatening, intimidating, coercing or interfering with fellow Associates on Company and/or client premises;
4. Making knowingly false, malicious, or derogatory statements concerning any Associate, the Company, the Client, or the Company or Client products.
5. Mixing or exchanging personal money with Company funds;
6. Failure to report an accident;
7. Disruptive behavior during working hours or on Company or client property; Horseplay, scuffling, throwing things, etc.;

8. Violating any safety rules or practices or engaging in any conduct which may create a safety hazard;
9. Violations of security procedures;
10. Gross neglect of duty;
11. Attempting to enter, entering or assisting any person to enter the Company's and/or client's premises or restricted areas without proper authorization;
12. Being present in working areas for any reason while off duty
12. Sleeping or dozing on the job;
13. Gambling on the job;
14. Losing or misplacing keys while under your direct responsibility;
15. Unauthorized use of customer property, such as typewriters, computer terminals, thermostats, televisions, radios, coffee makers, etc.
16. Unauthorized review of documents left on the desks.
17. Solicitation of any type on Company and/or client premises during work time;
18. Conducting one's self in such a manner during working or non-working hours that the conduct would be detrimental to the interest or reputation of the Company;

**Examples of less serious Class C offenses:**

1. Leaving one's job or regular work place during working hours for any reason without authorization, except for lunch, breaks, and using restrooms;
2. Lack of application or effort on the job;
3. Incompetence or failure to meet reasonable standards of efficiency;
4. Neglect of job duties and responsibilities where gross neglect is not involved;
5. Smoking or using smokeless tobacco in unauthorized areas;
6. Failure to keep accurate records where falsification is not involved;
7. Improper use of Company and/or client telephones;
8. Failure to comply with the dress code, uniform policy, or standards for cleanliness, personal hygiene, personal habits or other requirements as established by governmental agencies or by the Company;
9. Failure to follow call-out procedures for excused or unexcused absences or lateness;

## **Integrity in the Workplace**

Integrity and honesty in the workplace is fundamental to the success of our Associates and our Company. The Company is committed to providing each Associate a workplace free from dishonorable behaviors and/or practices. This policy is designed to enhance the integrity and honesty of all Company Associates, clients, customers and suppliers.

In order to protect the best interests of the Company and its Associates, clients, customers and suppliers, the Company may take appropriate steps, up to and including suspension without pay, of anyone suspected to be involved in a potential violation of this policy, pending an investigation. The Company will not tolerate the following actions by anyone at any level and will likely result in immediate termination of employment and possible criminal prosecution:

1. Theft of Company, client, customer or Associate property.
2. Failure to protect the Company's assets through intentional manipulation of funds, inventory or Company assets.
3. Failure to comply with and follow Company cash control policy and procedures.
4. Intentional falsification of information and/or mishandling of Company documents.
5. Misuse or unauthorized disclosure of confidential information not otherwise made available to persons or firms outside of the Company.
6. Misuse or unauthorized disclosure of confidential information not otherwise made available to other Associates of the Company that do not have a need to know or authorization to review said information.
7. Use of Company resources and capital for personal gain.

Following are examples of conduct which are prohibited by this policy:

1. Removal of Company and/or other people's personal property from lockers, desks, service and dining areas.
2. Removal of food, equipment, supplies and fluids from any area which is the responsibility of the Company, client or supplier.
3. Failure to accurately account for and report levels of all inventoried items.
4. Failure to accurately account for all cash and charge sales, daily cash receipts, deposits, petty cash expenditures, etc.
5. Failure to follow Company policy and procedures regarding time record keeping and payroll processing.
6. Failure to accurately and promptly process invoices to Accounting Department.

The above-listed examples are not intended to be all-inclusive, but are merely examples of some types of behavior and/or conduct which will not be tolerated.

## **III. BENEFITS**

### **Vacation**

Paid vacation is specific to your position, time in position, and line of business you support. Please reference the specific Paid Time Off - Attachment to the Handbook. One has been identified for Managers and another for Hourly.

### **Leave of Absence**

The Company recognizes that occasionally personal situations arise that require an Associate's absence from scheduled work. A leave of absence is a benefit which allows an Associate time away from work for specified reasons. The benefit accrual rate and seniority date stays the same. By requesting a Leave of Absence, an Associate is committing to the following:

- The Associate will return to the Company at the completion of the Leave of Absence.
- While on Leave of Absence, the Associate is NOT permitted to work for another employer.

### **Eligibility**

An Associates may request a leave of absence from work. The Company offers various types of leaves. Eligibility for each type of leave varies, as does the maximum length of the leave, and reinstatement rights. For all leave types, vacation, holiday, and sick time, fringe benefits, and seniority DO NOT accrue while an Associate is on any type of leave of absence.

### **Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)**

The Company will grant Associates a Leave of Absence in accordance with the U.S. Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993, as amended by the National Defense Authorization Act and set forth in 29 CFR Part 825, and/or state leave laws.

**Eligibility:** Associates must have worked for the Company for at least twelve (12) months and at least 1,250 hours during the previous twelve (12) month period to be entitled to a Leave of Absence under the FMLA and/or state leave laws.

**Reasons for Family and Medical Leave:** A Leave of Absence may be granted for one of the following reasons, provided the Associate is eligible for a Leave and, in a timely manner he/she provides the Company with the required information/certification to verify the request:

1. Birth of a child, including surrogate births;
2. Placement of a child into the Associate's family by adoption or by a foster care arrangement;
3. To care for the Associate's spouse, domestic partner, child or parent who has a serious health condition;
4. The Associate's own serious health condition, including any work-related injuries and illnesses;
5. To care for a covered service member who is a spouse, domestic partner, child, parent, or next of kin with a serious injury or illness; and

6. A qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that the Associate's spouse, domestic partner, child, parent, or next of kin is a covered military member on active duty, or has been notified of an impending call or order to active duty in support of a contingency operation.

**Definition of Serious Health Condition:** A serious health condition is an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves either an overnight stay in a medical care facility, or continuing treatment by a healthcare provider for a condition that either prevents the employee from performing the functions of the employee's job, or prevents the qualified family member from participating in school or other daily activities.

Subject to certain conditions, the continuing treatment requirement may be met by a period of incapacity of more than three (3) consecutive calendar days combined with at least two (2) visits to a health care provider or one (1) visit and a regimen of continuing treatment, or incapacity due to pregnancy, or incapacity due to a chronic condition. Other conditions may meet the definition of continuing treatment.

**Period of Leave:** Once it is determined that the Associate qualifies for a Leave of Absence due to reasons one (1) through four (4) and six (6) above he/she will be provided with up to twelve (12) weeks of unpaid Leave in a rolling twelve (12) month period-measured backwards, beginning on the first day of the scheduled Leave. If the Associate and his/her spouse, or domestic partner both work for the Company, they are only entitled to a combined total Leave of twelve (12) weeks for the birth, adoption, or foster care of a child, or to care for a parent. In certain circumstances, the Associate may take Leave intermittently by reducing his/her working hours. If Intermittent Leave is approved, the Company may, according to the needs of the Company, temporarily transfer the Associate to another position with an equal pay rate and benefits that better suits intermittent leave.

If an Associate qualifies for leave to care for a service member (reason number five (5) above), the Associate will be provided with up to twenty-six (26) weeks of unpaid Leave in a twelve (12) month period. Leave to care for an injured or ill service member, when combined with other FMLA-qualifying Leave may not exceed twenty-six (26) weeks in a single twelve (12) month period.

**Substitution of Paid Leave:** The Associate has the option of using his/her available vacation time or paid sick time during an approved Family and Medical Leave. Paid sick time may be allowed in the event of the Associate's own serious health condition. If paid sick time, or accrued, unused vacation is used during Leave, vacation and paid sick time will be paid pursuant to the Company policies regarding vacation and paid sick time. Vacation time cannot be used as a means to extend the Leave.

The Company provides all other leaves that are mandated by state or local laws. For those state or local laws allowing for additional leave for pregnancy and pregnancy-related conditions, or for other medical issues, please consult your Leave of Absence Coordinator for additional information.

**Notice Requirements:** If an Associate's need for a Leave is known in advance (for example: childbirth, adoption or planned medical treatment), he/she is required to provide his/her supervisor with at least thirty (30) days advance written notice that he/she intends to take a Leave.

For Leaves based on events that are not known or planned thirty (30) days in advance, the Associate must give notice as soon as he/she learns of the need for Leave. Failure to follow these notice requirements is grounds for the Company to deny the request for Leave.

**Medical Certification Requirements:** If the Leave is related to the Associate's own serious health condition or that of his/her spouse, domestic partner, child, parent, or service member or as otherwise required by state or local law, he/she must provide medical certification of the existence and nature of the serious health condition. The Associate must obtain this certification from the health care provider of the family member requiring care. A Leave request to care for a family member must also include proof of the health care provider's opinion that the Associate is "needed to care for" the family member. Leave may be denied if certification is not provided within twenty-one (21) calendar days, unless it is not possible to do so under the circumstances.

The Company may require a second opinion from a doctor that the Company selects. If it becomes necessary to settle a conflict between the original certification and the second opinion, the Company may require the opinion of a third doctor. In these cases, the second and third opinions would be paid for by the Company.

**Maintenance of Health and Other Benefits during the Leave:** During approved Family and Medical Leaves of Absence, the Company will continue to pay its portion of health insurance premiums and the Associate must continue to pay his/her share of the premium if the Associate wishes to continue this benefit. If he/she does not pay his/her share of the health insurance premium, it may result in loss of coverage. If the Associate does not return to work after the end of the Leave, he/she will be required to reimburse the Company for the Company's portion of the health insurance premium. In the event that the Associate does not return to work because of his/her own serious health condition that prevents him/her from performing the job or if there are other circumstances which are beyond his/her control, the Company will not require the Associate to reimburse the Company for its share of the health insurance premium.

During FMLA Leave, the Associate will not accumulate employment benefits such as vacation pay, sick pay, pension or any other benefits. Employment benefits noted immediately above accumulated up to the day on which the Family and Medical Leave of Absence begins will not be lost.

**Return to Work:** If the Associate returns to work from a Family and Medical Leave of Absence within or on the business day following expiration of the twelve (12) week period (twenty-six (26) week period for care of a service member), he/she is entitled to return to his/her previous job or an equal position without loss of benefits or a reduction in wages.

**Consequences of Failing to Return from Approved Leave after Exhausting Approved Leave:** If the Associate fails to return from an approved Leave he/she will be considered to have voluntarily quit his/her position as of the day that the Associate should have returned to work, unless an extension of the Leave is required under additional applicable law, including under the Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA"). If the maximum Leave time is used up and an Associate does not qualify for leave under the ADA the Associate will be dismissed as of the last day of his/her scheduled Leave. In these situations, Associates are encouraged to reapply for employment and, if rehired, benefit entitlement will be determined pursuant to the Company's reinstatement policy.

*Note: Where Leave laws specific to states, cities, and localities exist, the Company will apply those terms which result in a benefit to the Associate.*

## **Military Leave**

### **Eligibility for Military Leave**

Upon request, the Company provides Military Leave to Associates for military or reserve duty in the uniformed services. An Associate will be granted a Military Leave of Absence for the period of the military service, in accordance with applicable federal and state laws. For purposes of this policy, "uniformed services" includes training or service with the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, Army National Guard, Air National Guard, Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service, as well as the reserve components of each of these services. Additionally, "uniformed services" includes certain disaster response work (and authorized training for such work), as provided by the Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Response Act of 2002, and any other category of persons designated by the President of the United States in time of war or emergency.

Eligibility for reinstatement within the Company, after military duty or training is completed, will also be determined in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.

### **Notice of Military Leave**

An Associate requesting Military Leave must provide advance notice of his/her anticipated leave. Associates are encouraged to provide as much notice of anticipated Military Leave as possible.

## **Reemployment Rights**

Under applicable federal and state laws, an Associate is entitled to certain reemployment rights, provided he or she meets the following qualifications:

- The Associate provided advance notice of his/her anticipated uniformed services obligations;
- The Associate is released from duty in the uniformed services under conditions that are not dishonorable; and
- The Associate submits a timely application for reemployment.

An Associate's application for reemployment is timely in the following circumstances:

- If the Associate's period of service is less than 31 days, the Associate must contact the Company on the first full calendar day following the completion of his/her period of service and the expiration of eight hours, plus time required to return home safely (unless it is impossible or unreasonable for the Associate to do so);
- If the Associate's period of service is 31 to 180 days, the Associate must alert the Company of his/her ability to return to work within 14 days after completion of military service (unless it is impossible or unreasonable for the Associate to do so);
- If the Associate's period of service exceeds 180 days, the Associate must alert the Company of his/her ability to return to work no later than 90 days after completion of the period of service.

An Associate who fails to return to work or fails to reapply within the applicable time limits may lose his/her reemployment rights.

For further details regarding an Associate's rights and obligations regarding Military Leave, please contact the Leave of Absence Coordinator.

## **Jury Duty Leave**

Full-time and part-time Associates who are summoned for jury duty should immediately present the summons to their immediate supervisor. Arrangements should be made between Associate and supervisor regarding work schedule to ensure proper coverage can be provided.

An Associate who is going to be on jury duty must request a Jury Attendance Record from the court clerk to note the dates and hours served.

At the end of jury service and prior to preparation of payroll, the Associate must submit their attendance record, which can be requested from the court clerk, and the record of jury pay to the record keeper. The company will pay the difference between jury duty pay and normal wages, provided the Jury Attendance Record substantiates the claim for a period not to exceed fourteen (14) days except where extended by state law.

Associates on jury duty are expected to report for work whenever their presence is not required by the court during their regularly scheduled work hours.

## **Bereavement Leave (Full and Part-Time Associates)**

The Company recognizes that Associates have need for time off from work in the event of a death in the family. The Company provides time off with pay for any full-time or part-time Associate based on the guidelines below.

In the event of the death of a member of your immediate family a maximum of three (3) consecutive work days off with bereavement pay will be permitted to allow you to attend the funeral and assist with the funeral arrangements. Paid funeral leave should not exceed three (3) consecutive working days, except where travel distances exceed 500 miles from place of employment, in which case the total paid funeral leave should not exceed five (5) consecutive working days (Please Note: Bereavement Leave pay shall not be used in the computation of overtime).

**Immediate family includes** an Associate's parents, step-parents, spouse, current spouses parents, domestic partner, child, step-child, brother, sister, step-siblings, grandparents, children of the Associate's domestic partner.

In case of the death of some other member of your family, you should discuss the matter with your manager who may suggest the use of accrued vacation or unpaid leave of absence for this purpose. In any event, you must secure the approval of your manager before bereavement leave or any paid or unpaid time is taken.

**Other family includes** an Associate's brother-in-law, sister-in-law, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, cousin, grand-children and the parents and siblings of the Associate's domestic partner.

## **Voting Leave**

The Company recognizes and encourages each Associate's right to vote and provides flexible scheduling to give Associates the opportunity to meet their civic responsibilities. On Election Days, Associates who cannot vote before or after regular work hours, or during their lunch break, should work with their supervisor to arrange sufficient time off to vote.

*Note: Policy may change in accordance with state laws.*

## **Group Insurance**

Please refer to plan documents for your specific insurance benefits.

The Company considers our Associates to be its most valuable resources, and we believe you and your family should have access to high-quality benefit options.

The Company offers up-to-date, flexible benefits at competitive cost, including alternatives that can help you save money on your taxes. Some benefit costs are shared between you and the Company, while others are made available to you at reasonable group rates.

Those Associates (non-union) schedule to work 30 hours or more per week on a consistent basis are eligible for Company insurance benefits plans. Both Full time and Part time (non-union) Associates are eligible for company retirement savings. All Associates must first meet the waiting period for both Insurance and retirement plans before being eligible for coverage and/or enrollment.

All Associates are eligible to utilize the company paid Employee Assistance Program (EAP). This program is beneficial to assist Associates manage family and domestic situations, life changes and other personal issues relating to substance abuse. It's a confidential, nation wide service and the initial visits are free of

charge to the Associate. Please consult your manager, Benefits or Human Resources Representative for further information about this useful and important benefit.

### **What if I want to change my insurance once I am enrolled?**

The IRS states that the elections you make during an enrollment period, including contributions to a Flexible Spending Account, must stay in effect for the entire plan year (January 1 to December 31<sup>st</sup>), unless you experience a **qualifying life change event**. These events are defined as one of the following:

- You marry, divorce or terminate domestic partnership;
- Your spouse or dependent dies, causing you are your dependent to lose coverage;
- Your spouse has a change in employment status, causing a loss or gain of medical or dental coverage for you or your dependents;
- You have a change in your employment status;
- You or your dependents move into or out of an insurance service area;
- There is a change in legal custody of a dependent child;
- A Medical child Support order is issued;
- Your or your dependent's COBRA coverage ends;
- You become eligible for Medicare; or
- Your covered dependent becomes ineligible under the plans.

You must notify the Benefits Department by completing a change of status form within 31 days of the **qualifying life change event**. Notification after 31 days will result in no change for the remainder of the plan year.

### **Accommodations for People with Disabilities**

The Company will engage in the interactive process with any applicant or Associate that requests assistance or a reasonable accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act, or any other federal, state or local law. As such the Company will make reasonable accommodations available whenever possible for all applicants or Associates with disabilities as defined by the ADA provided that the individual is otherwise qualified to safely perform the duties and assignments connected with the job without risk of harm to self or others, and that any accommodations would not result in undue hardship to the Company. Requests for accommodations are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. The Company further provides leave as a reasonable accommodation for Associates with disabilities. ADA leaves are administered through the Company's leave of absence department. Please contact your manager, leave of absence team, or HR Representative if you have questions about this policy.

### **Notice of Continuation of Group Health Insurance (COBRA)**

Your participation in the Company's Benefits may end when you are no longer eligible for coverage due to any of the following reasons:

1. Your employment ends for any reason other than gross misconduct.
2. You or your dependent no longer meet the definition of an eligible participant.

3. Your work hours are reduced (such that you would become ineligible for health insurance).
4. You become entitled to benefits under Medicare (that is, you have elected Medicare as primary payer).
5. You die or retire.
6. Your marriage is dissolved.
7. You become legally separated from your spouse. COBRA will be offered to your former or legally separated spouse.
8. Your dependent child ceases to be an eligible dependent.

The coverage being continued will be identical to the coverage provided at the time to persons similarly situated to whom one of the events described above has not occurred. Continuation of group health insurance will be offered, at your sole expense.

*Note: Plan designs and carriers may change during annual open enrollment.*

The period of continuation will begin on the date coverage would otherwise have ended and will continue until the earliest of the following:

1. 18, 24 or 36 months after the date of occurrence of one of the events described above.  
*Note: If state law differs, the Company will comply with state law.*
2. The date the group plan ends.
3. The date the person whose coverage is being continued fails to provide the payment required to continue coverage.
4. The date the person, whose coverage is being continued, after electing this continuation, becomes entitled to coverage as an Associate or dependent under any other group health plan, or entitled to benefits under Medicare. If the new coverage contains pre-existing condition exclusion, COBRA coverage could continue.
5. The date your former spouse remarries and becomes covered under another group health plan.
6. COBRA-eligible disabled persons could extend the continuation period from 18 to 29 months.

## IV. SAFETY

### Safety Philosophy

In order to serve our customers in a cost-effective way, realizing that safety is a key business activity, and that accidents increase cost, it is a policy of the Company to actively promote Associate safety.

Our goal is to ensure that our most valuable asset, the Associate, is protected from unsafe acts and conditions, which might cause illness or injury.

We will accomplish this by:

1. Operating with the belief that all accidents are preventable.
2. Making safety a condition of employment.
3. Developing and implementing safety programs and procedures.
4. Continually training our Associates in safe work practices and procedures, and vigorously promoting the use of such practices and procedures.

5. Providing appropriate safety equipment and requiring its proper use at all times.
6. Our management will concentrate on eliminating all accidents in the workplace by providing knowledge, skill, and direction on an ongoing basis.
7. Advising our customers of potentially hazardous conditions found in the facility and, where applicable, possible solutions.
8. Committing our management to these efforts and holding all Associates accountable for creating a safe and productive working environment.
9. Never condoning unsafe acts by any Associates.

## **Policy**

It is the policy of the Company to conduct its operations above and beyond the minimum required safety procedures, by providing a safe environment for Associates, fellow workers, and the general public.

It is the responsibility of the Company to provide all necessary safety data for products approved for use and to provide safe operating procedures on all equipment as provided by the manufacturer.

It is the responsibility of each Associate to use products and equipment according to the Company policies and procedures, and the manufacturer's/owners' manual (including the use of proper personal protective equipment).

## **Management Commitment**

The Company is committed to:

1. Providing safety training to all Associates.
2. Avoiding on-the-job accidents.
3. Encouraging safe work habits.

## **Associate Commitment**

Each Associate is required to:

1. Work safely as required by the Company's Policies and Procedures.
2. Report all accidents immediately.
3. Cooperate fully with management during accident investigation.
4. Make every effort to protect others from injury or accident.
5. Wear proper personal protective equipment as required.

If there is ever any time in which you feel your safety is not the Number One concern of your management staff, please call your Human Resources representative.

