Marketing & Regulatory Programs

HR BROADCAST

Quarter 3 – FY 2015 Issue

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

As you are well aware the work of HR has changed significantly in the past few years and I recognize that change can be difficult. Some of the change was implemented to help manage new systems and some changes were implemented in an effort to improve service delivery to our customers through increased communication and better collective knowledge of customer goals, challenges and priorities. As is the case with any change, some aspects are easier than others; but through it all, HR Managers and Supervisors have set the standard for excellence again and again rising to each challenge put before them. For this reason, I felt the time was right for an HRD Leadership Summit which we held the week of June 1- 5, 2015 at our hub in Raleigh, North Carolina. For the first time ever, over 20 of our HR Supervisors and Managers from across the country were able to meet face to face and get to know one another and talk about where our human resources program is headed.

Day One focused on MRPBS and HR Strategic goals. **Day Two** included a facilitator, Robin Roggenkamp, who led several team exercises on communication and expectations of supervisors/managers. **Day Three** was set aside to interact with several of our customers. We were fortunate to have representatives from VS, AMS, WS, and PPQ join us and provide mission briefs in the morning and an open session in the afternoon with Raleigh Supervisors and Managers.

The theme for the Summit was "**Getting to Yes**" which meant each of us needed to evaluate the situation for our HR program area, and from our perspective. There was no standard response that would fit all situations. Nor did it mean just saying "yes" to everything the customer was requesting. I offered some questions that every HR Manager and Supervisor should ask themselves before raising the issue to HR leadership:

1. Have I collaborated with my colleagues on this issue?
2. What unique facts about the situation make it unusual or out of the norm?
3. Do we have any history or current issues around this topic that would cause concern at the Program level or with the Deputy Administrator's Office, APHIS OA , or the Department?
4. What options or alternatives can I provide to the customer to get them to the "desired outcome" without crossing the legal line?

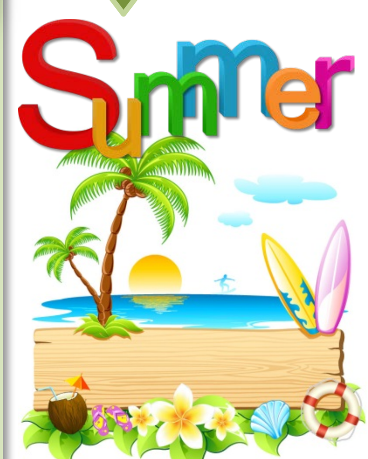
There were several take-a-ways that the HR Managers and Supervisors will be discussing with their staffs in the weeks and months ahead that will enable staffs to provide input as we in HR continue to evolve to remain relevant and meet the ever changing needs of our customers. Innovative contributions to help propel HR forward, working together to achieve success, and providing our customers with the service they expect and deserve is what's needed.

Thank you for all you do. I am proud to serve with you.

Marsha Wiggins,
HRD Director

Inside this Issue:

We hope that the HR Broadcast is meeting your needs and communicating topics of interest, but if there are items you would like to see included in future issues, please contact our HR Broadcast Layout Editor, Christina Furnkranz, at Christina.S.Furnkranz@aphis.usda.gov



Meet the Workplace Resolutions and Wellness Branch!

MEET HR

This month's HRD staff spotlight is on the **Workplace Resolutions and Wellness Branch (WRWB)**. The staff of eight carries out its mission by facilitating positive workplace communications, conflict resolutions, removal of workplace barriers, and providing leadership for the Work-Life-Wellness and Employee Assistance Programs.

There are three main programs positioned within the WRWB: **Collaborative Resolution**, **Reasonable Accommodation**, and **Work Life Wellness**.

<u>Collaborative Resolution Program</u> (CR) is an Early Intervention Program that utilizes Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) techniques to help employees and managers work through conflict situations, and develop skills to help them prevent, manage, and resolve workplace challenges more effectively. The basic services are:
* **Mediations/Facilitated Discussions** * **Conflict Management Training** * **Conflict Coaching** *

<u>Reasonable Accommodation Program</u> (RA) assists employees and supervisors through the Interactive Process to determine the employee's essential job functions; identify the employee's functional limitations in performing those job functions, and identifying potential accommodations. RA also provides training on various topics, including: Medical Confidentiality, Hidden Disabilities, and the Interactive Process as webinars or instructor led, classroom format, upon request.

<u>Work Life Wellness Program</u> (WLW) provides resources and services to assist employees in balancing work and personal lives. The objective of the WLW Program is to encourage employees to generate a healthy attitude and lifestyle and to develop habits that will improve their health and morale, and prevent illness. There are field representatives at HQ, HUBs, and field locations who are trained to provide WLW services at the local, state and regional levels. Resources and services within WLW include: Telework, Transit Incentive, Employee Assistance Program (EAP), Work Life Balance, Fitness, Nutrition, Mental and Emotional Health.

The team members of the Workplace Resolutions Branch look forward to working with you!

Check out our Website and Brochure <u>here</u>:

Charlotte Jones, Branch Chief

Reasonable Accommodations Program
Carol Griffith and David Walton
Work Life Wellness/EAP/Telework/Transit Incentive Programs
Tara Coker
Collaborative Resolution (CR) Program
Lajuan Barnes, Christopher Filmore, Rae Jones, and Deborah Linder

Technology At Work

Persons with disabilities who need program information in alternate formats (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY).

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

*By **Tara Coker** (Tara.L.Coker@aphis.usda.gov, 301-851-2883)*

EAP is a professional counseling and referral service to help APHIS employees with personal and professional problems. It is free, confidential within the limits of the law, and voluntary. EAP can assist you with emotional, family, marital, alcohol or drug use/abuse, relationship problems, and other issues.

Services covered:

- Up to 6 free confidential counseling sessions, per problem. Immediate family members (spouse/ significant other, children living in household) may also use EAP.
- Elder/child care referral services. Information regarding elder or child care resources i.e., summer camps; before/after care; special needs; private schools; adult day care centers; home health care; case management, etc.