## **General Safety Rules**

Each Associate is required to:

1. Work safely as required by OSHA.
2. Make every effort to protect others from injury or accident.
3. Report all accidents immediately to your supervisor.
4. Cooperate fully with management during accident investigations.
5. Understand that safety is everyone's responsibility.
6. Use no equipment or chemicals that you have not been properly trained to use.
7. Use no equipment that is not in proper working condition.
8. Be responsible for using the proper personal protective clothing or equipment necessary for each procedure (i.e., gloves, goggles, mask, etc.).
9. Ensure that all chemical spray bottles are labeled.
10. Always use wet floor signs.
11. Understand that horseplay of any kind is not acceptable at any time.
12. Report any unsafe or hazardous condition, which you can not correct, immediately to your supervisor.
13. Never take short cuts.
14. Support your safety program. Give suggestions and ideas.
15. Ensure that proper lifting techniques are followed at all times.
16. Understand the drug and alcohol policy, as stated earlier in this handbook. Associates must report to their manager the use of any such substances.
17. Failure to follow safety policies and procedures will result in corrective action.

## **Vehicle Inspection**

The operator shall inspect each vehicle or piece of equipment on a daily basis before and after operation. Drivers of Commercial Motor Vehicles (10,001 lbs or greater) are required to complete pre-trip and post-trip inspections as required under sections of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations 392.7 and 396.11 respectively. Each operator is responsible for the safe condition of the equipment. Any vehicle having steering or brake problems is not to be operated until a mechanic has made repairs. Any other unsafe conditions are to be reported to the operator's supervisor as soon as possible. Also drivers are required to turn in roadside inspection reports to operations management immediately upon return to the account, terminal or warehouse

## **Vehicle Operation**

All Company vehicles and equipment are to be operated in a safe manner and adhere to all applicable laws. The operator is totally responsible for the safe operation of the equipment. The vehicle operator shall report any accidents or damage to their supervisor.

## **Hazardous Materials and Waste (Right to Know)**

You have the legal "right to know" the consequences and precautions necessary for working with hazardous materials, chemicals and waste in your job. Training on the right to know is required before you begin working with any hazardous product. If you are in a job class that requires work on a regular or periodical basis with these materials, you should ensure you are familiar with the proper procedures necessary for such work. You should locate the Hazardous Communication Manual in the Company's Safety Manual in your department and read the Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for each material or chemical with which you will be working. Ensure you know and understand the proper use of personal protective clothing and equipment for working with those materials. Carefully read all labels and warnings on products you are working with.

You should also know the proper disposal method for materials considered hazardous and bio-hazardous waste. Inform your supervisor immediately of any spill or accident involving these types of wastes and seek medical treatment if necessary. You should ask the location of spill kits within your facility, and who is responsible for spill clean-up.

The Hazardous Communication Program can be found, in its entirety, in the Company's Safety Manual, and must be understood by all Associates. Please refer to this manual for further guidance.

## **Injury Policy**

If you should have an on-the-job accident, however minor, you should report it immediately to your supervisor and complete an Associate Injury Worksheet fully explaining the circumstances of the accident.

If an Associate is injured while on duty, they should follow these steps:

1. Notify the supervisor or manager immediately.
2. Complete an Associate Injury Worksheet with the supervisor or manager.
3. If medical treatment is necessary your supervisor will assist you.
4. Report back to the supervisor with findings of physician.
5. Failure to comply with this procedure may void your claim.

## **Workers' Compensation**

Associates of the Company are covered by Workers' Compensation benefits in accordance with state law should an accident or illness occur in the course of performing their duties.

**It is your responsibility as an Associate to report injuries immediately to your supervisor to initiate an accident report.**

An Associate disabled due to an on-the-job injury or illness is considered to be on Workers' Compensation Leave of Absence and will be placed on FMLA (if eligibility is met) as long as they are receiving Workers' Compensation benefits.

## **Limited Duty Policy/Doctor Visits Procedures**

Several guidelines have been developed to help everyone understand the expectations while under a physician's care for a workers' compensation injury. These guidelines are listed below.

1. You must provide a note or authorization from your treating physician that indicates any work restrictions or time off. This information needs to be returned to your immediate supervisor within 24 hours of the initial physician visit. Information may be faxed directly to us from the physician's office. Phone calls from the physician's office will not be accepted in lieu of a note from your treating physician.
2. It is your responsibility to contact the office after each doctor's visit and at least once a week.
3. Limited Duty may be available to the Associate after review and approval from the treating physician and the Company contract or regional manager. In cases where the Company determines that light duty cannot be accommodated, the National Risk Manager must be notified by the contract or regional manager immediately. In all cases, the company makes all reasonable efforts to comply with all applicable state and federal laws. You are expected to comply with limited duty assignments that fall within the guidelines from your treating physician.
4. Where a Panel of Physicians is made available, you should treat with one of these preferred doctors. In most states, failure to do so will cause delay and possible denial of your workers' compensation claim.

These general guidelines are meant to assist all involved in the process of helping you return to your normal duties as soon as possible. Failure to comply with these guidelines may result in a delay in your return to work, and corrective action taken against you for failure to comply.

## **Exposure Control Plan**

All Associates with the Company have the potential to be exposed to blood or other potentially infectious materials (OPIM).

The Exposure Control Plan can be found, in its entirety, in the Company's Infection Control Manual, and must be understood by all Associates. Please refer to this manual for further guidance.

## **Hepatitis B Vaccination**

All Associates recognized in the Exposure Control Plan as potentially exposed to blood or other potentially infectious materials must be offered the Hepatitis B Vaccination.

All Associates are required to read and understand the Exposure Control Plan for blood borne pathogens to eliminate or minimize occupational exposure to blood borne pathogens in accordance with OSHA standards.

Once the Associate has reviewed the Exposure Control Plan they must complete the Hepatitis B Vaccination form to indicate their decision whether to accept or decline the Hepatitis B Vaccination. The Hepatitis B Vaccination is offered free of charge.

- A. Should the Associate consent to the administration of the Hepatitis B Vaccination the vaccination must be completed within 10 days of starting employment.
- B. Should the Associate decline the Hepatitis B Vaccination and choose in the future to be vaccinated they can receive the vaccination series at no charge to the Associate.



## V. RECEIPT OF HANDBOOK

You are responsible for reading and understanding the Associate Handbook.

The information enclosed cannot and does not constitute an employment contract, nor does it create an expressed or implied contract of any kind. No employee or applicant for employment has any contractual rights, claims, or privileges against the Company by virtue of this Handbook. Nothing in this Handbook is intended to create any type of agreement for employment or continued employment or guarantee of hours worked. We do not guarantee employment for a fixed term or definite period of time. Employment may be terminated at the will of either party, with or without cause and with or without prior notice.

The Company is an “at will” employer and as such may terminate the employment relationship at any time. Statements or promises that may be made by managers or other executives, with the exception of a written agreement signed by the Executive Vice President of Human Resources may not supersede the policies and procedures herein. It should be understood that these policies and procedures are continually evaluated and may be amended, modified or terminated at any time with or without notice to the Associates. We reserve the right to alter, revise, or rescind policies and procedures at our sole discretion to better meet the goals of the Company. It should be further understood that this Handbook states the Company’s policies and practices in effect on the date of publication.

I have received a copy of the Associate Handbook and understand the statements disclosed above.

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Associate Signature

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Date

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Associate Name (Please Print)

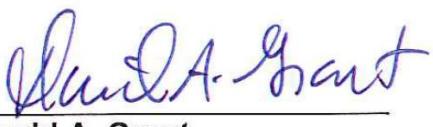


**FEMA MANUAL 123-10-1  
ABSENCE AND LEAVE  
APPROVAL DATE: 12/29/2015**



**DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY  
FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF COMPONENT HUMAN CAPITAL OFFICER**

  
**Corey J. Coleman**  
Chief Component Human Capital Officer  
Office of the Chief Component Human  
Capital Officer  
Date: 12/15/2015

  
**David A. Grant**  
Associate Administrator  
Mission Support  
Date: 12/29/15

## **Foreword**

This Manual provides guidance and policy direction for the administration, implementation, and oversight of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Absence and Leave Program.

FEMA's absence and leave rules are an important tool to recruit and retain a highly skilled and motivated workforce. Employees are encouraged to make full use of their earned leave for rest and relaxation, recuperation from sicknesses or injuries, meeting the health and wellness needs of family members, and to fulfill civic obligations.

FEMA's leave benefits are determined by laws, regulations, and executive orders governing the leave system for Federal employees. Some of the applicable laws, regulations, and executive orders give FEMA discretion to authorize certain leave benefits, in whole or in part, this Manual details FEMA's decision on exercising its discretion regarding the application of leave benefits. This Manual provides a complete listing of all types of leave authorized by FEMA's absence and leave rules.

While FEMA supports employees utilizing all forms of leave authorized by this policy, managers and employees must ensure the proper use of leave. Excessive use of leave has a detrimental effect on FEMA and the Federal service by delaying or preventing FEMA's mission objectives, increasing the work assignments for other employees, and providing reduced or unsatisfactory service to the public. FEMA's leave rules are designed to balance the needs of FEMA, employees, and the public.

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## **CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **1-1. Purpose**

This Manual establishes the policies and procedures for FEMA's absence and leave program. This Manual will provide managers and employees with guidance on the proper use of all types of leave authorized under FEMA policy.

### **1-2. Applicability and Scope**

The provisions of this Manual apply to all employees who meet the definition of "employee" under 5 U.S.C. § 2105. This Manual also applies to Cadre of On-Call Response/Recovery Employees (COREs) to the extent the CORE Manual (FM 252-11-1) adopts the policies and procedures of this Manual. This Manual does not apply to Reservists.

### **1-3. Supersession**

This Manual supersedes FEMA Manual 3300.3, FEMA Absence and Leave Policy, issued July 31, 2001.

### **1-4. Authorities/References**

- A. Title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.) Chapter 63, Leave.
- B. Title 5, U.S.C. Chapter 81, Compensation for Work Injuries.
- C. Title 5, U.S.C. § 8339(m).
- D. The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993, Pub. Law No. 103-3, as amended, codified at 29 U.S.C. § 2601 *et seq.*
- E. The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994, Pub. Law No. 103-353, as amended, codified at 38 U.S.C. § 4301 *et seq.*
- F. Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) § 353.106, Personnel Actions During Employee's Absence.
- G. Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) Part 550 Subpart J, Adjustment of Work Schedules for Religious Observances.
- H. Title 5, C.F.R. Part 550 Subpart L, Lump-Sum Payment for Accumulated and Accrued Annual Leave.
- I. Title 5, C.F.R. Part 550 Subpart N, Compensatory Time Off for Travel.
- J. Title 5, C.F.R. Part 630, Absence and Leave.
- K. Title 5, C.F.R. § 831.302.
- L. Title 29, C.F.R. Part 825, The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993.
- M. Executive Order (E.O.) 5396, July 17, 1930.

- N. E.O. 13223, September 14, 2001.
- O. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Washington, DC, Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures, December 2014.
- P. OPM Handbook on Leave and Workplace Flexibilities for Childbirth, Adoption, and Foster Care, April 2015.
- Q. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Interim Policy 112-10, The Proper Use of Administrative Leave.
- R. FEMA Directive 010-8, FEMA Incident Workforce Deployment, October 16, 2014.
- S. FEMA Directive 119-6, Employee Physical Fitness Program, February 1, 2012.
- T. FEMA Manual 106-1-1, Scheduling of Work, March 5, 2014.
- U. FEMA Manual 123-9-1, Telework, January 9, 2013.
- V. FEMA Manual 141-1-1, Records Management: Files Maintenance and Records Disposition, March 7, 2014.
- W. FEMA Manual 252-11-1, Cadre of On-Call Response/Recovery Employee (CORE) Program, August 25, 2015.
- X. FEMA Manual 253-2-1, Premium Pay, February 11, 2014.
- Y. FEMA Manual 255-3-1, Employee Discipline, December 29, 2015.
- Z. FEMA Manual 255-4-1, Employee Awards and Recognition, September 26, 2013.

## **1-5. Policy**

- A. FEMA will utilize the discretion afforded by Federal absence and leave laws, regulations, and policies to limit the categories and use of leave to balance the needs of FEMA to complete its assigned missions with recruiting and retaining a highly skilled and motivated workforce.
- B. FEMA must be ready at all times to respond to all disasters and meet the needs of the public with the necessary workforce.
- C. Managers and supervisors will implement FEMA's absence and leave policies in a fair and consistent manner.
- D. Employees are required to report to work on time according to their approved work schedules and be available during FEMA's core business hours to complete assignments, respond to co-workers, and meet the needs of the public.
- E. Employees are encouraged to make use of their leave privileges for rest, relaxation, accomplishing personal business, seeking health or medical care, and recovering from sicknesses and injuries. Providing effective leave options

- allows FEMA to recruit and retain high quality employees, increase employee engagement, and improve morale.
- F. FEMA offers a variety of leave options and workplace flexibilities to allow employees to satisfy their work responsibilities and meet the needs of family members due to illnesses, injuries, and childbirth.
  - G. FEMA supports employees fulfilling their military commitments when called to active service. FEMA will make every effort to support veterans returning to civilian life and/or seeking treatment for service related injuries and illnesses through the absence and leave program.
  - H. Employees will use legitimately earned leave appropriately according to the policies and procedures detailed by this Manual. Employees and supervisors will be mindful of the effect improper use of leave has on FEMA's ability to complete its mission, fellow employees, and public perception of the Federal service.

## **1-6. Definitions**

- A. Adoption. The legal process in which an individual becomes the legal parent of another's child.
- B. Armed Forces. The Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard.
- C. Core Hours. The designated period of the day an employee must be present at work. FEMA's designated core hours are 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- D. Domestic Partner. An adult in a committed relationship with another adult, including both same-sex and opposite-sex relationships.
- E. Essential Functions. The fundamental job duties of the employee's position.
- F. Family Member. An individual who is the employee's spouse, and parent of that spouse; a son or daughter, and spouse or domestic partner of the son or daughter; the employee's parent, and parent's spouse or domestic partner; the employee's brother or sister and their spouse or domestic partner; the employee's grandparent or grandchildren, and their spouse or domestic partner; domestic partner, and the partner's parents; or any individual related by blood or affinity whose close association with the employee is the equivalent of a family relationship.
- G. Foster Care. Providing 24-hour care for children in substitution for, and away from, their parents or guardian. Such legal placement is made by or with the agreement of the State as a result of a voluntary agreement by the parent or guardian that the child be removed from the home, or pursuant to a judicial determination of the necessity for foster care, and involves agreement between the State and foster family to take the child.
- H. Health Care Provider. A licensed Doctor of Medicine or Doctor of Osteopathy; any health care provider recognized by the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program or who is licensed or certified under Federal or State law to

provide the service in question; a health care provider as defined in part 2 of this definition who practices in a country other than the United States, who is authorized to practice in accordance with the laws of that country, and who is performing within the scope of his or her practice as defined under such law; a Christian Science practitioner listed with the First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston, Massachusetts; or a Native American, including an Eskimo, Aleut, and Native Hawaiian, who is recognized as a traditional healing practitioner by native traditional religious leaders who practices traditional healing methods as believed, expressed, and exercised in Indian religion of the American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut, and Native Hawaiians.

- I. Home Leave. Leave earned by service abroad for use in the United States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, or in the territories or possessions of the United States.
- J. Immediate Relative. See definition of a family member.
- K. Incapacity. The inability to work, attend school, or perform other regular daily activities because of a serious health condition or treatment for or recovery from a serious health condition.
- L. Intermittent Leave. Leave taken in separate blocks of time, rather than for one continuous period of time, and may include leave periods of 1 hour to several weeks.
- M. In loco parentis. An individual who has day-to-day responsibility for the care and financial support of a child or, in the case of an employee, who had such responsibility for the employee when the employee was a child. A biological or legal relationship is not necessary.
- N. Leave Donor. An employee whose voluntary written request for transfer of annual leave to the annual leave account of a leave recipient is approved by FEMA.
- O. Leave Recipient. A current employee for whom FEMA has approved an application to receive annual leave from the annual leave accounts of one or more leave donors.
- P. Leave Without Pay (LWOP). An absence from duty in a non-pay status. Leave without pay may be taken only for those hours of duty comprising an employee's basic workweek.
- Q. Leave Year. The period beginning with the first day of the first complete pay period in a calendar year and ending with the day immediately before the first day of the first complete pay period in the following calendar year.
- R. Medical Certificate. A written statement signed by a registered practicing physician or other practitioner certifying to the incapacitation, examination, or treatment, or to the period of disability while the patient was receiving professional treatment.
- S. Medical Emergency. A medical condition of an employee or a family member of such employee that is likely to require an employee's absence from duty for

- a prolonged period of time and to result in a substantial loss of income to the employee because of the unavailability of paid leave.
- T. Month. A period which runs from a given day in one month through the date preceding the numerically corresponding day in the next month.
  - U. Office or Directorate. Offices or Directorates that are at or above Level three in FEMA's organizational structure: Office of the Administrator, Office of Chief Counsel, Office of the Chief Financial Officer, Office of External Affairs, Office of Policy and Program Analysis, Office of Response and Recovery, Response Directorate, Recovery Directorate, Logistics Management Directorate, Protection and National Preparedness, National Preparedness Directorate, National Continuity Programs Directorate, Grant Program Directorate, Mission Support, Office of the Chief Administrative Officer, Office of the Chief Component Human Capital Officer, Office of the Chief Information Officer, Office of the Chief Procurement Officer, Office of the Chief Security Officer, Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration, Federal Insurance Administration (FIA) Mitigation, FIA Insurance, United States Fire Administration, and Offices of Regional Administrators.
  - V. Parent. A biological, adoptive, step, or foster parent of the employee, or a person who was a foster parent of the employee when the employee was a minor; a person who is the legal guardian of the employee or was the legal guardian of the employee when the employee was a minor or required a legal guardian; or a person who stands *in loco parentis* to the employee or stood *in loco parentis* to the employee when the employee was a minor or required someone to stand *in loco parentis*.
  - W. Reduced Leave Schedule. A work schedule under which the usual number of hours of regularly scheduled work per workday of an employee is reduced. The number of hours by which the daily or weekly tour of duty is reduced are counted as leave for FMLA purposes.
  - X. Serious Health Condition. An illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves: inpatient care (i.e., an overnight stay) in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical care facility, including any period of incapacity or any subsequent treatment in connection with such inpatient care; or continuing treatment by a health care provider that includes (but is not limited to) examinations to determine if there is a serious health condition and evaluations of such conditions if the examinations or evaluations determine that a serious health condition exists.
  - Y. Service Abroad. Service by an employee at a post of duty outside the United States and outside the employee's place of residence if his or her place of residence is in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico or a territory or possession of the United States.
  - Z. Son or Daughter. A biological, adopted, step, or foster son or daughter of the employee; a person who is a legal ward or was a legal ward of the employee when that individual was a minor or required a legal guardian; a person for

whom the employee stands *in loco parentis* or stood *in loco parentis* when that individual was a minor or required someone to stand in loco parentis; or a son or daughter of an employee's spouse or domestic partner.

- AA. Substantial Loss of Income. An absence (or expected absence) of at least 24 work hours for a full-time employee which is not covered by available paid leave.
- BB. Uncommon Tour of Duty. An established tour of duty that exceeds 80 hours of work in a biweekly pay period, provided the tour:
  - 1. Includes hours for which the employee is compensated by standby duty pay under 5 U.S.C. § 5545(c)(1) and 5 C.F.R. § 550.141;
  - 2. Is a regular tour of duty established for firefighters compensated under 5 U.S.C. § 5545b and 5 C.F.R. Part 550, Subpart M; or
  - 3. Is authorized for a category of employees by the Office of Personnel Management.

## **1-7. Responsibilities**

- A. FEMA Administrator is responsible for:
  - 1. Providing oversight and guidance on FEMA's absence and leave policies; and
  - 2. Sponsoring or approving community or volunteer service projects.
- B. Office of the Chief Component Human Capital Officer (OCCHCO) is responsible for:
  - 1. Developing and maintaining absence and leave policies and procedures;
  - 2. Providing advice and guidance regarding the use of absence and leave;
  - 3. Issuing instructions governing the creation and maintenance of time and attendance records;
  - 4. Providing advice and assistance to address misconduct issues;
  - 5. Reviewing and approving requests to require medical certification for an employee to return to work after a period of absence under FMLA;
  - 6. Approving requests for LWOP as appropriate;
  - 7. Reviewing and approving applications for donated leave under the VLTP;
  - 8. Transferring or processing employee leave balances; and
  - 9. Maintaining records and providing reports on FEMA's absence and leave program.
- C. Heads of Offices and Directorates are responsible for:

1. Ensuring at least seventy-five percent of full-time employees with Incident Management (IM) or Incident Support (IS) titles are deployed or available to deploy in response to disasters or other emergencies;
2. Approving or denying the cancellation of previously approved annual leave;
3. Approving or denying the restoration of forfeited annual leave;
4. Approving or denying administrative leave in emergency situations; and
5. Approving or denying requests for LWOP as appropriate.

D. Supervisors are responsible for:

1. Establishing and approving work schedules;
2. Communicating proper procedures to employees for requesting an absence from work;
3. Approving or disapproving employee leave requests according to operational needs;
4. Approving or disapproving employee time and attendance records;
5. Monitoring employee attendance;
6. Charging employees with AWOL as appropriate;
7. Taking appropriate corrective or disciplinary actions if employees fail to follow established leave procedures;
8. Reviewing and approving requests for restoring forfeited annual leave;
9. Consulting with OCCHCO on whether to require medical certification before an employee can return to work after an absence under FMLA;
10. Approving requests for LWOP as appropriate; and
11. Reviewing and approving applications for donated leave under the VLTP.

E. Timekeepers are responsible for:

1. Properly accounting and accurately documenting employee time and attendance; and
2. Conducting leave audits.

F. Employees are responsible for:

1. Reporting for duty according to his or her approved work schedule and being available for work during FEMA's core business hours;
2. Accurately accounting for all periods of work and leave;
3. Submitting requests for leave as early as possible;
4. Notifying his or her supervisor as early as possible if he or she will be unable to report to duty on time as scheduled;

5. Complying with internal office or directorate procedures for requesting leave;
  6. Obtaining supervisory approval for leave requests prior to taking leave, except in rare circumstances when it is not possible to give advance notice;
  7. Complying with FEMA's absence and leave rules and not abusing his or her leave rights;
  8. Requesting the restoration of forfeited annual leave when appropriate;
  9. Supplying sufficient documentation to support absences related to sick, court, or military leave;
  10. Requesting and providing sufficient notice to his or her supervisor to take leave under FMLA as appropriate;
  11. Submitting sufficient documentation to support leave taken under FMLA;
  12. Providing medical certifications that the employee is able to perform the essential functions of his or her position after a period of FMLA leave if requested;
  13. Providing sufficient notice and documentation in support of absences associated with childbirth, adoption, or foster care;
  14. Requesting and gaining approval for annual and administrative leave before using any period of administrative leave or excused absence;
  15. Maintaining awareness of local weather conditions, and retaining sufficient work and equipment necessary to continue working according to any applicable telework agreement in the event of an office closure;
  16. Supplying sufficient documentation to apply for leave donations; and
  17. Properly using any donated leave through the VLTP.
- G. COREs are responsible for working at a Directed Work Location if directed by a supervisor or other properly designated FEMA official.

#### **1-8. Forms Prescribed**

- A. OPM 630, Application to Become a Leave Recipient Under the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program.
- B. OPM 630A, Request to Donate Annual Leave to Leave Recipient Under the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program (Within Agency).
- C. OPM 630B, Request to Donate Annual Leave Recipient Under the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program (Outside Agency).
- D. OPM 630C, Transfer of Leave Records for Leave Recipient Covered by the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program.

- E. OPM 1637, Application to Become Recipient Under the Emergency Leave Transfer Program.
- F. OPM 1638, Request to Donate Annual Leave Under the Emergency Leave Transfer Program.
- G. OPM 1639, Transfer of Donated Annual Leave To/From the Emergency Leave Transfer Program.
- H. SF-52, Request for Personnel Action.
- I. WH-380-E, FMLA Medical Certification Form for Employee's Serious Health Condition.
- J. WH-380-F, FMLA Medical Certification Form for Family Member's Serious Health Condition.
- K. WH-384, FMLA Certification for Qualifying Exigency.

**1-9. Questions**

Questions concerning absence and leave policies and procedures should be addressed to the Office of the Chief Component Human Capital Officer at (202) 212-3962.

## **CHAPTER 2: SCHEDULING OF WORK AND LEAVE**

### **2-1. Attendance**

FEMA has core business hours from 9:30 am to 3:30 pm (see FM 106-1-1, Scheduling of Work). Employee work schedules must include FEMA's core business hours. Employees are expected to report for work on time and to be on duty at all times during their regularly scheduled tour of duty except during lunch periods and approved absences.

### **2-2. Lunch or Meal Breaks**

Employees who work at least five consecutive hours are entitled to take an unpaid 30-minute lunch or meal break. Employee work schedules include a 30-minute unpaid lunch or meal break during which employees are not permitted to work. The unpaid lunch or meal break may be extended up to an additional 30 minutes at the discretion and permission of the supervisor, if the employee extends his or her workday by a corresponding amount. Employees may not take their lunch or meal break at the start or end of their work schedule.

### **2-3. Tardiness**

- A. Periods of tardiness may be approved after the tardiness occurs by the employee's supervisor. Normally, annual leave or LWOP will be charged, in multiples of 15 minutes to cover such periods of tardiness. In rare instances of infrequent, unavoidable tardiness, the supervisor may excuse tardiness which does not exceed 30 minutes in a situation where an excused absence is warranted.
- B. If the conditions or frequency of the tardiness do not warrant approval of leave, the tardiness may be charged to Absence Without Leave, in multiples of 15 minutes, to cover the period of absence.
- C. Employees will not be required to work during these periods of leave. Normally, leave for the balance of the 15 minutes will be taken immediately following the tardiness. It may be taken later in the day, however, if more convenient to the office. This leave will not, however, be carried over beyond the day in which the tardiness occurs.
- D. Repeated tardiness is a basis for disciplinary action. Please contact OCCHCO, Labor and Employee Relations for advice and assistance on disciplinary actions.

### **2-4. Reporting for Duty Mission Ready**

Employees must report to work mission ready. Employees who are issued FEMA equipment, such as laptops, PIV cards, and telephones, that is necessary to perform their duties, must report to their designated worksite with such

equipment according to their authorized duty schedule. If an employee reports to work without a piece of necessary equipment, the employee shall use accrued annual leave, credit hours, or compensatory time to retrieve the equipment. In lieu of using paid leave, supervisors may approve LWOP if the employee does not have accrued leave. In all cases, employees shall not be granted administrative leave with pay to retrieve missing equipment. If an employee does not report to work as scheduled on a reoccurring basis, the supervisor should consult with the servicing Employee Relations Specialist for guidance on how to account for the time needed to retrieve missing equipment and any other disciplinary options.

## **2-5. Requests for Leave or Approved Absence**

An employee who wishes to take leave is required to inform his/her supervisor in advance of the request. Employees should provide their supervisors with as much advanced notice as possible for leave requests. An employee who is unable to provide advance notice and finds themselves unable to report for duty shall notify his or her supervisor as soon as possible at the beginning of the work day to request leave. The request should include the day(s), what type of leave, the number of hours, and the specific hours (from-to) and be documented in WebTA. Note: Leave may not be approved, so it is in the interest of the employee to request leave with as much notice as possible.

## **2-6. Deployment Availability**

FEMA seeks to effectively and fairly deploy necessary personnel in response to disasters and other emergencies. To ensure sufficient personnel are available for deployments, heads of Offices and Directorates should plan to have at least seventy-five percent of their full-time employees with IM or IS titles deployed or available to deploy at all times.

## **2-7. Use of Leave**

FEMA encourages employees to make full use of their legitimate leave rights. While the accrual of leave is an employee benefit, the use of leave is subject to the specific requirements contained in applicable laws, regulations, and this Manual. Both the needs of the employee and the need to accomplish FEMA's mission will be considered in arriving at decisions to approve or disapprove leave requests. Employees are not to abuse their leave rights and privileges. Abuse may be the basis for disciplinary action up to and including termination.

## **2-8. Compensatory Time Off**

An employee may choose to receive compensatory time off in lieu of payment for an equal amount of irregular or occasional overtime hours worked. See FEMA

Premium Pay Manual 253-2-1 for more information on earning compensatory time off.

- A. Compensatory time must be used in 15-minute increments.
- B. Compensatory time off must be used within 26 pay periods of the pay period in which it was earned.
- C. Compensatory time off must be used prior to using annual leave, except after pay period 18 when employees must schedule annual leave subject to forfeiture.

## **2-9. Compensatory Time Off for Travel**

Employees receive compensatory time off for time spent in travel status that is not otherwise compensable as hours of work. See FEMA Premium Pay 253-2-1, 5 C.F.R. Part 550 Subpart N Compensatory Time Off for Travel for more information on earning requirements.

- A. Compensatory time off for travel must be used in 15 minute increments.
- B. Compensatory time off for travel must be used within 26 pay periods of the pay period in which it was earned.
- C. If an employee separates from FEMA or the Federal service, any unused compensatory time off for travel is forfeited.

## **2-10. Absences for Disabled Veterans**

- A. A disabled veteran shall be granted annual leave, sick leave, or LWOP, as requested to seek medical treatment connected with a service injury (see Executive Order 5396). The veteran must present an official statement from a medical authority that such treatment is required. The veteran must give prior notice of definite days and hours of absence required for medical treatment in order that arrangements may be made for carrying on the work during his/her absence.
- B. Effective November 5, 2016, an employee who is a veteran with a service-connected disability rated at 30 percent or more will be entitled to receive up to 104 hours of leave for purposes of undergoing medical treatment for the disability during the first 12-month period of employment, beginning on the first day of employment with the Federal government. Any leave credited to an employee under this section that is not used during the 12-month period, may not be carried over and will be forfeited. The employee must submit an official statement from a health care provider that the leave will be used for treating the service-connected disability.

## **2-11. Accommodation for Religious Exercise**

To the extent that modifications to an employee's work schedule do not interfere with the efficient accomplishment of FEMA's mission, Federal Law requires agencies to accommodate employees' exercise of their religion unless such accommodation would impose undue hardship on the conduct of FEMA's operation. The granting of accrued, accumulated, or advance annual leave (if other requirements on the advancement of leave are met) can be used to accommodate a requested absence for religious observance. Other options include alternative work schedules used within the requesting employee's organization or compensatory time off for religious observances covered in 5 C.F.R. 550.1002 and FM 253-2-1, Premium Pay, February 11, 2014.

## **2-12. Absence Without Leave**

When an employee fails to report for duty without prior approval or has an unauthorized absence from the workplace during the work day, he or she may be charged with Absence Without Leave (AWOL).

An AWOL charge, the failure to follow appropriate leave procedures, or the failure to follow instructions that result in an AWOL charge may serve as the basis for corrective or disciplinary action when appropriate.

Supervisors are required to properly and accurately document any periods of AWOL for employees under their supervision and to initiate disciplinary action, if warranted. Supervisors should maintain records and documentation of all periods of AWOL charged to their employees. At a minimum, the records should reflect the dates, times, and reasons for the AWOL charge and any verbal or written counseling which may have occurred. AWOL is charged in 15 minute increments.

An employee charged with AWOL on the workdays before and after a holiday will not receive holiday pay for the holiday. An employee charged with AWOL on the workday before or after a holiday will receive holiday pay for the holiday, if excused from duty on the holiday and in a pay status on the workday before or after the holiday.

If the employee provides administratively acceptable documentation to support an absence charged as AWOL, and the employee's supervisor accepts the justification for the absence, the charge to AWOL may be changed to an approved leave category. If an AWOL charge is changed to an approved absence, a charge of AWOL cannot serve as the basis for corrective or disciplinary action. However, supervisors may still take corrective or disciplinary action for failing to follow appropriate leave procedures.

## CHAPTER 3: ANNUAL LEAVE

### **3-1. Use of Annual Leave**

- A. Employees may use annual leave for vacations, rest and relaxation, family needs, personal business, emergencies not covered by sick leave, and other activities.
- B. Employees may request the use of annual leave for instances generally covered by sick leave. Employees can use annual leave for sick leave purposes when an employee has an insufficient amount of sick leave to cover an absence or when an employee is trying to build up his or her leave balance. Employees may be required to provide "administratively acceptable" medical documentation when substituting annual leave for sick leave.
- C. Employees should not assume that having projected "use or lose" annual leave near the end of the leave year requires that management approve requests to use the projected "use or lose" annual leave.
- D. Managers, supervisors, and leave approving officials maintain the discretion to approve when annual leave is taken based on the needs and workload of the organizational unit. Designated management officials will notify an employee in writing when a request for annual leave has been denied.

### **3-2. Earning Rates for Annual Leave**

- A. Employees accrue annual leave based on length of creditable Federal service or type of appointment.
- B. Employees must be in a pay status for at least a portion of a pay period to earn annual leave for that pay period. If an employee is in a non-pay status (i.e., LWOP, including LWOP pending a disability claim), for an entire pay period, the employee will not accrue annual leave.
- C. If an employee resigns or is separated from Federal service prior to the last workday of a pay period, the employee will not accrue annual leave for that pay period.
- D. Full-time General Schedule (GS), CORE, and wage grade employees will accrue annual leave at the following rates:
  1. Employees with less than 3 years of service earn 4 hours each full biweekly pay period.
  2. Employees with 3 but less than 15 years of service earn 6 hours each full biweekly pay period, except for the last full pay period of the calendar year when they earn 10 hours.
  3. Employees with 15 or more years of service earn 8 hours each full biweekly pay period.
- E. Full-time employees who hold Senior Executive Service (SES), Senior-Level (SL), or Scientific or Professional (ST) positions will accrue eight (8) hours of

- annual leave each full biweekly pay period.
- F. Part-time GS, CORE, and wage grade employees will accrue annual leave at the following rates:
1. Employees with less than three years of service earn 1 hour for each 20 hours in a pay status.
  2. Employees with 3 years but less than 15 years of service earn 1 hour for each 13 hours in a pay status.
  3. Employees with 15 or more years of service earn 1 hour for each 10 hours in a pay status.
- G. Employees with uncommon tours of duty will accrue annual leave at the following rates:
1. Employees with less than three years of service earn 4 hours times the average number of hours worked in the bi-weekly pay period divided by 80.
  2. Employees with 3 years but less than 15 years of service earn 6 hours times the average number of hours worked in the bi-weekly pay period divided by 80.
  3. Employees with 15 or more years of service earn 8 hours times the average number of hours worked in the bi-weekly pay period divided by 80.

### **3-3. Advancing Annual Leave**

- A. The provisions for advancing annual leave apply only to employees whose continued employment is contemplated. Any request for advance annual leave must be made to the supervisor in writing, in advance of anticipated usage by the employee.
- B. Employees may be advanced no more than the amount of annual leave to be earned in the remainder of the leave year.
- C. The decision on whether to advance annual leave should be based on such considerations as the employee's reason for requesting it, workload status, and the interests of FEMA.
- D. Upon return to active duty status from a period of extended annual leave, the employee must repay the advance annual leave during the period of his or her continued employment. The advance annual leave may be liquidated by subsequently earned annual leave. If an employee separates from the Federal service with a negative leave balance, the employee will be indebted to the Federal government for the remaining value of the advanced leave.

### **3-4. Maximum Accumulation of Annual Leave**

- A. The maximum accumulation of annual leave which may be carried into a new leave year for most employees is 30 days (240 hours). However, there are some exceptions to the 30 day maximum accumulation for employees stationed outside the United States. These limited exceptions are covered in 5 U.S.C. 6304 (b).
- B. The maximum accumulation for employees in the Senior Executive Service (SES) is 90 days (720 hours).

### **3-5. Scheduling Annual Leave to Allow Potential Restoration**

Any annual in excess of the maximum leave ceiling will be forfeited at the end of the leave year. Leave scheduled and approved before the third biweekly pay period prior to the end of the leave year that cannot be taken, may be restored if the leave could not be taken due to exigencies of public business (determined by an appropriate authority), illness, or administrative error. Leave scheduled prior to this deadline may be restored only if the conditions in section 3-6 are met. Each year the OCCHCO issues a notice to inform employees of the pertinent deadlines, the final date to schedule leave, and the final date of the leave year. Employees are encouraged to request all leave as early as practicable.

### **3-6. Restoration of Annual Leave**

- A. If annual leave scheduled and approved prior to the third biweekly pay period prior to the end of the leave year is forfeited, it can be restored for the employee's later use only for the following reasons:
  1. Exigencies of the public business which are approved by the head of an Office or Directorate at the time the exigency occurs;
  2. Sickness; or
  3. Administrative error which results in the loss of annual leave otherwise accruable.
- B. In order for the head of an Office or Directorate to approve the cancellation of properly scheduled and approved annual leave because of "exigencies of the public business," the following conditions must exist:
  1. There must have been no reasonable alternative to canceling leave for the particular employee in order to meet the work exigency (i.e., the work could not have been postponed, handled, or managed in another way, or performed by some other employee); and
  2. There must have been specific beginning and ending dates of the critical work assignment, project, etc., that resulted in the cancellation of the scheduled leave.
- C. Employees who forfeit annual leave as a result of any of the conditions above

may request restoration by sending a memorandum through their supervisor to the appropriate Office or Directorate head. Requests must be timely made following the end of the leave year, and must clearly state why the leave was forfeited. The employee must submit documentation showing the previously approved leave and a supervisor's memorandum explaining why it was necessary to cancel the leave.

- D. When restoration is warranted, a memorandum stating it is warranted signed by the head of the Office or Directorate, or designee, will be sent to the employee with a copy forwarded to the OCCHCO for accounting purposes. Restored annual leave is maintained in a separate leave account.
- E. Restored annual leave must be used not later than the end of the leave year ending two years after:
  1. The date of restoration for leave forfeited because of administrative error;
  2. A date fixed by FEMA management as the termination of the exigency; or
  3. The date the employee is determined to be recovered and able to return to duty.
  4. Restored annual leave that is not used within this time period cannot be restored again.

### **3-7. Annual Leave to Establish Retirement Eligibility**

An employee may use annual leave to qualify for retirement eligibility if the employee is subject to separation through a reduction-in-force, transfer of function, or when an employee declines to relocate to a different commuting area. An employee may use all accumulated, accrued, and restored annual leave to the employee's credit prior to the effective date of the reduction-in-force, transfer of function, or relocation, as well as any annual leave earned after the effective date of the reduction-in-force, transfer of function, or relocation. An employee may not use advanced annual leave after the effective date of the reduction-in-force or transfer of function to establish retirement eligibility.

### **3-8. Terminal Leave**

Terminal leave is annual leave taken at the conclusion of a period of service and immediately before separation or retirement without the employee returning to duty. FEMA may not grant an employee terminal leave immediately prior to separation from the Federal service when it is known in advance that the employee will separate. If an employee does not return to duty from a period of annual leave, the employee's last day on duty will be considered the effective date of separation (see Comp. Gen Opinion B-223876 dated June 12, 1987).

An exception to this rule will be made for employees involuntarily separated because of a reduction-in-force or a transfer of function. In such cases, an employee may elect to use accrued annual leave to remain in service after the

date the employee would otherwise have been separated if, and only to the extent that, such additional service credit will enable the employee to qualify for an immediate retirement annuity or to qualify for health benefits coverage into retirement.

### **3-9. Lump Sum Payment of Annual Leave**

- A. When an employee separates from the Federal service, the employee will receive a lump-sum payment for accumulated and current accrued unused annual leave. The lump-sum payment will equal the pay the employee would have received if the employee remained in the Federal service and exhausted the amount of accumulated annual leave (holidays are counted as workdays in projecting the lump-sum leave period). The lump-sum payment period will not extend an employee's service period. (See 5 U.S.C. § 5551 and 5 C.F.R. Part 550, subpart L).
- B. The employee's lump-sum payment is calculated by multiplying the number of hours of accumulated and accrued annual leave by the employee's applicable hourly rate of pay. The following types of pay are included in the lump-sum payment calculations (See 5 C.F.R. § 550.1205):
  1. Rate of basic pay;
  2. Locality pay or other similar geographic adjustments;
  3. Any statutory adjustments in pay or any general system-wide increases that become effective during the lump-sum period (FEMA will adjust the lump-sum payment to reflect the increased rate on and after the effective date of the pay adjustment);
  4. A within-grade increase if the employee meets the requirements for an increase prior to the date the employee becomes eligible for a lump-sum payment;
  5. Premium pay to the extent such premium pay was payable to the employee:
    - i. Night differential at the applicable rate for a prevailing rate employee for all regularly scheduled periods of night shift duty;
    - ii. Premium pay if the employee received premium pay for the pay period immediately prior to the date the employee became eligible for a lump-sum payment, subject to any salary caps;
    - iii. Overtime pay for overtime work that is regularly scheduled during an employee's established uncommon tour of duty (the uncommon tour of duty must be applicable for the pay period immediately prior to the date the employee became eligible for a lump-sum payment);
  6. A supervisory differential (if applicable);
  7. Non-foreign area cost-of-living allowance and/or post differentials; and

8. A post allowance if the employee's official duty station is in a foreign area.
- C. If an employee is called to active military duty in the armed forces, the employee is entitled to (see 5 U.S.C. § 5552):
  1. Receive a lump-sum payment for accumulated and current accrued annual leave in accordance with this section; or
  2. Elect to have the annual leave remain to his or her credit until returning from active duty.

## **CHAPTER 4: SICK LEAVE**

### **4-1. Use of Sick Leave**

- A. FEMA must grant sick leave to an employee, subject to exceptions listed in section 4-5 Abuse of Sick Leave Privileges, when an employee:
  1. Receives medical, dental, or optical examination or treatment;
  2. Is incapacitated from the performance of position duties by physical or mental illness, injury, pregnancy, or childbirth;
  3. Provides care for a family member who is incapacitated by a medical or mental condition, or attends to a family member receiving medical, dental, or optical examination or treatment;
  4. Provides care for a family member with a serious health condition;
  5. Makes arrangements funeral arrangements or attends the funeral of a family member;
  6. Would, because of communicable disease, jeopardize the health of other employees and/or the general public by being on the job (when there is uncertainty as to whether a particular ailment meets the definition of a "communicable disease" and it is not addressed by local health regulations, the employee should be asked to provide a statement from the patient's physician that the ailment is contagious. This statement should contain the period of time for which the patient must be confined or isolated); or
  7. Must be absent from work for adoption-related activities (e.g., appointments with adoption agencies, social workers and attorneys, court proceedings, required travel, periods of time adoptive parents are required by court or agency to care for the adopted child.).
- B. Full-time employees may use a total of 12 weeks (480 hours) of sick leave per year to care for a family member with a serious health condition. For a part-time employee or an employee with an uncommon tour of duty, an employee may use 12 times the average number of hours in his or her scheduled tour of duty each week to care for a member with a serious health condition.
- C. Part-time employees are covered by the regulation, but their sick-leave benefits are pro-rated. For instance, a part-time employee who works 20 hours a week, could use 20 hours of sick leave or from 21 to 240 hours if they maintained a sick leave balance of at least 40 hours.

### **4-2. Earning Rates for Sick Leave**

Earning of sick leave is not affected by length of service. Full-time employees earn sick leave at a rate of 4 hours for each full biweekly pay period. Part-time employees with an established tour of duty earn sick leave at a rate of 1 hour for

each 20 hours of duty they are in pay status (with a maximum of 4 hours of sick leave per pay period). Employees are not limited in the amount of sick leave they may accumulate and carryover from one year to the next.

#### **4-3. Requesting Sick Leave**

Employees should request sick leave to attend medical appointments as soon as possible after the appointment is scheduled or when they are reasonably certain of the time an appointment will be made. Except for emergencies, employees must request advance approval of sick leave for medical, dental, or optical examinations or treatment. Employees who are unable to report for duty because of personal illness or injury will notify the supervisors as soon as possible. Normally, an employee shall notify their supervisor according to the procedures established by his or her supervisor or applicable bargaining agreement at the onset of an illness or injury. The employee will provide the supervisor with an estimate of the time that he or she expects to be absent because of the illness. If the employee expects to deviate from the previously approved estimate of time for sick leave, the employee will contact the supervisor. Failure to properly notify the supervisor of the use of sick leave or an incapacitation can lead to the placement of an employee in an AWOL status or other disciplinary measures.

#### **4-4. Medical Certificates**

Employees are required to provide “administratively acceptable” evidence to their supervisor when requesting sick leave. Normally, the only thing needed to satisfy this requirement is an employee’s certification as to the reason for the absence. However, for an absence in excess of three workdays (or for shorter absences where there are reasonable suspicions about the circumstances of the leave or where it is unclear whether the employee is totally incapacitated for duty), supervisors may require an employee who misses work to submit a doctor’s certification of the medical reason for the leave or other satisfactory evidence as to the reason for the absence. If a supervisor has a reasonable basis to suspect an employee is abusing sick leave, the employee may be required to support all incidences of sick leave with a medical certificate regardless of duration. The employee must provide the required certification within a reasonable amount of time. Unapproved sick leave may be charged to annual leave or as AWOL.

#### **4-5. Abuse of Sick Leave Privileges**

Sick leave abuse can create morale problems with other employees who are forced to cover for absent employees and also costs FEMA in terms of both excessive and unwarranted leave payments and lost productivity.

Each supervisor should periodically review the sick leave records of employees who show a pattern of repeated sick leave. An employee whose record is questionable may be required to submit a medical certificate in support of any

future absence, regardless of length, for which a request for sick leave is made. An employee who misuses sick leave may receive a charge to AWOL which may result in disciplinary action.

#### **4-6. Advancing Sick Leave**

- A. An employee may, at the supervisor's discretion, be granted sick leave in advance of accrual in the event of serious disability or ailment, defined as one which usually lasts for at least 3 consecutive work days and is supported by a medical certificate.
- B. A supervisor should not advance sick leave to an employee when it is known (or reasonably expected) that the employee will not return to duty (e.g., when the employee has applied for disability retirement).
- C. Supervisors should consider the need for the employee's service, the expectation of a return to duty, the employee's history of leave usage, and the availability of other leave, such as annual leave or LWOP, in their determinations.
- D. The maximum amount of sick leave that may be granted to a requesting full time employee is 240 hours, and will be restricted to:
  - 1. An employee who is incapacitated for the performance of duties by physical or mental illness, injury, pregnancy, or childbirth;
  - 2. For a serious health condition of the employee or a family member;
  - 3. When an employee would jeopardize the health of others with his or her presence on the job because of exposure to a communicable disease;
  - 4. For purposes relating to the adoption of a child; or
  - 5. For the care of a covered service member with a serious injury or illness if the employee is exercising an entitlement right under 5 U.S.C. 6382(a)(3).
- E. FEMA may, at the supervisor's discretion, advance up to 104 hours to a full-time employee:
  - 1. For medical, dental, or optical examination or treatment;
  - 2. To provide care for a family member who is incapacitated by a medical or mental condition, or to attend to a family member receiving medical, dental, or optical examination or treatment;
  - 3. To provide care for a family member who would jeopardize the health of others by that family member's presence because of exposure to a communicable disease; or
  - 4. To make arrangements necessitated by the death of a family member or to attend the funeral of a family member.
- F. The maximum amount of sick leave FEMA may advance to part-time employees is prorated by the number of hours in the employee's regularly

scheduled administrative workweek.

- G. The maximum amount of advanced sick leave that an employee may have on balance at any time, no matter the reason for the leave, is 240 hours. For example, if an employee is given 104 hours of advanced sick leave in order to make funeral arrangements for a family member in July, and requests 240 hours of advanced sick leave for a serious health condition that requires treatment in August, the employee will only be able to receive 136 hours of advanced leave to treat their serious health condition.
- H. Sick leave may be advanced only if an employee has exhausted his or her annual leave or compensatory time off balance.
- I. Employees may not be advanced sick leave during a period of active military duty.
- J. Employees cannot be advanced sick leave for care of a covered service member, unless the employee invokes FMLA to care for the covered service member.
- K. Advance sick leave should not be granted to a probationary employee beyond what the employee would be expected to earn during the probationary period until the supervisor has had an opportunity to reach a decision about the employee's continued employment.
- L. When an employee who is indebted for advanced sick leave separates from Federal Service, he or she is required to refund the amount of advanced sick leave or the agency may deduct that amount from any pay due to the employee upon separation, and then proceed to reclaim the remaining balance.
- M. When an employee who has been advanced sick leave leaves FEMA without having made up the balance of advance leave, the supervisor must immediately call the OCCHCO to report that the employee will be resigning from the Federal Government. The supervisor is then required to send a follow-up letter to the payroll office.
- N. Once an advance has been granted, further use of sick leave constitutes an additional advance and must meet all the criteria of this section before it can be approved. If an employee cannot be granted additional advanced sick leave or the employee is not approved for an additional advance of sick leave, absences due to illnesses must be charged to annual leave or LWOP.
- O. Upon return to active duty status from a period of extended sick leave, the employee must repay the advance sick leave during the period of his or her continued employment. The advance of sick leave may be liquidated by subsequently earned sick leave. The employee may also choose to liquidate the indebtedness by a charge against annual leave (provided this action is not for the purpose of avoiding a forfeiture of annual leave at the end of the leave year), or by a charge against annual leave received by the employee as an approved leave recipient. The employee may arrange to pay for advanced annual or sick leave in cash at any time if such an arrangement is approved

by OCCHCO.

- P. Indebtedness related to advance sick leave is waived for employees approved for disability retirement and for deceased employees.

**4-7. Substitution of Sick Leave for Annual Leave**

When sickness occurs within a period of annual leave, an employee may be granted sick leave for the period of illness, provided the employee notifies his/her supervisor within a reasonable period of time, within one pay period, to request sick leave via WebTA. In circumstances in which it is unclear whether the employee is incapacitated, FEMA may request more information or medical documentation, as appropriate prior to approving the substitution.

**4-8. Sick Leave Used in the Computation of an Annuity**

If an employee retires from the Federal service on an immediate annuity or dies leaving a survivor entitled to an annuity, any unused sick leave will be used in the calculation of the employee's or survivor's annuity. Sick leave used to calculate an annuity will be charged against the employee's sick leave account and may not thereafter be used, transferred, or recredited. All sick leave in the employee's sick leave account on the date of his or her retirement or death, will be credited towards the annuity calculation and will be considered used.

**4-9. Records on the Use of Sick Leave**

FEMA must maintain records of the amount of sick leave used by an employee for family care purposes and to make arrangements for or attend the funeral of a family member under section 630.401(a)(3) and (4). The records must be sufficient to ensure an employee does not exceed the limitations in section 630.401(b) and (c).

## CHAPTER 5: FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE ACT

### **5-1. Leave Entitlement**

The Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) entitles eligible employees to take up to 12 administrative workweeks of unpaid leave in certain situations. Employees who take unpaid leave through FMLA will be returned to their same or equivalent position at the end of the period of leave, with the same benefits, pay, status, and other conditions of employment. Employees interested in taking leave under FMLA should discuss their leave plans with their supervisor as early as possible to ensure the employee's leave request is allowable under FMLA and an orderly transfer of duties and responsibilities during the employee's absence.

- A. An employee is entitled to a total of 12 administrative workweeks of unpaid leave during any 12 month period for one of the following purposes:
  1. The birth of a son or daughter of the employee and the care of such son or daughter;
  2. The placement of a son or daughter with the employee for adoption or foster care;
  3. The care of a spouse, son, daughter, or parent of the employee with a serious health condition;
  4. In response to a serious health condition of the employee who is unable to perform any one or more of the essential functions of his or her position; or
  5. Any qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that the employee's spouse, son, daughter, or parent is a covered military member on covered active duty (or has received notice to be called to active duty) in the Armed Forces (see 5 C.F.R. § 630.1204 for more information).
- B. An employee (or an employee's representative) must invoke his or her right to take leave under FMLA before taking leave. An employee cannot retroactively invoke his or her right to take leave under FMLA, unless the employee is mentally or physically incapable of providing notice of his or her intent to take FMLA leave during the entire time the employee is absent from duty. In such cases, the employee may be required to provide documentation explaining the employee's and/or representative's inability to notify FEMA of the employee's absence. A supervisor may ask an employee if it is his or her intent to invoke his or her FMLA protection when he or she is requesting qualifying leave.
- C. The 12 month period begins on the date an employee first takes leave under FMLA. An employee is not entitled to an additional 12 weeks of FMLA leave until the previous 12 month period ends and the employee experiences an event that will entitle the employee to leave under FMLA.
- D. The 12 administrative workweeks of leave are based on the employee's regularly scheduled workweek. The 12 administrative workweeks of leave

equals 12 times the average number of hours in the employee's regularly scheduled administrative workweek.

## **5-2. Applicability and Eligibility**

- A. Permanent employees and employees serving under a temporary appointment of more than one year are covered by the regulations under 5 C.F.R. Part 630, Subpart L.
  1. Employees must have at least 12 months of Federal service with a regular tour of duty to receive the protections and benefits under FMLA.
  2. The service does not need to be continuous.
  3. Service under temporary appointments of one year or less or on an intermittent duty basis does not count towards meeting the eligibility requirement.
- B. Employees who do not have a scheduled tour of duty (i.e., employees with an intermittent duty schedule) and employees serving under a temporary appointment of one year or less are covered by the regulations under 29 C.F.R. Part 825 (see FD 010-6, FEMA Reservist Program, June 14, 2012).
  1. Employees must have at least 12 months of Federal service.
  2. The service does not need to be continuous.
  3. The employee must have worked for at least 1,250 hours during the previous 12 months prior to the period for which FMLA is to be used.

## **5-3. Serious Health Condition**

- A. FMLA allows employees to take up to 12 administrative workweeks of unpaid leave for serious health conditions. A serious health condition under FMLA means an illness, injury, impairment, or other physical or mental condition that involves inpatient care (i.e., an overnight stay in a hospital), or continuing treatment by a health care provider. Continuing treatment by a health care provider may include one or more of the following:
  1. A period of incapacity of more than 3 consecutive calendar days (including any subsequent treatment or period of incapacity relating to the same condition) that also involves:
    - i. Treatment two or more times by a health care provider, or by a provider of health care services under orders of, or on referral by a health care provider; or
    - ii. Treatment by a health care provider on at least one occasion which results in a regimen of continuing treatment under the supervision of the health care provider (e.g., a course of prescription medication or therapy requiring special equipment to resolve or alleviate the health condition);

2. Any period of incapacity due to pregnancy or pre-natal care, even if the affected individual does not receive active treatment from a health care provider during the period of incapacity or the period of incapacity does not last more than three consecutive calendar days;
  3. A chronic serious condition requiring treatment by a health care provider that continues over an extended period of time which may cause episodic rather than a continuing period of incapacity (e.g., asthma, diabetes, epilepsy);
  4. Permanent or long-term conditions requiring supervision by a health care provider;
  5. Multiple treatments for non-chronic conditions.
- B. Employees may not use FMLA for routine or minor medical appointments or illnesses. Employees may use sick leave in response to short-term, routine, or other minor health conditions (see chapter 4). Employees may not use FMLA for the following purposes:
1. Routine physical, eye, or dental examinations;
  2. A regimen of continuing treatment involving over-the-counter medications, bed-rest, exercise, or other similar activities that can be initiated without a visit to a health care provider;
  3. Voluntary cosmetic surgery, unless inpatient care is required or complications develop;
  4. Absences due to an employee's use of an illegal substance, unless the employee is receiving treatment for substance abuse by or on referral from a health care provider;
  5. The common cold, the flu, earaches, upset stomach, minor ulcers, headaches, routine dental or orthodontia problems, and periodontal disease, unless complications arise; or
  6. Allergies, restorative dental or plastic surgery after an injury, removal of cancerous growth, or mental illness resulting from stress may be serious health conditions only if such conditions require inpatient care or continuing treatment by a health care provider.

#### **5-4. Notice to Take Leave**

If the need to take leave under FMLA is foreseeable (i.e., expected childbirth, adoption, foster care, or planned medical procedure), the employee (or the employee's representative) shall notify his or her supervisor at least 30 calendar days before the start of the planned leave. If the need for the leave is unforeseeable, and the employee cannot provide a full 30 calendar days' notice, the employee shall notify his or her supervisor as soon as practical. If the need for the leave is foreseeable, and the employee fails to provide sufficient notice with no reasonable excuse, the employee's supervisor may require the employee

to delay taking leave under FMLA until the employee provides at least 30 calendar days' notice.

**5-5. Intermittent or Reduced Leave Schedule**

An employee may take intermittent FMLA leave or reduced leave for the birth of a son or daughter, the care of a newborn son or daughter, or the placement of a son or daughter with the employee for adoption or foster care with the approval of the employee's supervisor. An employee may take intermittent FMLA leave or reduced leave for the care of a spouse, son, daughter, or parent with a serious health condition, or in response to the employee's own serious health condition when medically necessary. If an employee invokes FMLA on an intermittent or reduced leave schedule for a serious health condition, FEMA may place the employee in an alternate position that can accommodate the employee's leave schedule (see 5 C.F.R. § 620.1205).

**5-6. Substitution of Paid Leave**

Once an employee invokes his or her right to leave under FMLA, an employee may substitute future scheduled periods of unpaid leave with paid leave (i.e., an employee may not retroactively substitute paid leave for unpaid leave). An employee may substitute annual leave, sick leave, advanced annual leave, advanced sick leave, or any donated leave under the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program. An employee may not be forced to substitute paid leave for LWOP. An employee may not substitute compensatory time or credit hours for unpaid leave. If an employee substitutes paid sick leave for unpaid leave, the normal rules for using sick leave apply (i.e., an employee cannot use sick leave to bond with a newborn child).

**5-7. Medical Certification and Supporting Documentation**

If an employee invokes his or her right to unpaid leave under FMLA, the employee will be required to submit sufficient documentation to support the leave. If an employee takes leave in response to a serious health condition, the employee will be required to submit written medical certification from the appropriate health care provider. The medical certification must include:

- A. The start date of the medical condition;
- B. The probable duration of the medical condition;
- C. The appropriate medical facts, including a general statement as to the incapacitation, examination, or treatment that may be required by a health care provider;
- D. If the leave is to care for a spouse, son, daughter, or parent with a serious health condition, a statement that the family member requires psychological

- and/or physical care, and needs assistance for basic medical, hygienic, nutritional, safety, or transportation needs in response to such a condition;
- E. If the leave is in response to the employee's serious health condition, a statement that the employee is unable to perform one or more of the essential functions of the employee's position or requires medical treatment for a serious condition; and
  - F. In the event of intermittent leave or a reduced leave schedule for planned medical treatments, the dates of the treatments (actual or estimates), the duration of the treatments, and the period of recovery if applicable; or a statement that the serious health condition is a chronic or continuing condition with an unknown duration, whether the patient is currently incapacitated, and the estimated duration and frequency of the episodes of incapacity.

#### **5-8. Continued Employment and Health Benefits**

- A. An employee who takes leave under FMLA is entitled, upon return to duty, to be returned to the same position the employee held before taking FMLA leave or an equivalent position with the same benefits, pay, status, and other terms and conditions of employment. FEMA may not return an employee to an equivalent position that is subject to a written notification of a reduction-in-force, if the employee's previous position is not affected by a reduction-in-force.
- B. An employee enrolled in a health plan through the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHB) who invokes his or her right to take unpaid leave under FMLA, may continue his or her health benefits if the employee pays his or her appropriate employee share of the insurance premiums.
- C. The supervisor of record may require an employee to report periodically on his or her status and intention to return to work.

#### **5-9. Return to Work**

If an employee takes leave under FMLA to respond to a serious health condition, the employee may be required to provide a written medical certification from the employee's health care provider that the employee is able to perform the essential functions of his or her position before the employee will be allowed to return to work. The employee's supervisor must gain OCCHCO's approval to request such certification before giving notice to the employee of the requirement. The employee's supervisor will inform the employee of the need to provide such documentation before the employee takes leave. If the need for the leave is unforeseeable, the employee will be given notice of the certification requirement as soon as practicable under the circumstances. If an employee is required to provide written certification before returning to work, FEMA must apply the requirement to all similarly situated employees (i.e., employees in the same occupation or with the same serious health condition).

#### **5-10. Records and Reporting**

OCCHCO will maintain and provide records on the use of FMLA as appropriate. At a minimum, the records will state the employee's basic rate of pay, occupational series, the number of hours taken, and the reason for the FMLA leave.

## **CHAPTER 6: ABSENCE FOR MATERNITY AND PATERNITY**

### **6-1. Eligibility and Use of Leave for Maternity and Paternity Reasons**

- A. Absence due to pregnancy is treated like any other period of medical incapacitation.
- B. Employees are eligible to use a combination of annual leave, sick leave, compensatory time off or credit time if available, LWOP, FMLA, and/or donated leave for maternity or paternity related absences. Parents may use annual leave, compensatory time off if available, FMLA, and LWOP to prepare for the birth of a child (e.g., to attend birthing classes), to bond with or care for a healthy newborn child, or to care for other children in the household.
- C. Parents may not use sick leave or donated leave to be absent from work to bond with or care for a healthy newborn child.
- D. The Federal Government, including FEMA, does not offer a separate leave benefit for maternity or paternity purposes (i.e., maternity leave or paternity leave).
- E. State regulations and policies covering maternity or paternity leave do not supersede the policies, rules, and regulations of the Federal Government.

### **6-2. Leave Requests**

- A. Employees requesting leave for maternity or paternity reasons shall submit a written request to their supervisor. For planning purposes, the written request should specify the precise nature of leave being requested; i.e., sick leave, annual leave, FMLA, and/or LWOP.
- B. Employees should submit a physician's or practitioner's written certification stating that the employee or mother is pregnant, the expected delivery date, the approximate time period for which the employee or mother will be incapacitated because of pregnancy, and the date on which the employee can be expected, under normal conditions, to return to work.
- C. When submitting the request, the employee should indicate whether or not the employee intends to return to duty after delivery. If the employee does not intend to return to duty after the delivery, the employee's resignation should be obtained in advance to be effective at the expiration of the period of paid leave.
- D. The employee should report pregnancy in a reasonable time after it is known so that steps can be taken to protect the mother's health, adjust her working conditions if necessary, and to plan for any staffing adjustments. When there is doubt concerning the employee's ability to continue to perform the duties of the position safely, the supervisor should have her furnish a medical certificate authorizing continued work and should take whatever precautionary

measures appear necessary. OCCHCO can provide guidance on available leave options.

#### **6-3. Leave for Maternity Reasons**

- A. A birth mother is entitled to use sick leave for medical appointments, hospitalization, and for her period of incapacitation following childbirth.
- B. A mother may use accrued annual leave for pregnancy, childbirth, and to bond with or care for a healthy newborn child.
- C. A mother is entitled to use up to 12 weeks (480 hours) unpaid leave under FMLA for absences related to pregnancy and childbirth, to provide care to a newborn child with a serious health condition, or to bond with a newborn child.
- D. An employee may not use sick leave or donated leave to extend an absence related to pregnancy or childbirth beyond the period of physical incapacitation.

#### **6-4. Leave for Paternity Reasons**

- A. A birth father may use up to 12 weeks (480 hours) of accrued sick leave each year to accompany the mother to prenatal appointments, during periods when the mother or newborn child is hospitalized, and/or during the mother's recovery periods (see section 4-1).
- B. A father may use accrued annual leave to care for the mother of a newborn child during pregnancy and childbirth, or to bond with or care for a healthy newborn child.
- C. A father is entitled to use up to 12 weeks (480 hours) of unpaid leave under FMLA to care for the mother of a newborn child during her period of incapacitation, to provide care if the mother or child has a serious health condition, or to bond with a newborn child.
- D. With supervisory approval, a father may use LWOP for absences related to pregnancy and childbirth, or to bond with or care for a healthy newborn child.

#### **6-5. Advance of Annual and/or Sick Leave**

- A. FEMA may advance the amount of annual leave a mother or father would accrue during the remainder of the leave year for purposes related to childbirth.
- B. FEMA must advance a maximum of 30 days (240 hours) of sick leave to a mother or father during the mother's period of incapacitation from pregnancy, childbirth, or to care for a child with a serious health condition.

- C. An employee is required to repay advanced annual or sick leave, except in very limited circumstances (e.g., disability retirement or death). An employee who requests advanced annual or sick leave will be indebted to FEMA until the debt is repaid (usually through earning annual or sick leave). FEMA will not advance annual or sick leave to an employee who will not or is not expected to return to duty after taking leave.
- D. See sections 3-3 and 4-6 for specific rules on advancing annual or sick leave.

#### **6-6. FMLA for Maternity and Paternity Purposes**

- A. An employee may begin to use FMLA protected leave before the actual date of the birth which will also begin the 12 month period to use leave under FMLA. If an employee does invoke the right to leave under FMLA prior to the date of birth, the employee's 12 month period to use leave under FMLA begins on the date the employee first takes leave under FMLA and may end before the child's first birthday.
- B. If an employee wishes to use FMLA to bond with a newborn child, the employee must invoke the use of FMLA before the child's first birthday.
- C. With supervisor approval, an employee may use leave under FMLA on an intermittent basis for care or bonding with a newborn child.
- D. Employees must adhere to all procedures for the use of leave under FMLA. For additional information on the use of FMLA, see Chapter 5.

#### **6-7. VLTP for Maternity and Paternity Purposes**

- A. Pregnancy is treated as a short-term illness for the purpose of the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program (VLTP).
- B. Employees may not use donated leave to care for or bond with a healthy newborn child, or to care for healthy children in the home.
- C. Employees may apply to become a leave recipient under the VLTP for maternity or paternity related absences including periods when a mother is under doctor ordered bed rest, periods when the mother is incapacitated following childbirth, absences related to medical complications arising from pregnancy or childbirth, or absences to care for a newborn child with a serious health condition.
- D. Donated leave may be substituted retroactively for any period of leave without pay used because of a medical emergency or used to liquidate a debt incurred by an employee for receiving advanced annual or sick leave.

#### **6-8. Adoption and Foster Care**

Employees may use the following leave flexibilities to adopt or foster a child:

- A. Sick leave
  - 1. An employee may use sick leave for:
    - i. Appointments with adoption agencies, social workers, or attorneys;
    - ii. Court proceedings;
    - iii. Required travel;
    - iv. Any periods when the employee is required by the adoption agency or a court to take time off from work to care for an adopted child; or
    - v. Any other activities necessary to complete an adoption;
  - 2. An employee may not use sick leave to bond with or care for a healthy child.
  - 3. An employee, who is fostering a child, can only use sick leave for adoption-related purposes if the employee is adopting the child.
  - 4. An employee who is accompanying a family member to activities related to an adoption is not entitled to use sick leave for adoption.
  - 5. FEMA may request administratively acceptable evidence for the use of sick leave for adoption-related purposes.
  - 6. Upon request, employees must be granted up to 240 hours of advanced sick leave for purposes related to adopting or fostering a child with a serious health condition, or up to 104 hours of advanced sick leave to care for a child with a routine illness, or for medical, dental, or optical appointments.
- B. Annual and Paid leave
  - 1. Annual leave may be used for any purpose relating to adopting or fostering a child.
  - 2. FEMA may advance an employee the amount of annual leave an employee would accrue during the remainder of the leave year.
- C. An employee's entitlement to FMLA leave for adoption or foster care expires 12 months after the placement of the child with the employee.
- D. Voluntary Leave Transfer Program (VLTP)
  - 1. Employees may apply to receive donated leave only in response to medical emergencies (e.g., care of an adopted or foster child with a serious health condition).
  - 2. Donated leave may be substituted retroactively for any period of leave without pay used because of a medical emergency.

## CHAPTER 7: COURT LEAVE

### **7-1. Eligibility and Use of Court Leave**

- A. Court leave is not charged to leave and will not result in a loss of pay to employees who serve as a juror.
- B. If the employee is a party to a suit with only private parties, the employee cannot use court leave, but must use annual leave, credit or compensatory leave, or LWOP.
- C. Court leave must be requested in advance, and a copy of the summons or subpoena must be included in the request. Employees may be required to provide proof of attendance as a juror or witness.
- D. There is no limit on the amount of court leave that may be granted to an employee.
- E. Unless the time or distance involved make it impractical, employees are expected to leave their duty station no earlier than necessary to arrive on time for court service, and to return to work at the end of each day's court service if the employee can return to work at least one hour before the end of the employee's normal tour of duty.
- F. An employee released from jury or witness duty who is required to return to duty during the workday may request annual leave, credit or compensatory time off if available, or LWOP in lieu of returning to duty for the remainder of the workday.
- G. An employee will be charged with AWOL if:
  - 1. The employee is dismissed from jury or witness duty and is directed to return to duty but does not; or
  - 2. The employee's service as a juror or witness is cancelled for the day but the employee does not report to work as scheduled.
- H. For court leave purposes, applicable judicial proceedings includes any trial, action, suit, or other matter before a court, but does not include an administrative proceeding such as an arbitration hearing or a hearing or appeal before the Merit Systems Protection Board, the Federal Labor Relations Authority, or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

### **7-2. Jury Duty**

FEMA's policy is to not seek to have employees excused from jury duty, except for key officials whose services cannot be spared for an extended period of time.

- A. If an employee is on a period of scheduled annual leave when called to serve as a juror, court leave must be substituted and used if the employee is otherwise eligible. Jury duty is considered an "exigency of public business," and annual leave which has been forfeited because of a period of court leave may be restored if it otherwise meets the criteria for restoration (e.g., had

- been scheduled and approved in writing at least three pay periods before the end of the leave year).
- B. When a holiday occurs during the period an employee is called to jury duty or and the employee is normally required to work on the holiday, the employee receives holiday (leave) pay. The employee does not receive holiday premium pay.
  - C. Employees in a non-pay status (LWOP, AWOL, suspension, or furlough) when called for jury duty are not entitled to court leave. An employee must be scheduled for paid leave or normal duty in order to qualify for court leave.

### **7-3. Serving as a Witness**

- A. When an employee is called to appear as a witness, the employee's leave status depends on whether the employee is testifying in an official or non-official status, which party is requesting the employee's testimony, and whether the United States, a State, or local government is a party to the action.
- B. An employee called to testify in an official capacity (i.e., the testimony is related to current or former official duties), or assigned by FEMA to produce official records is in official duty status and does not use court leave, regardless of who the parties are to a case.
  - 1. An employee required to testify in an official capacity on a regular day off must be compensated accordingly.
  - 2. While testifying in an official duty status, an employee is eligible for government travel expenses, including per diem, as appropriate.
- C. An employee called as a witness in a non-official capacity on behalf of a state or local government, or on behalf of any party in connection with any judicial proceeding in which the United States, the District of Columbia, a state, or local government is a party must be given court leave.
- D. If an employee is called to give a deposition in a case which a party in the proceeding is the United States, the District of Columbia, a state, or local government, the employee is entitled to court leave for the time involved in giving the deposition.
- E. An employee appearing in court for a traffic violation is not entitled to court leave in connection with his or her appearance in court as a defendant.
- F. An employee testifying on his or her behalf cannot use court leave and must use annual leave, LWOP, or credit or compensatory time off if available.
- G. If an employee is a party in a suit against the United States, the District of Columbia, a state, or local government, the time the employee spends in preparation for and during trial cannot be charged to court leave, but must be charged to annual leave, LWOP, or credit or compensatory time off if available.

1. Except if an employee is a plaintiff against a Federal agency in a civil action related to, or caused by, a violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the employee-plaintiff prevails in the civil action. Under such circumstances the employee should not be charged with leave and is entitled to official time for court appearances.
  2. If the employee-plaintiff does not prevail in such a civil rights action, any related absences must be charged to annual leave, LWOP, or credit or compensatory time off if available.
  3. Until the conclusion of the civil rights action, the leave status for an employee-plaintiff must tentatively be recorded as annual leave, accrued credit or compensatory leave, or LWOP.
- H. An employee called as a witness in a nonofficial capacity in a judicial proceeding involving only private parties is not entitled to court leave and must use annual leave, credit or compensatory leave, or LWOP for such appearances.
- I. An employee who is not summoned as a witness, but who appears before a court voluntarily and requests to testify is not entitled to court leave.
  - J. If an employee is on a period of scheduled annual leave when called to serve as a witness, court leave must be substituted and used if the employee is otherwise eligible. Serving as a witness service is considered an "exigency of public business," and annual leave which has been forfeited because of a period of court leave may be restored if it otherwise meets the criteria for restoration (e.g., had been scheduled and approved in writing at least three pay periods before the end of the leave year).
  - K. Employees do not receive court leave to serve as a witness on a regular day off (i.e., if the employee is on a compressed work schedule).
  - L. When a holiday occurs during the period an employee is called to serve as a witness and the employee is normally required to work on the holiday, the employee receives holiday (leave) pay. The employee does not receive holiday premium pay.
- M. Employees in a non-pay status (LWOP, AWOL, suspension, or furlough) when called to serve as a witness are not entitled to court leave. An employee must be scheduled for paid leave or normal duty in order to qualify for court leave.

#### **7-4. Court or Witness Fees**

- A. If a jurisdiction provides compensation or fees to jurors or witnesses to help make up for lost wages as a result of serving as a juror or witness and the employee uses court leave or is in an official duty status, the employee must collect any such compensation for their service and turn it in to FEMA. An employee who neglects to collect the fees for jury service will be indebted to FEMA.

- B. If a jurisdiction reimburses jurors or witnesses for costs associated with serving as a juror or witness (i.e., meals, parking, or transportation), the employee is entitled to retain any such reimbursements.
- C. An employee appearing as a witness in a nonofficial capacity in a judicial proceeding involving only private parties is entitled to retain any fees or expenses associated with such appearances.
- D. If an employee is in a non-pay status (i.e., LWOP, AWOL, suspension, or furlough) while serving as a juror or witness, the employee is entitled to retain all forms of compensation associated with service as a juror or witness.

#### **7-5. Court Leave and Other Leave Categories**

- A. If an employee is on a period of scheduled annual leave when called to serve as a juror or witness, court leave must be substituted and used if the employee is otherwise eligible. Jury duty or witness service is considered an “exigency of public business,” and annual leave which has been forfeited because of a period of court leave may be restored if it otherwise meets the criteria for restoration (e.g., had been scheduled and approved in writing at least three pay periods before the end of the leave year).
- B. Employees do not receive court leave to serve as a juror or witness on a regular day off (i.e., if the employee is on a compressed work schedule).
- C. When a holiday occurs during the period an employee is called to jury duty or to serve as a witness and the employee is normally required to work on the holiday, the employee receives holiday (leave) pay. The employee does not receive holiday premium pay.
- D. Employees in a non-pay status (LWOP, AWOL, suspension, or furlough) when called for jury duty or to serve as a witness are not entitled to court leave. An employee must be scheduled for paid leave or normal duty in order to qualify for court leave.

## CHAPTER 8: MILITARY LEAVE

### **8-1. Eligibility**

- A. Full-time permanent employees or non-permanent employees with appointments of one year or more are eligible for military leave.
- B. Employees dishonorably discharged from the military are not eligible for military leave.
- C. Part-time employees with a scheduled tour of duty between 16 and 32 hours per week are eligible for prorated military leave.
- D. Employees with temporary appointments of less than one year are not eligible for military leave. However, supervisors must approve requests from any employee servicing in one of the uniformed services to use annual leave, compensatory time off, LWOP, Absent-US to complete an obligation to the military.

### **8-2. Use of Military Leave**

- A. An employee is entitled to time off without a loss of pay for certain types of active or inactive duty in the National Guard or as a Reserve of the Armed Forces (see 5 U.S.C. § 6323).
- B. Employees should give advanced written or verbal notice to their supervisors according to their office procedures when called for military duty. If a military necessity prevents giving advance notice or giving advance notice is otherwise impossible or unreasonable, advance notice of military duty is not required. However, to use military leave (regular or emergency), the employee must provide the supervisor with a copy of the military orders, annual drill schedule, or other documentation identifying the dates of the military obligation.
  - 1. Employees must provide advance notice, but the failure to do so should not result in a denial of the leave request for military duty. However, management can require employees to follow certain guidelines in providing advance notice for future deployments.
  - 2. Managers can deny reemployment rights when an employee has failed to provide advance notice of a foreseeable military obligation or when feasible.
  - 3. According to the Department of Labor and the Department of Defense, advance notice means as early as possible or feasible, with a recommendation that notice should be given at least 30 days in advance.
- C. Military leave is charged in 1 hour increments. Military leave may only be charged for hours that the employee would otherwise have worked for FEMA in a pay status.

- D. Military leave cannot be charged for regular days off or holidays. When a holiday occurs during a period of military leave, the employee will not be charged for military leave, but will receive holiday leave for the holiday.
- E. Employees may not be advanced annual or sick leave during a period of active military duty.
- F. Employees serving on active military duty cannot perform work for FEMA or receive compensation for such work during the period of active duty.

### **8-3. Accumulation and Charging of Military Leave**

- A. Full-time employees receive 120 hours of military leave per fiscal year. Military leave is not accrued during the year, eligible employees are credited with the full 120 hours of military leave on the first day of employment and then at the start of each fiscal year on October 1.
- B. Employees may carry over a maximum of 120 hours of military leave into the next fiscal year. Eligible employees may use up to 240 hours of military leave in any given fiscal year. If an employee's military orders require service that extends across fiscal years, an employee has the potential to use up to 360 hours of military leave in a calendar year.
- C. Employees are not required to return from military duty to a civilian position before using military leave earned during a new fiscal year.
  - 1. Any new military leave must be associated with military duties.
  - 2. For service of 30 days or less, the employee must report to work no later than the first regularly scheduled work period on the first full calendar day after completion of service or as soon as possible after an 8 hour period if reporting (see 38 U.S.C. § 4312(e)(1)(A)(i) and (ii) and (B); 5 C.F.R. § 353.205(a)).
  - 3. For service of 31 to 180 days, employees must submit an application for reemployment no later than 14 days after completion of the service, or if impossible, the next full calendar day when submission is possible (see 38 U.S.C. § 4312(e)(1)(C); 5 C.F.R. § 353.205(b)).
  - 4. For service of 181 days or more, the employee must submit an application no later than 90 days after the completion of the service (see 38 U.S.C. § 4312(e)(1)(D); 5 C.F.R. § 353.205(c))
- D. The amounts of military leave accrued by part-time employees are pro-rated according to their scheduled tour of duty.
- E. Absences for military duty in excess of an employee's available military leave may be charged to annual leave, compensatory time off, or LWOP at the request of the employee. In such circumstances, if an employee does not specify a paid leave category, the employee will be placed in a LWOP status.

1. Supervisors must grant an employee's request to use accrued annual leave, compensatory time, or LWOP for absences for military duty in excess of available military leave.
2. Supervisors must grant an employee's request to use sick leave for absences for military duty in excess of available military leave, but only to the extent that the sick leave request complies with statutes, regulations, and FEMA policy on the use of sick leave.
3. Supervisors cannot require employees to use accrued leave to cover his or her absence in excess of the employee's available military leave.

#### **8-4. Military Leave (Regular)**

- A. Regular military leave allows employees to participate in active duty, active duty training, and inactive duty training. Inactive duty training is authorized training performed by members of a Reserve component not on active duty and performed in connection with the prescribed activities of the Reserve component.
- B. Employees using annual leave or compensatory time off during applicable periods of military duty may be entitled to their full civilian pay, as well as their military pay if they meet the requirements of 5 U.S.C. § 6323. Generally, if an employee chooses to use his or her military leave, then the employee's civilian pay will be reduced by the amount of military pay the employee receives for military leave.

#### **8-5. Military Leave (Emergency)**

- A. Eligible employees may receive up to 22 workdays of military leave per calendar year for emergency duty ordered by the President, the Secretary of Defense, or a State Governor. Supervisors must grant leave for absences due to military obligations.
- B. The 22 workdays of emergency military leave is in addition to the 15 workdays of regular military leave.
- C. Emergency leave is provided to employees who perform military duties in support of civil authorities in the protection of life and property, or who perform full-time military service in response to a contingency operation (see 5 U.S.C. § 6323(b) and 10 U.S.C. § 101(a)(13)). Contingency operations are military operations that:
  1. Are designated by the Secretary of Defense as an operation in which members of the Armed Forces are or may become involved in military actions, operations, or hostilities against an enemy of the United States or against an opposing military force; or
  2. Results in the call or order to, or retention on, active duty of members of the uniformed services under 10 U.S.C. § 688, 12301(a), 12302, 12304,

12305, 12406; 10 U.S.C. Chapter 15; or any other provision of law during a war or during a national emergency declared by the President or Congress.

- D. Employees will have their civilian pay reduced by any military pay received during periods of emergency military leave. However, an employee may choose not to take military leave and instead use annual leave, compensatory time off, or sick leave in order to retain both civilian and military pay.

## CHAPTER 9: HOME LEAVE

### **9-1. Earning Home Leave**

- A. Home leave is earned in the very limited situation where an employee is on a foreign duty assignment for the specific purpose of visiting the United States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, or the territories or possessions of the United States.
- B. Home leave is earned in addition to annual and sick leave.
- C. Employees begin earning home leave on the date of the employee's arrival at a duty post outside of the United States, or on the date of entrance on duty when recruited abroad.
- D. Employees stop earning home leave on the employee's date of departure from the duty post outside of the United States for separation or reassignment in the United States, or the date of separation if the employee separates when abroad, whichever occurs first.
- E. Employees will earn home leave while on a foreign duty assignment including periods of:
  - 1. Absence in a non-pay status up to 2 workweeks (80 hours) within each 12 month service period abroad;
  - 2. Authorized leave with pay;
  - 3. Time spent in the United States Armed Forces which interrupts service abroad (but only for eligibility, not leave-earning purposes, see section 9-1.G.6.); and
  - 4. A period of detail.
- F. Home leave is earned in daily units and will be credited to an employee's leave account in multiples of one day increments (based on an 8 hour day).
- G. For each 12 months of service abroad, an employee earns home leave at the following rate:
  - 1. 15 days for appointments or positions FEMA requires the incumbent to accept assignments anywhere in the world as the needs of FEMA dictate;
  - 2. 15 days for employees serving with a United States mission to a public international organization;
  - 3. 15 days for serving at foreign posts which FEMA pays a foreign or non-foreign (but not a tropical) differential of 20 percent or more;
  - 4. 10 days for posts not covered by 1, 2, or 3, and which FEMA pays a foreign or territorial (but not a tropical) differential of at least 10 percent but less than 20 percent;
  - 5. 5 days for posts not included in 1, 2, 3, or 4.

6. 0 days for employees who would earn home leave according to 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5, but whose service is interrupted by a tour of duty in the Armed Forces for the duration of the tour abroad.
- H. Home leave may accumulate to a maximum of 45 days.
  - I. For an employee whose foreign duty assignment is interrupted by a tour of duty in the Armed Forces of the United States will not accrue home leave during the period of active military service.
  - J. When an employee returns to a position in the United States, any unused home leave is held in abeyance. If the employee receives another foreign duty assignment, the unused home leave will be recrated.
  - K. All unused home leave is forfeited when an employee has a break in Federal service of more than 90 calendar days.

## **9-2. Use of Home Leave**

- A. An employee must complete a basis service period of 24 months of continuous creditable service outside of the United States before using home leave. To use home leave, an employee must be expected to return to the foreign duty assignment after a period of home leave. An employee cannot terminate a foreign duty assignment while on home leave.
- B. Home leave may not be the basis for terminal leave or a lump sum payment upon separation from FEMA or the Federal Service.
- C. Home leave is approved at the discretion of the official responsible for authorizing leave for the employee.
- D. The minimum charge for home leave is 1 day and home leave is charged in 1 day increments.
- E. Home leave can only be used to visit United States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, or the territories or possessions of the United States.
- F. Home leave may not be charged for holidays, regular non-workdays, and non-workdays authorized by administrative order.
- G. Home leave may be used in conjunction with annual leave, compensatory time off, or leave without pay.
- H. An employee cannot substitute annual leave for periods previously charged to home leave to avoid forfeiture of annual leave at the end of the leave year.
- I. The granting of home leave does not entitle the employee to payment or reimbursement of travel or transportation expenses.

**9-3. Refund of Home Leave**

- A. An employee who does not return to service abroad after a period of home leave, or after the completion of an assignment in the United States is indebted for the used home leave.
- B. An employee can satisfy a debt due to used home leave by:
  1. A charge against the employee's annual leave;
  2. A charge against any final salary payments;
  3. A charge against any other financial assets administered by the Federal government; or
  4. Reimbursing FEMA for the monetary value of the used home leave.
- C. A refund for this indebtedness is not required if:
  1. The employee completes more than six months of service in an assignment in the United States following the period of home leave;
  2. When FEMA determines that the employee's failure to return was due to compelling personal reasons of a humanitarian or compassionate nature, such as issues involving physical or mental health, or circumstances over which the employee has no control; or
  3. FEMA determines that it is in the public interest to not return the employee to an overseas assignment.

## CHAPTER 10: EXCUSED ABSENCE

### **10-1. Purpose of Excused Absences**

Employees may be excused from performing their regular duties for certain activities which are considered to be in the interest of the Government. Absences may also be granted in certain other special circumstances, such as hazardous weather conditions. The administrative leave categories described in this Chapter are the only allowable administrative leave categories. Employees shall record their time during such absences as either the appropriate administrative leave category or official time according to the policies established by this Chapter.

### **10-2. Time-Off Awards**

A Time-Off Award (TOA) is an excused absence granted to an employee to be used without charge to leave or loss of pay in recognition of individual or group contributions or accomplishments. (See FEMA Manual 255-4-1, Employee Awards and Recognition, for more information on the process and limits for granting Time-Off Awards).

- A. TOAs must be granted and used in one hour increments.
- B. TOAs must be scheduled and used within 26 pay periods from the date the TOA was awarded. After the 26<sup>th</sup> pay period, any unused time off will be automatically forfeited and may not be restored or otherwise substituted.
- C. TOAs have no effect on annual leave carryover limitations.
- D. TOAs cannot be converted into cash payments under any circumstances (5 C.F.R. 451.104(f)).
- E. If an employee separates from FEMA or the Federal service before using all time-off hours, any unused time off will be forfeited.
- F. If an employee transfers to or from another DHS Component, any available TOAs will be honored at the employee's new position. FEMA will not transfer TOAs to or from other Federal agencies.
- G. TOA's shall not be granted to create the effect of a holiday or treated as administrative excusals or leave (i.e., granting the entire organization or office a TOA to be used on a specific day).

### **10-3. Voting**

FEMA's policy is to encourage employees to exercise their voting rights and permits a limited amount of excused absence for voting.

- A. Employees are not allowed administrative leave for voting by absentee ballot. Most states allow absentee voting for both primary and general elections. Employees are responsible for knowing the election laws for their state.

- B. Employees must request administrative leave for voting or registering to vote in advance.
- C. As a general rule, where the polls are not open at least 3 hours either before or after an employee's regular hours of work he or she may be granted an amount of administrative leave which will permit him or her to report for work 3 hours after the polls open or leave work 3 hours before the polls close, whichever requires the lesser amount of time off.
- D. Under exceptional circumstances, where it is necessary to enable the employee to vote, a greater amount of administrative leave may be granted, but not to exceed a full day. These exceptions must be noted under "Other Leave" on FEMA WebTA and approved by the supervisor in advance.
- E. If an employee's voting place is beyond a normal commuting distance and voting by absentee ballot is either not permitted or not possible, the employee may be granted a maximum of one workday to make the trip to the voting place to vote at the discretion of the supervisor. If more than one workday is needed the employee may request annual leave, compensatory time off, or LWOP for the additional period of absence. Under such circumstances employees must request administrative leave at least seven calendar days in advance and provide administratively acceptable documentation that demonstrates the employee is not permitted to vote absentee.
- F. Where employees vote in jurisdictions that require registration in person, administrative leave may be granted under the same conditions as administrative leave for voting. Administrative leave may not be granted if registration can be accomplished on a non-work day and the place of registration is within a reasonable one day round trip travel distance of the employee's place of residence.
- G. Employees who take time off to participate in other electoral activities, such as serving as election officers, precinct inspectors or clerks, or poll workers may not be granted administrative leave for these activities. Any time spent during regular duty hours for these activities must be charged to annual leave, compensatory time, credit hours, or LWOP if granted.

#### **10-4. Absences to Take Examinations**

Employees taking noncompetitive civil service examinations for positions in FEMA, examinations established by operating units to determine qualifications for promotion, or competitive examinations to qualify for competitive status in the positions which they hold in FEMA may be granted administrative leave for the time necessary to take the examination, including the time it takes the employee to travel to and from the examination site, if that site is not the employee's normal duty station.

Supervisors may grant administrative leave for the time necessary to take other examinations (e.g., a CPA exam, bar exam) which are directly related to the employee's current or prospective duties within FEMA.

#### **10-5. Absences for Job Required Medical Examinations**

An employee may be granted administrative leave to take a medical examination officially required in connection with the employee's continued employment with FEMA.

#### **10-6. Immediate Treatment of On-the-Job Injuries**

An employee injured on-the-job may be granted administrative leave for an initial examination and for immediate treatment by a physician of the employee's choice on the day of the injury. Where local treatment is not available, or for employees who are duty stationed outside the continental United States, an employee may be excused for a reasonable period for travel to and from the nearest medical facility for necessary treatment.

#### **10-7. Changes in Tour of Duty During Disasters**

During disasters, some employees may be required to immediately change their tour of duty hours. The FEMA Administrator may authorize up to one day of administrative leave for employees who are required to change their normal duty hours to prepare for or execute emergency response or recovery assignments.

For example, an employee with a normal tour of duty of Monday through Friday, 8:30 am to 5:30 pm, is given an emergency assignment on Tuesday from 7:00 pm to 7:00 am through the rest of the week. On Thursday at noon, the emergency is cancelled and the employee is told not to report to the emergency assignment, but to report back to his or her normal workplace at 8:30 am on Friday. The employee may be granted administrative leave for the Thursday, so the employee does not suffer a loss of leave or pay due to the emergency assignment.

#### **10-8. Emergency or Hazardous Weather Conditions**

Administrative Leave may be granted, subject to the restrictions found in FEMA's Telework and CORE Manuals, due to hazardous weather conditions or other emergencies.

- A. When weather or emergency conditions result in OPM announcing a delayed arrival, non-emergency employees will be excused without charge to leave or loss of pay for the period from normal arrival time at work until the revised expected arrival time at work. Employees who arrive later than their expected arrival time will be charged annual leave or LWOP for the additional period of absence from work. Tardiness beyond the expected arrival time may be excused at the discretion of the leave-approving official if the employee made a reasonably diligent effort to arrive at work on time. Employees on previously approved scheduled leave for the entire day remain in the same leave status

and are not granted excused absence for the period from their normal departure time to the revised arrival time.

- B. When weather or emergency conditions result in OPM announcing an early dismissal in which employees will be dismissed a set period of time earlier than their normal departure times. Employees who are in a duty status at the time an early dismissal is announced will be excused without charge to leave or loss of pay for the remainder of the work day, even if they were scheduled to take leave later in the day.
  - 1. Employees who are in a duty status at the time an early dismissal is announced but leave before their authorized dismissal with supervisor approval (but not due to a hardship) shall be charged annual leave or LWOP for the remainder of the scheduled workday.
  - 2. Employees who fail to report to work before the authorized early dismissal shall be charged annual leave or AWOL for the entire workday.
  - 3. Employees on previously approved leave shall continue to be charged for leave for the entire workday.
  - 4. Employees scheduled to return from leave after an early dismissal is announced but before their authorized dismissal, shall continue to be charged with leave until their dismissal time. Absence after the dismissal time shall be charged as excused absence even if the employee is scheduled to take leave later in the day.
  - 5. Employees scheduled to report to work after an early dismissal is announced may be granted excused absence for the remainder of the workday even if they were scheduled to take leave later in the day.
- C. When a weather or emergency conditions results in the closing of all or part of FEMA's activities, employees who work in the offices affected by the closing may be granted administrative leave, subject to the policies detailed in this Section, FEMA's Telework Manual (see Telework Manual, 123-9-1) and CORE Manual (see CORE Manual, 252-11-1).
  - 1. Employees on pre-approved paid leave on a day when a FEMA office is closed will not have their leave cancelled and granted administrative leave. In such cases, employees will remain in their pre-approved leave category. Employees on LWOP pending disability, in receipt of workers' compensation, military leave, on suspension, or in a non-pay status on the workday immediately before and the first workday after the closure will also not be granted administrative leave.
  - 2. If a FEMA facility is closed due to inclement weather or other emergencies, COREs who would normally work at that location will be directed to work at an alternate work location or their telework site if they have a current telework agreement. In such circumstances, COREs will only be granted administrative leave if an emergency affects their alternate or telework location (*i.e.*, loss of power, loss of heat, loss of internet connectivity, etc.).

3. Unscheduled telework is incorporated into FEMA's emergency preparedness operations to maintain productivity and help ensure the safety of the Federal workforce and the public.
  - a. When a FEMA facility is open, but employees are given the option of unscheduled annual leave, LWOP, or telework, the following procedures apply:
    - i. Emergency Employees must report for duty as directed unless they are telework ready and permitted to telework by their supervisors.
    - ii. Non-Emergency Employees shall report to work or notify their supervisors in advance if they intend to take unscheduled leave.
    - iii. Non-Emergency Telework Ready Employees must report to work, commence telework, or request unscheduled leave.
  - b. When a FEMA facility is closed employees will be granted administrative leave for the number of hours they were scheduled to work unless they are covered by one of the following categories:
    - i. Emergency Employees must report for duty as directed unless they are telework ready and permitted to telework by their supervisors.
    - ii. Non-Emergency Telework Ready Employees who are already scheduled to telework or who are directed by FEMA to perform unscheduled telework must telework the entire work day. If directed to telework, such employees may request the use of annual leave, compensatory time off, credit hours, or sick leave, as appropriate; leave without pay; their flexible work schedule day off or revision of their work hours under flexible work schedules.
    - iii. COREs will be directed to work at an alternate work location or at their approved telework site if they have a current telework agreement.
4. Supervisors may excuse telework ready employees from work and grant annual or administrative leave, as appropriate, when an emergency adversely affects an employee's telework site (e.g., disruption of electricity, loss of heat, loss of connectivity, etc.), or if the teleworker faces a personal hardship that prevents him or her from teleworking effectively. Dependent care needs do not ordinarily entitle a teleworker to administrative leave; annual leave will be granted as appropriate.

#### **10-9. Veterans Attending Funeral Services**

An employee who is a veteran of a war, a veteran of a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge has been authorized, or a member of an honor or ceremonial group of an organization of those veterans, may be granted administrative leave for the time necessary, not to exceed 4 hours in any one day, to participate as an active pallbearer, a member of a firing squad, or a guard

of honor in a funeral ceremony for a member of the Armed Forces whose remains are returned from abroad for final internment in the United States (5 U.S.C. 6321).

#### **10-10. Funerals of Immediate Relatives in the Armed Forces**

- A. An employee is entitled to up to 3 days of administrative leave to make arrangements for, or attend the funeral or memorial service of a family member who died as a result of wounds, disease, or injury incurred while serving as a member of the Armed Forces in a combat zone (5 U.S.C. 6326).
- B. The 3 days must be within the employee's established tour of duty, including regularly scheduled overtime. The 3 days need not be taken on consecutive days, but the employee must provide a justification for use of funeral leave on nonconsecutive days.

#### **10-11. Attending Funerals of Fellow Federal Law Enforcement Officers**

A Federal law enforcement officer or a Federal firefighter may be excused from duty to attend the funeral of a fellow Federal law enforcement officer or Federal firefighter who was killed in the line of duty. When an employee is excused from duty, attendance at such a memorial service shall be considered to be an official duty of the officer or firefighter (5 U.S.C. 6328).

#### **10-12. Return from Active Military Service**

- A. Employees who are members of the National Guard or Reserves that are called to active duty in support of the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) (formerly the Global War on Terrorism) are entitled to 5 days of administrative leave upon their return from active duty. The entitlement applies to all employees, regardless of whether they are deployed overseas or stateside. The 5 days of excused absence are prorated for employees on uncommon tours of duty (see Executive Order 13223).
- B. Employees must have been on active duty in support of OCO for at least 42 consecutive days to be eligible for leave.
- C. Employees may not be granted more than 5 days of administrative leave in a 12 month period. The 12 month period begins on the first day of the excused absence and ends 365 days later.
- D. The 5 days of leave must be used for a continuous period immediately upon an employee's return to civilian duty.
- E. The 5 days of leave must be granted as soon as an employee reports back for civilian duty or notifies FEMA of an intent to return to civilian duty.
- F. The 5 days of leave may not be "banked" for use at a future time.

G. Employees who separate prior to being granted the excused absence for this purpose do not have an entitlement to payment for any time not granted.

#### **10-13. Notice Period Preceding a Reduction in Force**

Employees who have received a general or specific notice of reduction in force may be granted administrative leave to attend interviews for other prospective positions within FEMA or another DHS component during the notice period. If administrative leave is granted, the amount of administrative leave is limited to the duration of the scheduled interview. Administrative leave may not be granted for any travel associated with attending an interview.

#### **10-14. Health and Fitness Programs**

To the extent FEMA has a current health and fitness program policy (FD 119-6, Employee Physical Fitness Program, February 1, 2012), supervisors may, at their discretion, grant limited leave for participation subject to the provisions of that policy.

#### **10-15. Blood Donations**

Employees who donate blood, including platelet donations, to the Red Cross, local hospitals, blood banks, or similar nonprofit organizations, may be granted administrative leave of up to 4 hours, once every three months. The 4 hours includes the time required to travel to and from the donation center, and to actually give the donation. If the employee is not accepted for blood donation, only the time necessary for the trip to and from the blood center is allowed as an excused absence. Time in excess of four hours may be granted at the employee's request as annual leave, sick leave, compensatory time off if available, or LWOP.

#### **10-16. Bone Marrow and Organ Donations**

- A. An employee is entitled to up to 30 days of leave per calendar year in addition to annual leave, sick leave, LWOP, or any other applicable leave categories available to an employee for organ donation and recovery.
- B. An employee is entitled to up to 7 days of leave per calendar year in addition to annual leave, sick leave, LWOP, or any other applicable leave categories available to an employee for bone marrow donation and recovery. An employee may not be excused for bone marrow donation for their own future use.
- C. With supervisory approval, employees may use annual leave, sick leave, advanced annual or sick leave, accrued compensatory or credit time off if

- available, or LWOP for additional recovery time in excess of the 30 days for organ donation or 7 days for bone marrow donation.
- D. Supervisors may approve, at their discretion, short periods of annual or sick leave for employees to participate in screening activities to become potential bone marrow or organ donors.
  - E. Leave for bone marrow or organ donation, but not screening activities, is a separate category of leave that is in addition to annual and sick leave.

#### **10-17. Absence to Perform Community Service**

Employee absence to perform community or other voluntary service should be charged to annual leave, compensatory time off if available, credit hours if available, or LWOP. However, in some rare circumstances it may be appropriate to grant employees administrative leave to participate in community service activities if:

- 1. It is directly related to FEMA's mission;
- 2. It is officially sponsored or sanctioned by the FEMA Administrator (i.e., specific disaster relief activities.);
- 3. It will clearly enhance the professional development or skills of the employee in his/her current position;
- 4. The employee's supervisor determines, in his or her discretion, that the employee's absence will not adversely affect the operations of the office; and
- 5. The absence is brief and is determined to be in the interest of FEMA.

#### **10-18. Administrative Proceedings**

Employees called to testify or provide sworn statements at hearings conducted by the Office of Special Counsel, the Merit Systems Protection Board, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, or arbitrators or grievance examiners appointed in federal agency employment disputes are in official duty status while testifying and no grant of excused absence will be recorded. Employees are in official duty status for the presentation of, but not the preparation for administrative grievances.

#### **10-19. Equal Employment Opportunity Complaints**

- A. A reasonable amount official time must be granted to employees who are pursuing their own EEO complaint against FEMA, or who have been approved to represent other FEMA employees who are pursuing an EEO complaint against FEMA to file a complaint, respond to agency or EEOC requests, and when the employee's presence is authorized or required by the EEOC if otherwise on duty. Employees are considered in official duty status for such activities and no grant of excused absence will be recorded.

- B. The employee and his or her supervisor should discuss the amount of time is reasonable for preparation at least five business days prior to the employee using such time. The employee should notify their supervisor of the need for official time and the amount of time needed for upcoming meetings and hearings with agency officials or with EEOC Administrative Judges within three business days after the meeting or hearing is scheduled to allow the supervisor to schedule for the normal operations of the office.
- C. Official time will not be granted to employees pursuing EEO complaints against other Federal agencies, or serving as representatives in such complaints. Absences related to such complaints must be charged to annual leave, compensatory time if available, or LWOP.

## **CHAPTER 11: LEAVE WITHOUT PAY**

### **11-1. Use of LWOP**

- A. Leave without pay (LWOP) is a temporary non-pay status and absence from duty that may be granted at the employee's request. In most instances, granting LWOP is a matter of supervisory discretion and granting LWOP should be done sparingly, however, there are certain situations when employees are entitled to LWOP (see section 11-2).
- B. LWOP must be requested and approved in advance before taking LWOP. Failure to do so will result in an unauthorized absence.
- C. LWOP may not be charged for periods of unauthorized absence. Absence Without Leave (AWOL) is used for unauthorized absences.
- D. Employees may be required to exhaust available annual leave before being granted LWOP if the absence is primarily for the personal convenience of the employee.
- E. LWOP is charged in 15 minute increments.
- F. LWOP is not ordinarily approved for periods longer than 12 months at a time, except in situations which are in the best interests of FEMA or the U.S. Government, such as Peace Corps volunteers.
- G. LWOP may not be retroactively substituted for annual or sick leave (see 58 Comp. Gen. 661).
- H. Employees may not be granted LWOP for the sole purpose of pursuing or engaging in outside employment. Outside employment includes any position or opportunity, including internships, for which the employee receives a monetary payment.

### **11-2. Required LWOP Situations**

Employees are entitled to LWOP under the following circumstances:

- A. The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA), provides covered employees with an entitlement to a total of up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave (LWOP) during any 12-month period for certain family and medical needs (see Chapters 5 and 6 and 5 C.F.R. Part 630, Subpart L).
- B. The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994, provides employees with an entitlement to LWOP when employment with FEMA is interrupted by a period of service in the uniformed service (see 5 C.F.R. § 353.106).
- C. Executive Order 5396, dated July 17, 1930, provides that disabled veterans are entitled to LWOP for necessary medical treatment.
- D. Employees receiving workers' compensation payments from the Department of Labor must be placed in an LWOP status.

### **11-3. Approving LWOP**

- A. An employee's immediate supervisor may only approve LWOP of up to 80 hours.
- B. Heads of Offices or Directorates must approve any periods of LWOP exceeding 80 hours.
- C. Heads of Offices or Directorates may approve up to six months of LWOP. Extensions of LWOP over six months must be approved by OCCHCO.
- D. If the period of LWOP is more than 30 calendar days, an SF-52 is required to provide documentation in the employee's Official Personnel Folder.
- E. When approving extended periods of LWOP, there should be a reasonable expectation that the employee will return to duty at the conclusion of the period of LWOP.

### **11-4. LWOP for Family Obligations**

Supervisors are allowed, at their discretion, to approve up to 24 hours of LWOP per year for employees to balance the demands of family and work. LWOP for general family care purposes differs from LWOP under FMLA in that LWOP for general family purposes is not an entitlement and must be approved by an employee's supervisor, and there is no right to substitute paid leave for unpaid leave used. An employee may be granted up to 24 hours of LWOP, if other leave is not available to:

- A. Attend school and early childhood educational activities that are directly related to the educational advancement of an employee's child, such as tutoring or attending school board meetings. Schools under this heading refer to elementary and secondary schools, Head Start programs, or child-care facilities.
- B. Accompany child to routine medical, dental, or optical appointments when no sick leave is available.
- C. Accompany elderly relatives to routine medical, dental, optical, or other professional service appointments that are directly related to the care of an elderly relative. LWOP for this purpose is in addition to an employee's entitlement to sick leave for general family care and LWOP under FMLA.

### **11-5. Extended Use of LWOP**

Extended periods of LWOP may be authorized sparingly if the value to FEMA, the U.S. Government, or the serious personal needs of the employee are sufficient to offset the costs and administrative inconveniences involved, including encumbrance of a position, loss of needed services, complication of retention registers for reduction in force, obligation to provide employment at the end of the period of leave, and credit for six months of each year of absence

toward retirement (or full credit for those in receipt of disability compensation). If the circumstances warrant an extended LWOP subject to the approving requirements above, extended periods of LWOP may be authorized for:

- A. Education that contributes to the interests or mission of FEMA;
- B. Recovery from illness or disability not of a permanent nature, when continued employment or immediate return to employment might impair the employee's health or the health of other employees; or
- C. If the disability or disease is one for which the employee is being compensated by the Department of Labor under 5 U.S.C. Chapter 81, LWOP in excess of one year may be granted in increments appropriate to the employee's prospects for recovery.

#### **11-6. Effect of LWOP on Employee Benefits**

- A. If an employee is in a non-pay status for an entire pay period, the employee will not earn annual or sick leave for that pay period. Periods in a non-pay status are calculated on a cumulative basis during a leave year. For every 80 hours in a LWOP status, an employee's annual and sick leave amounts will be reduced by the amount of leave the employee would have earned during that pay period.
- B. Employees on LWOP due to a compensable on-the-job injury will not earn annual or sick leave while in a LWOP status.
- C. Employees cannot be paid for a legal holiday if they are in a non-pay status on the workday before and workday after a holiday. Employees who are on extended periods of LWOP may not return to duty for the sole reason of being paid for a holiday.
- D. Employees may continue to receive health insurance under the Federal Employees Health Benefit (FEHB) program for up to 365 days while in a LWOP status. Employees are still obligated to pay their portion of their health premiums while they are in a non-pay status.
- E. Employees covered by the Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) will automatically retain their coverage at no cost for up to 365 days while in a LWOP status. After 365 days, employees will have the option to convert their FEGLI coverage to an individual life insurance policy and pay all premiums.
- F. Periods of LWOP in excess of six months in a calendar year will be deducted from creditable service toward retirement, except for absences for military duty or caused by a compensable on-the-job injury (see 5 U.S.C § 8332(f)).
- G. Employees will not be able to contribute to their Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) during periods of LWOP.
- H. For employees covered by the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), the Federal Government will discontinue contributions, both automatic and matching, to an employee's account.

- I. Unless the LWOP is taken for military duty or as a result of a compensable on-the-job injury, the waiting period for a within grade increase will be extended by the amount of time which exceeds (see 5 C.F.R. § 531.406):
  - 1. Two work weeks if the employee is at step 1, 2, or 3;
  - 2. Four work weeks if the employee is at step 4, 5, or 6; or
  - 3. Six work weeks if the employee is at step 7, 8, or 9.
- J. For more information on the effects of LWOP and other non-pay categories have on salary and benefits see Appendix C.

## **CHAPTER 12: VOLUNTARY LEAVE TRANSFER PROGRAM**

### **12-1. Program Description and Eligibility**

- A. The Voluntary Leave Transfer Program (VLTP) allows eligible employees to donate annual leave or receive donated annual leave from other Federal employees in response to a medical emergency.
- B. A leave recipient must face a substantial loss of income and use or expect to use all of his or her accrued annual and sick leave in response to a medical emergency.
- C. Employees cannot donate leave to an immediate supervisor, any individual in their supervisory or management chain of command, or any other management official within FEMA having an influence or input on personnel actions involving the leave donor.
- D. Employees may not solicit personal donations for leave, directly or indirectly, from other employees.
- E. Employees will not be eligible for the VLTP for any of the following purposes:
  1. Caring for or bonding with a healthy newborn child;
  2. Recuperating from elective or cosmetic surgery; or
  3. Absences related to bereavement.

### **12-2. Application to be a Leave Recipient**

- A. Employees seeking donated leave must submit an application including:
  1. The name, position title, and grade or pay level of the leave recipient;
  2. The reasons why donated leave is requested, including a description of the nature, severity, and anticipated duration of the medical emergency. If the medical emergency is a reoccurring condition, the employee must state the approximate frequency and duration of each reoccurrence;
  3. A copy of the employee's current annual and sick leave balance; and
  4. Certification by the employee's physician(s) or experts attesting to the nature of the medical emergency.
- B. If the employee is unable to complete the application, a personal representative of the employee may prepare and submit an application on the employee's behalf.

### **12-3. Approval**

- A. Employees, or their representative, will submit an application to become a leave recipient to the employee's supervisor of record.

- B. The supervisor of record will review the application to ensure the employee meets the eligibility criteria: the employee will be absent from duty without available paid leave for at least 24 hours or 30% of the employee's average biweekly scheduled tour of duty (for part-time employees or employees with an uncommon tour of duty), and the absence is due to a medical emergency affecting the employee or a covered family member.
- C. The employee's supervisor of record will submit approved applications to OCCHCO. OCCHCO will review the application and notify the employee or representative if the application is approved. If the application is not approved, OCCHCO will state the reason(s) for the disapproval.
- D. Leave donors may only donate leave to an employee after an employee's application is approved.

#### **12-4. Transfer of Annual Leave**

- A. Once an employee is approved to receive donated leave, other FEMA employees may submit a written request to donate a specified number of annual leave hours to an eligible leave recipient.
- B. Transferred annual leave may be used retroactively for periods of LWOP or to liquidate a debt of advanced annual or sick leave associated with the medical emergency.
- C. Usually, FEMA will only transfer donated leave between FEMA employees. However, FEMA will accept leave donations through the VLTP under the following circumstances:
  1. When a family member of the leave recipient is employed by another agency and requests to transfer annual leave to the leave recipient;
  2. When OCCHCO determines that the amount of leave available for transfer from other FEMA employees may not be sufficient to meet the needs of the leave recipient; or
  3. When OCCHCO determines that accepting leave donations from other agencies would further the purpose of the VLTP.

#### **12-5. Donations of Annual Leave**

- A. A leave donor must donate at least one hour of leave and in increments of one hour.
- B. A leave donor can only donate annual leave.
- C. A leave donor may donate no more than one-half of the amount of annual leave he or she will earn during the leave year.
- D. A leave donor who is projected to have leave subject to forfeiture may donate the lesser of one-half of the amount of leave the donor will accrue during the

leave year or the amount of leave the donor is scheduled to accrue until the end of the leave year.

#### **12-6. Use of Transferred Annual Leave**

- A. A leave recipient must use all of his or her annual, sick, or other available paid leave accrued or accumulated before using any transferred leave.
- B. Leave recipients may only use donated leave for the medical emergency stated in the leave application.

#### **12-7. Accrual of Annual and Sick Leave**

An employee using donated leave will continue to accrue annual and sick leave, at the employee's normal rate, until the employee accrues forty hours of annual and sick leave (or in the case of an employee with an uncommon tour of duty, the average number of hours in the employee's weekly scheduled tour of duty). In the case of annual leave, the employee will accrue annual leave to the extent necessary to reduce any indebtedness caused by an advance of annual leave. The accrued annual and sick leave will be placed in a set aside account during the period of the medical emergency. A leave recipient may use such leave after the end of the medical emergency or if all donated leave is exhausted.

#### **12-8. Termination of the Medical Emergency**

The medical emergency ends when:

- A. The leave recipient notifies OCCHCO in writing that the medical emergency no longer exists;
- B. OCCHCO determines, after written notice and opportunity for the leave recipient (or, if appropriate, another person acting on behalf of the leave recipient) to answer orally or in writing, that the medical emergency no longer exists;
- C. OCCHCO receives notice that the leave recipient is approved for a disability retirement; or
- D. The leave recipient separates from FEMA.

#### **12-9. Restoration of Transferred Annual Leave**

- A. When the medical emergency affecting a leave recipient ends, any remaining donated leave shall be restored on a prorated basis to the appropriate leave donors.
- B. Donated leave will not be restored if:
  1. The amount of leave to be restored is less than one hour; or

2. If the leave donor retires, dies, or separates from FEMA before the date OCCHCO is notified that donated leave is eligible for restoration.
- C. The leave donor may elect to receive the restored leave by:
  1. Crediting such leave to the annual leave account for the current leave year;
  2. Crediting such leave to annual leave account effective as of the first day of the first leave year beginning after the date of the election; or
  3. Donating such leave, in whole or in part, to another leave recipient.

#### **12-10. Prohibition of Coercion**

- A. The decision to donate leave must be completely voluntary. An employee may not directly or indirectly intimidate, threaten, coerce, or promise any benefit to any other employee for the purpose of influencing or interfering with any employee's decision to donate, receive, or use annual leave.
- B. For the purpose of paragraph A of this section, the terms "intimidate, threaten, or coerce" includes promising to confer or conferring any benefit (such as an appointment, promotion, or compensation) or effecting or threatening to effect any reprisal (such as deprivation of appointment, promotion, or compensation).

## **CHAPTER 13: TRANSFER AND RECREDIT OF LEAVE**

### **13-1. Transfer of Leave**

- A. When an employee transfers between positions with the same leave system as FEMA, without a break in service, the agency the employee is transferring from shall certify the employee's annual leave account to the employing agency for credit or recharge (see 5 U.S.C. 6306, 5 C.F.R. 630.501, and 5 C.F.R. 630.502).
- B. When an employee transfers between positions with a different leave system than FEMA's, without a break in service, 7 calendar days of annual leave are deemed equal to 5 workdays of annual leave (5 C.F.R. 630.501).
- C. Only annual leave in whole hour units may be transferred between Federal agencies.

### **13-2. Recredit of Sick Leave**

- A. When an employee transfers between positions with the same sick leave system as FEMA, without a break in service, the agency the employee is transferring from shall certify the employee's sick leave account to the employing agency for credit or recharge (see 5 C.F.R. § 630.502(a)).
- B. When an employee transfers between positions with a different leave system than FEMA's, without a break in service, 7 calendar days of annual leave are deemed equal to 5 workdays of annual leave (5 C.F.R. 630.502 (d)).
- C. An employee who has had a break in service is entitled to a recredit to sick leave (without regard to the date of his or her separation), if he or she returns to Federal employment on or after December 2, 1, 1994, unless the sick leave was forfeited upon reemployment in the Federal Government before December 2, 1994 (5 C.F.R. 630.502 (b)).
- D. Only sick leave in whole hour units may be transferred between Federal agencies.

## APPENDIX A: LEAVE AT A GLANCE

The following chart provides descriptions and examples for some of the leave categories available to employees.

Leave	Description	Example
Annual Leave	Paid absence from duty for vacations, rest, relaxation, conducting personal business, sickness and injuries, and family needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Developing a close relationship with an infant or making child care arrangements.</li><li>• Attend the funeral of a friend.</li><li>• Taking your car to be repaired.</li></ul>
Sick Leave	Paid absence from duty for medical, dental, or optical examinations or treatment; incapacitation by physical or mental illness, injuries, pregnancy, or childbirth; preventing the spread of communicable diseases that would jeopardize the health of others while on duty; or adoption-related activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Being incapacitated or recuperating from child birth.</li><li>• Meeting with adoption lawyer.</li><li>• Developing a close relationship with newly adopted child when required by the courts or an adoption agency.</li><li>• Making funeral arrangements or attending a memorial service of a family member.</li><li>• Taking a family member to medical, dental, or optical appointments.</li><li>• Caring for a family member with an illness.</li><li>• Caring for your spouse or partner who is recovering from childbirth.</li></ul>
FMLA	Employees are entitled to 12 administrative work weeks of unpaid leave during a 12-month period, if FMLA is invoked, for birth and care for a newborn; adopting a son or daughter; becoming a foster parent; care of a spouse, son, daughter, or parent with a serious health condition; treatment or care of the employee's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The birth and care for a newborn child.</li><li>• The placement of a son or daughter with the employee for adoption or foster care.</li><li>• The care of a spouse, son, daughter, or parent with a serious health condition.</li><li>• Recovering from a serious health condition.</li></ul>

	serious health condition. Paid leave may be substituted.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responding to a qualifying exigency associated with the employee's spouse, son, daughter, or parent active duty in the military.</li> </ul>
LWOP for Family Needs	Supervisors are encouraged to allow employees to take up to 24 hours of LWOP per year, if the employee exhausts his or her paid leave, to participate in school activities directly related to the educational advancement of their children; accompany their children to routine medical appointments; care for an elderly relative who may require daily care or assistance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent/Teacher conferences.</li> <li>• School sponsored activities such as sports and recreation programs, field trips, class plays, "career day", or other volunteer activities.</li> <li>• Interviewing for a new school/child care facility.</li> <li>• Helping an elderly relative who may require daily care or assistance in making arrangements for housing, meals, telephones, banking service, and other similar activities.</li> </ul>

## **APPENDIX B: HOME LEAVE**

The following chart outlines the number of Home Leave days earned after each month of service abroad based on appointment type.

Months of service abroad	Home Leave Days Earned After Each Month of Service		
	Maximum 15 days	Maximum 10 days	Maximum 5 days
1	1	0	0
2	2	1	0
3	3	2	1
4	5	3	1
5	6	4	2
6	7	5	2
7	8	5	2
8	10	6	3
9	11	7	3
10	12	8	4
11	13	9	4
12	15	10	5

## APPENDIX C: LWOP

The following chart outlines some of the effects that the use of LWOP and other non-pay categories have on salary and benefits.

Topic	Number of Days/Hours in a Non-Pay Status Allowed Without a Penalty	
Initial Appointment Probationary Period	Any non-pay time in excess of 22 workdays extends the probationary period by that number of days.	
Supervisory/Managerial Probationary Period	Any non-pay time in excess of 22 workdays extends the probationary period by that number of days.	
Career Tenure	Any non-pay time in excess of 30 calendar days for each period of absence extends the service date for career tenure by that number of days.	
Leave	<p>If an employee is in a non-pay status for an entire pay period, no annual or sick leave is earned for that pay period. If non-pay time occurs during part of one or more of a full-time employee's pay periods, the employee continues to earn leave until the non-pay time totals 80 hours. Then leave is reduced by the amount the employee earns during a pay period.</p>	
Service Credit for Annual Leave Accrual (advancement to earning 6 and 8 hours per pay period)	6 months of non-pay time is creditable. Advancement to higher leave accrual category is delayed by the amount of non-pay time in excess of 6 months in one calendar year.	
General Schedule Within-grade Increases	<u>Waiting Period</u> For steps 2/3/4- 52 weeks For steps 5/6/7- 104 weeks For steps 8/9/10-156 weeks	<u>Non-pay Time Allowed</u> 2 workweeks (80 hrs for FT employees) 4 workweeks (160 hrs for FT employees) 6 workweeks (240 hrs for FT employees)
Federal Wage System Within-grade Increases	<u>Waiting Period</u> For step 2 - 26 weeks For step 3 - 78 weeks For steps 4/5 - 104 weeks	<u>Non-pay Time Allowed</u> 1 workweek (40 hours for FT employees) 3 workweeks (120 hrs for FT employees) 4 workweeks (160 hrs for FT employees)

Federal Employees Group Life (FEGLI) Coverage	FEGLI Coverage continues without cost to the employee for up to 12 months in non-pay status. Coverage is terminated after employee has been in non-pay status for 12 months. (Previous time in non-pay status counts toward the 12 months if the employee does not return to duty in between periods of non-pay status for at least 4 consecutive months.)
Federal Employee Health Benefits (FEHB) Coverage	Unless the employee cancels or temporarily terminates the enrollment, coverage generally continues for up to 365 days in non-pay status. During periods of LWOP, the employee is liable for his or her full share of the premiums for this period.
Retirement	6 months of non-pay time is creditable service. Service credit is adjusted by the amount of non-pay time in excess of 6 months in one calendar year.



# INTERACTIVE PROCESS

## Accommodation and Compliance: Interactive Process

### Introduction

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires covered employers to provide effective, reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities. To help determine effective accommodations, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), recommends that employers use an "interactive process," which simply means that employers and employees with disabilities who request accommodations work together to come up with accommodations.

According to the EEOC, the interactive process is not always required under the ADA. In many instances, the appropriate accommodation is obvious and therefore it is not necessary to go through a step-by-step process. For example, if an employee who uses a wheelchair requests that his desk be placed on blocks to elevate the desktop above the arms of the wheelchair and the employer complies, an appropriate accommodation has been requested, identified, and provided without the need for a formal process.

However, when an accommodation is not obvious, an appropriate accommodation is best determined through a flexible, interactive process. As part of this process, the EEOC recommends that employers:

- (1) Analyze the particular job involved and determine its purpose and essential functions;
- (2) Consult with the individual with a disability to ascertain the precise job-related limitations imposed by the individual's disability and how those limitations could be overcome with a reasonable accommodation;
- (3) In consultation with the individual to be accommodated, identify potential accommodations and assess the effectiveness each would have in enabling the individual to perform the essential functions of the position; and
- (4) Consider the preference of the individual to be accommodated and select and implement the accommodation that is most appropriate for both the employee and the employer.

JAN offers the following additional information and tips for the interactive process, starting with the accommodation request:

### Step 1: Recognizing an Accommodation Request

The interactive process starts with an accommodation request from an employee with a disability so it is important for employers to be able to recognize a request. According to the EEOC, an individual may use "plain English" and need not mention the ADA or use the phrase "reasonable accommodation" when requesting an accommodation. Therefore, any time an employee indicates that he/she is having a problem and the problem is related to a medical condition, the employer should consider whether the employee is making a request for accommodation under the ADA.

The [EEOC \(Reasonable Accommodation and Undue Hardship \(EEOC Guidance\)\)](#) provides the following examples:

Example A: An employee tells her supervisor, "I'm having trouble getting to work at my scheduled starting time because of medical treatments I'm undergoing." This is a request for a reasonable accommodation.

Example B: An employee tells his supervisor, "I need six weeks off to get treatment for a back problem." This is a request for a reasonable accommodation.

Example C: A new employee, who uses a wheelchair, informs the employer that her wheelchair cannot fit under the desk in her office. This is a request for reasonable accommodation.

Example D: An employee tells his supervisor that he would like a new chair because his present one is uncomfortable. Although t

accommodation. He does not link his need for the new chair with a medical condition.

#### Tips:

- **Err on the side of caution:** If an employer is not sure whether an employee has requested an accommodation, the employer should ask the employee to clarify what is being requested and why.
- **Act quickly:** Once an accommodation request is identified, the employer should respond immediately – unnecessary delays in processing an accommodation request can violate the ADA.
- **Assign responsibility:** Employers should assign at least one person who is responsible for making sure an accommodation request is processed so the request is not lost on someone's desk.
- **Conduct training:** Employers should train all managers and supervisors to recognize accommodation requests and what to do with a request once it is received.

## Step 2: Gathering Information

Once an accommodation request has been received, the employer should gather whatever information is necessary to process the request. Necessary information may include documentation of the disability and need for accommodation. In some cases, the employee's disability and need for accommodation are obvious and no additional information is needed. For example, if an employee who recently started using a wheelchair indicates that he needs a ramp to get into the workplace, the disability and need for accommodation are obvious.

However, in other cases the individual may know that he/she is having difficulty, but may be uncertain about the exact cause or possible solution. For example, if an employee with a non-visible disability indicates she is having trouble completing her work tasks because of her disability, the employer does not have enough information to provide effective accommodations. The employer needs to know what limitations are interfering with job performance and what specific work tasks are at issue.

The employee who requested the accommodation is often the best source of information about the disability and possible accommodations. If the employee cannot provide the necessary information, then medical documentation can be useful. The important thing for employers to remember is not to ask for too much information. Under the ADA, when an employee requests an accommodation and the disability and need for accommodation are not obvious, then the employer can request medical documentation to help determine whether the employee has a disability and needs the requested accommodation and information to help process the accommodation request.

#### Tips:

- **Find out the limitation and problem.** In most cases, to find effective accommodations employers need to know what limitation is causing what problem so this is usually a good place to start.
- **Get information from the employee when possible.** Employees with disabilities are familiar with their limitations and often know what accommodations will work best for them.
- **Remember ADA rules for medical inquiries.** A good policy for employers is to only ask for what is absolutely necessary. Asking for all medical records will rarely, if ever, meet this test.

## Step 3: Exploring Accommodation Options

Once the employer has identified the employee's limitation that is causing a problem and has identified what that problem is, then the employer is ready to explore accommodation options. At this step, employers should be open to new ideas and new ways of doing things. This is the time to brainstorm and consider what might work.

Again, the employee who requested the accommodation is a good place to start so employers should always invite the employee to suggest accommodations. If more accommodation ideas are needed, the employer can ask the employee's medical provider for ideas – in some cases medical professionals are able to suggest effective accommodations. In other cases, they may not be able to suggest ideas, but may be able to say whether ideas under consideration will help overcome the employee's limitations.

And if still more ideas are needed, then the employer should consult with outside resources such as JAN, vocational rehabilitation, rehabilitation engineers, and disability-related organizations. Remember when consulting with outside resources, employers must con

resources.

#### Tips:

- **Keep an open mind.** Accommodations are about doing things differently to help overcome disability-related limitations, so keep an open mind when exploring accommodation options.
- **Invite the employee to suggest accommodations.** The employee who requested the accommodation may have some good accommodation ideas, but may be hesitant to bring them up without being asked to do so.
- **Ask the employee's medical provider for ideas.** Some medical professionals will brainstorm accommodation ideas with employers.
- **Use JAN when needed.** JAN is a free, national resource for employers who are seeking help coming up with accommodation ideas.

## Step 4: Choosing an Accommodation

Once accommodation options have been explored, the employer must choose what accommodation to implement. If there is more than one option, the employer should consider the preference of the employee. However, the employer gets to choose among effective options and can choose, for example, the lowest cost accommodation.

Sometimes employers are not sure whether an accommodation will work and are afraid if they try it out they will be locked in forever. This is not the case – employers are free to try accommodations and stop them if they do not work. One thing employers might want to do when testing accommodations is to make a written agreement with the employee that the accommodation is being tested, how long the test will be, and what will happen if the accommodation does not work. That way, no one is surprised when the accommodation is revisited down the road.

#### Tips:

- **Consider the employee's preference.** Although not required by the ADA, when possible employers should choose the accommodation the employee prefers.
- **Consider a trial period.** When it is not clear whether an accommodation will work, it might be possible to try out the accommodation.

## Step 5: Implementing the Accommodation

Once an accommodation has been chosen, it is time to implement the accommodation. This step is very important to the success of an accommodation. If equipment is involved, then it needs to be properly installed and the employee needs to be trained in its proper use. If the accommodation involves a schedule change or policy modification, then certain managers or supervisors may need to know of the change to effectively implement it. If the accommodation involves an outside service, someone needs to make sure the service is provided promptly and effectively. If the accommodation is a reassignment, then the employee may need time to acclimate to the new job.

#### Tips:

- **Make sure all necessary steps are taken to implement the accommodation.** A good way to do this is to check to see if the accommodation is actually working.
- **Communicate with essential personnel about the accommodation.** Remember ADA confidentiality rules and only let managers and supervisors know about the accommodation if necessary.

## Step 6: Monitoring the Accommodation

An important but often forgotten part of the interactive process is monitoring accommodations after they are in place. In some cases, an accommodation stops being effective for various reasons such as: the employee's limitations change, workplace equipment changes, the job changes, the workplace itself changes, or the accommodation becomes an undue hardship for the employer.

Because changes occur, employers may need to periodically check on the ongoing effectiveness of accommodations. If equipment is involved in the accommodation, someone may need to be assigned to perform maintenance or upgrades as needed. The most important way to monitor accommodations is to encourage ongoing communication. Employees who are receiving accommodations need to understand that they should let their employer know if there are changes or problems with the accommodation and who specifically to contact.

**Tips:**

- **Check on effectiveness.** As things change in the workplace, accommodations may need to also change so employers should periodically check the effectiveness of accommodations.
- **Maintain the accommodation.** Equipment will not function forever without maintenance so when equipment is part of an accommodation, employers need to make sure the equipment is properly maintained.
- **Encourage ongoing communication.** For any workplace issue, ongoing communication is the key to success. The same is true for accommodations – employers should encourage employees to communicate any issues they have with their accommodations.

## Training and Information

- For more training and information on the interactive process, see JAN's Just-In-Time Training Module "[Interactive Process](#)".
- For information on the interactive process in relation to service providers, see [JAN's Interactive Process and Service Providers](#).
- For additional information, see: [Employers' Practical Guide to Reasonable Accommodation Under the Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#) and [Employers' Practical Guide: Reasonable Accommodation During the Hiring Process](#).

## Situations and Solutions:

The following situations and solutions are real-life examples of accommodations that were made by JAN customers. Because accommodations are made on a case-by-case basis, these examples may not be effective for every workplace but give you an idea about the types of accommodations that are possible.



A federal agency recently updated its accommodation policy.

[↓ Read more](#)



An employee submitted an accommodation request for ergonomic chair due to a back injury.

[↓ Read more](#)

## JAN Publications & Articles regarding Interactive Process

### Publications

[Consultants' Corner Articles](#)

[Addressing Requests for Sit/Stand Workstations](#)

[Best Practices for Addressing Requests for Ergonomic Chairs](#)



- 
- [Providing Temporary or Trial Accommodation Solutions](#)
  - [Recertifying the Ongoing Need for Accommodation](#)
  - [Using Third-Party Vendors to Process Accommodation Requests](#)
  - [Why Communication Is Key to the Accommodation Process](#)
  - [Your Accommodation Request Was Denied. What Now?](#)
- 

 [View All Publications](#)

## Articles

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- [Accommodations Beyond Job Performance = Compliance and Inclusion](#)
  - [Changing a Supervisor as an Accommodation under the ADA](#)
  - [Cognitive Impairment and the Interactive Process](#)
  - [Good Deeds Not Punished: Dispelling the Idea of Precedent Setting and the ADA](#)
  - [Managing Accommodations During the Great Return to Office](#)
  - [Mother May I? Must I? Should I?](#)
  - [Out with the Old, In with the New...Supervisor](#)
  - [Providing Temporary Accommodation Solutions](#)
  - [Recognizing an Accommodation Request Under the ADA](#)
  - [Should an Accommodation Request Automatically Trigger FMLA?](#)
  - [Streamlining the Interactive Process When Accommodating Job Applicants](#)
  - [Tell 'Em About It: Educating the Workforce about the ADA & Accommodations](#)
  - [The Use of Sample Forms under the ADA](#)
  - [To Ask, or Not to Ask? – Knowing When to Request Medical Information](#)
  - [What does "Undue Hardship" mean? - A Deconstructive Series for ADA Terminology](#)
  - [What Does Reasonable Mean? – A Deconstructive Series for ADA Terminology](#)
  - [What to Include in Your ADA/Accommodation Toolkit](#)
- 

 [View All Articles](#)

## Blog Posts

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- No Blog Posts available for Interactive Process
- 

 [View All Blog Posts](#)

## Events Regarding Interactive Process

## Upcoming Events

No Upcoming Events for Interactive Process.

 [View All Upcoming Events](#)

## Past Recorded Module

No Past Recorded Modules for Interactive Process.



[Employer Chat](#) 

[Show Reader](#) 

[MyJAN](#) 

[View All Recordings](#)

## Past In-person Training

No Past In-Person Trainings for Interactive Process.

 [View All In-Person Trainings](#)

## Past Exhibit Booths

No Past Exhibit Booths for Interactive Process.

 [View All Exhibits](#)

## Past Webcast Series Training

No Remote Monthly Series Training for Interactive Process.

 [View All Trainings](#)

### [Upcoming Events](#)

### [Past Recorded Module](#)

### [Past In-person Training](#)

### [Past Exhibit Booths](#)

### [Past Webcast Series Training](#)

## Other Information Regarding Interactive Process

### External Links

[California Reasonable Accommodation Package](#)[Cognitive Impairment and the Interactive Process](#)[EEOC's Disability Discrimination](#)[EEOC's Reasonable Accommodation, Establishing Procedures to Facilitate the Provision of](#)[JAN Just-in-Time Module: Interactive Process](#)

### Organizations

[Job Accommodation Network](#)[Office of Disability Employment Policy](#)[Employer Chat](#)[Show Reader](#)[MyJAN](#)

American National Standards Institute

American Society of Safety Professionals (ASSP)

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

Occupational Safety & Health Administration

Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America (RESNA)



**DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
REQUEST FOR REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION**

**Privacy Act Statement**

**Authority:** The Privacy Act of 1974 (Privacy Act), 5 U.S.C. § 552a as amended, requires that you provide FEMA with certain information in order to process a request. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. § 701 as amended, stipulates that Federal agencies must provide reasonable accommodation to qualified individuals with disabilities. Further, Executive Order 13164 mandates that Federal agencies provide written procedures for requesting reasonable accommodations and maintain records in order to monitor the procedure's effectiveness.

**Purpose:** To provide reasonable accommodations to employees and applicants with disabilities according to Executive Order 13164.

**Routine Uses:** The information on this form may be disclosed as generally permitted under 5 U.S.C. § 552a(b) of the Privacy Act of 1974, as amended. This includes using this information as necessary and authorized by the routine uses published in DHS/ALL-033 - Reasonable Accommodations Records System of Records, 76 Fed. Reg. 41,274 (July 13, 2011) and upon written request, by agreement, or as required by law.

**Disclosure:** FEMA's obligation to consider an individual's request for reasonable accommodation begins when the individual makes the request. However, the Request for Reasonable Accommodation form should be filled out as soon as possible following a request. The disclosure of information on this form is voluntary; however, failure to provide the requested information may prevent FEMA from accommodating your request.

1. Applicant's/Employee's Name  Max J Meindl	2. Telephone Number  (202) 374-9426
3. Organization/Office  DHS/FEMA Core	4. Date of Request  03/04/2020

5. Accommodation Requested (Be as specific as possible, e.g., sign language interpreter, or adaptive equipment such as voice recognition/keyboards, screen readers/magnification, etc.):

Medical-telework for a sufficient period during Coronavirus outbreak. At a CDC briefing yesterday, the following was stipulated in part:

Transcript for the CDC Telebriefing Update on COVID-19

Press Briefing Transcript

Tuesday, March 3, 2020

While information so far suggests that most COVID-19 illness is mild, a report out of China suggest serious illness occurs in 16% of cases.

Older people and people with underlying health conditions, like heart disease, lung disease and diabetes, for example, were about twice as likely to develop serious outcomes versus otherwise younger, healthier people. We are particularly concerned about these people given the growing number of cases in the United States as well as those with suspected community spread. This is especially important for people who are older and have underlying health conditions. For seniors, preparedness may also mean making sure you have adequate supplies of routine medications, like medication for blood pressure and diabetes. This is always part of what CDC recommends for preparedness. If you're 65 and older and particularly if you live in areas where there's on going community spread, you need to think about what actions you can take to reduce your exposure.

6. Reason for Request:

I am concerned about exposure to sneezing and coughing here at work and I am requesting a short term (2-6 weeks) reasonable accommodation to medical-telework while this virus makes its way through the population. With a weakened immune system, heart issues and respiratory issues (COPD) and using inhalers, needless to say, I am way beyond concerned. I don't want to seem like a scare monger or get on leaderships bad boy list for requesting an RA, so I don't know what to do at this time. I am very concerned.

7. If accommodation is time sensitive, please explain:

CORONAVIRUS: I am concerned about exposure to sneezing and coughing here at work and was considering requesting a short term (2-6 weeks) reasonable accommodation to medical-telework while this virus makes its way through the population. With a weakened immune system, heart issues and respiratory issues (COPD) and using inhalers, needless to say, I am way beyond concerned. I don't want to seem like a scare monger or get on leaderships bad boy list for requesting an RA, so I don't know what to do at this time. I am very concerned.

8. Applicant's/Employee's Title  Emergency Management Specialist (PDMG)	9. Applicant's/Employee's Signature  <i>Max J Meindl, PMP</i>	10. Date  Mar 4, 2020
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## **MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO REQUEST FOR REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION**

11. Request for Reasonable Accommodation (check one):		<input type="checkbox"/> Granted	<input type="checkbox"/> Interim/Alternate Granted (Provide comments in number 16)
<input type="checkbox"/> Denied (if denied, answer questions in number 13 )			
12. Applicant's/Employee's Name			
13. Request for Reasonable Accommodation Denied Because (May check more than one box):			
<input type="checkbox"/> Accommodation Ineffective		<input type="checkbox"/> Accommodation Would Require Removal of an Essential Function of the job	
<input type="checkbox"/> Accommodation Would Cause Undue Hardship		<input type="checkbox"/> Accommodation Would Require Lowering of Performance or Production Standard	
<input type="checkbox"/> Medical Documentation Inadequate		<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please identify):	
14. Detailed reason(s) for the denial of reasonable accommodation (Must be specific, e.g., why accommodation is ineffective or causes undue hardship):			
15. If the individual proposed one type of reasonable accommodation which is being denied, but rejected an offer of a different type of reasonable accommodation, explain both the reason for the denial of the requested accommodation and why you believe the chosen accommodation would be effective:			
16. Comments			
17. If an individual wishes to request reconsideration of this decision, she/he must take the following steps:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> An employee may appeal directly to his/her Second Level Supervisor. The employee may present additional information in support of his/her request.</li> <li><input type="radio"/> An applicant may appeal directly to the Disability Employment Program Manager of the Office of Equal Rights. The applicant may present additional information in support of his/her request.</li> </ul>			
18. If an individual wishes to file an EEO Complaint, or to pursue MSPB or union grievance procedures, she/he must take the following steps:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> For an EEO complaint pursuant to 29 C.F.R. 1614, contact an EEO Counselor in the Office of Equal Rights within 45 days from the date of this denial of reasonable accommodation; or</li> <li><input type="radio"/> For a collective bargaining claim, file a written grievance in accordance with the provisions of the Collective Bargaining Agreement; or</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Initiate an appeal to the Merit Systems Protection Board within 30 days of an appealable adverse action as defined in 5 C.F.R. 1201.3</li> </ul>			
19. Name Of Deciding Official	20. Signature Of Deciding Official	21. Date	

**1 Copy of this form must be provided to the employee or applicant who made the request.**

**1 Copy of this form must be provided to the Disability Employment Program Manager of the Office of Equal Rights.**

**DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY  
Federal Emergency Management Agency**

**REQUEST FOR WORK SCHEDULE**

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Choose the work schedule you would like to request per guidance in FEMA Manual 106-1-1 by checking the box and entering the required information. Submit the completed form to your supervisor for approval.

**SECTION I: Employee Information**

1. Check one of the following:		<input type="checkbox"/> New	<input type="checkbox"/> Change in Existing Work Schedule
2. Employee Name		3. Organization	4. Position Title
6. Office Telephone Number		7. Supervisor (Name/Title)	

**SECTION II: Schedule Selection (Select one of the following options)**

Traditional Work Schedule	<input type="checkbox"/> A fixed schedule based on facility business hours.
Compressed Work Schedule (CWS)	<input type="checkbox"/> CWS is an 80-hour biweekly basic work requirement scheduled for fewer than 10 workdays.  <input type="checkbox"/> Flexitour - A schedule where the employee works the normal 8-hour workday, but may select the arrival times within the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. (arrival) and 3:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. (departure).
Flexible Work Schedule (FWS)	<input type="checkbox"/> Maxiflex - A schedule that contains core hours on fewer than 10 workdays in the biweekly pay period. The employee may vary the number of hours worked on a given workday (between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m.) or the number of hours worked each week.

**DUTY HOURS:** Please indicate the arrival and departure times for each day below; complete the duty hours for both weeks, indicating your day(s) off.

<b>WEEK 1</b>		
<b>Monday</b>	_____ a.m. to	_____ p.m.
<b>Tuesday</b>	_____ a.m. to	_____ p.m.
<b>Wednesday</b>	_____ a.m. to	_____ p.m.
<b>Thursday</b>	_____ a.m. to	_____ p.m.
<b>Friday</b>	_____ a.m. to	_____ p.m.
<b>Saturday</b>	_____ a.m. to	_____ p.m.
<b>Sunday</b>	_____ a.m. to	_____ p.m.

<b>WEEK 2</b>		
<b>Monday</b>	_____ a.m. to	_____ p.m.
<b>Tuesday</b>	_____ a.m. to	_____ p.m.
<b>Wednesday</b>	_____ a.m. to	_____ p.m.
<b>Thursday</b>	_____ a.m. to	_____ p.m.
<b>Friday</b>	_____ a.m. to	_____ p.m.
<b>Saturday</b>	_____ a.m. to	_____ p.m.
<b>Sunday</b>	_____ a.m. to	_____ p.m.

Employee's official tour of duty must include a 30-minute uncompensated lunch or meal break.

**SECTION III: Approval**

EMPLOYEE'S SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

SUPERVISORY ACTION:

- Approved (Forward signed form to timekeeper for coding)
- Disapproved (Attached written disapproval justification and maintain in employee file)
- Approved with the following modifications:

SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Change Effective: \_\_\_\_\_

# Certification of Health Care Provider for Employee's Serious Health Condition (Family and Medical Leave Act)

U.S. Department of Labor

Wage and Hour Division



DO NOT SEND COMPLETED FORM TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR; RETURN TO THE PATIENT

OMB Control Number: 1235-0003  
Expires: 8/31/2021

## SECTION I: For Completion by the EMPLOYER

**INSTRUCTIONS to the EMPLOYER:** The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) provides that an employer may require an employee seeking FMLA protections because of a need for leave due to a serious health condition to submit a medical certification issued by the employee's health care provider. Please complete Section I before giving this form to your employee. Your response is voluntary. While you are not required to use this form, you may not ask the employee to provide more information than allowed under the FMLA regulations, 29 C.F.R. §§ 825.306-825.308. Employers must generally maintain records and documents relating to medical certifications, recertifications, or medical histories of employees created for FMLA purposes as confidential medical records in separate files/records from the usual personnel files and in accordance with 29 C.F.R. § 1630.14(c)(1), if the Americans with Disabilities Act applies, and in accordance with 29 C.F.R. § 1635.9, if the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act applies.

Employer name and contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Employee's job title: \_\_\_\_\_ Regular work schedule: \_\_\_\_\_

Employee's essential job functions: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Check if job description is attached: \_\_\_\_\_

## SECTION II: For Completion by the EMPLOYEE

**INSTRUCTIONS to the EMPLOYEE:** Please complete Section II before giving this form to your medical provider. The FMLA permits an employer to require that you submit a timely, complete, and sufficient medical certification to support a request for FMLA leave due to your own serious health condition. If requested by your employer, your response is required to obtain or retain the benefit of FMLA protections. 29 U.S.C. §§ 2613, 2614(c)(3). Failure to provide a complete and sufficient medical certification may result in a denial of your FMLA request. 29 C.F.R. § 825.313. Your employer must give you at least 15 calendar days to return this form. 29 C.F.R. § 825.305(b).

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_  
First \_\_\_\_\_ Middle \_\_\_\_\_ Last \_\_\_\_\_

## SECTION III: For Completion by the HEALTH CARE PROVIDER

**INSTRUCTIONS to the HEALTH CARE PROVIDER:** Your patient has requested leave under the FMLA. Answer, fully and completely, all applicable parts. Several questions seek a response as to the frequency or duration of a condition, treatment, etc. Your answer should be your best estimate based upon your medical knowledge, experience, and examination of the patient. Be as specific as you can; terms such as "lifetime," "unknown," or "indeterminate" may not be sufficient to determine FMLA coverage. Limit your responses to the condition for which the employee is seeking leave. Do not provide information about genetic tests, as defined in 29 C.F.R. § 1635.3(f), genetic services, as defined in 29 C.F.R. § 1635.3(e), or the manifestation of disease or disorder in the employee's family members, 29 C.F.R. § 1635.3(b). Please be sure to sign the form on the last page.

Provider's name and business address: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of practice / Medical specialty: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax:(\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

**PART A: MEDICAL FACTS**

1. Approximate date condition commenced: \_\_\_\_\_

Probable duration of condition: \_\_\_\_\_

**Mark below as applicable:**

Was the patient admitted for an overnight stay in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical care facility?

\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_ Yes. If so, dates of admission:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) you treated the patient for condition:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Will the patient need to have treatment visits at least twice per year due to the condition? \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_ Yes.

Was medication, other than over-the-counter medication, prescribed? \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_ Yes.

Was the patient referred to other health care provider(s) for evaluation or treatment (e.g., physical therapist)?

\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_ Yes. If so, state the nature of such treatments and expected duration of treatment:  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Is the medical condition pregnancy? \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_ Yes. If so, expected delivery date: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Use the information provided by the employer in Section I to answer this question. If the employer fails to provide a list of the employee's essential functions or a job description, answer these questions based upon the employee's own description of his/her job functions.

Is the employee unable to perform any of his/her job functions due to the condition: \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_ Yes.

If so, identify the job functions the employee is unable to perform:  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Describe other relevant medical facts, if any, related to the condition for which the employee seeks leave (such medical facts may include symptoms, diagnosis, or any regimen of continuing treatment such as the use of specialized equipment):  
\_\_\_\_\_

**PART B: AMOUNT OF LEAVE NEEDED**

5. Will the employee be incapacitated for a single continuous period of time due to his/her medical condition, including any time for treatment and recovery?  No  Yes.

If so, estimate the beginning and ending dates for the period of incapacity: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Will the employee need to attend follow-up treatment appointments or work part-time or on a reduced schedule because of the employee's medical condition?  No  Yes.

If so, are the treatments or the reduced number of hours of work medically necessary?  
 No  Yes.

Estimate treatment schedule, if any, including the dates of any scheduled appointments and the time required for each appointment, including any recovery period:

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Estimate the part-time or reduced work schedule the employee needs, if any:

\_\_\_\_\_ hour(s) per day; \_\_\_\_\_ days per week from \_\_\_\_\_ through \_\_\_\_\_

7. Will the condition cause episodic flare-ups periodically preventing the employee from performing his/her job functions?  No  Yes.

Is it medically necessary for the employee to be absent from work during the flare-ups?  
 No  Yes. If so, explain:

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Based upon the patient's medical history and your knowledge of the medical condition, estimate the frequency of flare-ups and the duration of related incapacity that the patient may have over the next 6 months (e.g., 1 episode every 3 months lasting 1-2 days):

Frequency : \_\_\_\_\_ times per \_\_\_\_\_ week(s) \_\_\_\_\_ month(s)

Duration: \_\_\_\_\_ hours or \_\_\_\_\_ day(s) per episode

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: IDENTIFY QUESTION NUMBER WITH YOUR ADDITIONAL ANSWER.**

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**Signature of Health Care Provider**

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Date

PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT NOTICE AND PUBLIC BURDEN STATEMENT

If submitted, it is mandatory for employers to retain a copy of this disclosure in their records for three years. 29 U.S.C. § 2616; 29 C.F.R. § 825.500. Persons are not required to respond to this collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The Department of Labor estimates that it will take an average of 20 minutes for respondents to complete this collection of information, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. If you have any comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, send them to the Administrator, Wage and Hour Division, U.S. Department of Labor, Room S-3502, 200 Constitution Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20210. **DO NOT SEND COMPLETED FORM TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR; RETURN TO THE PATIENT.**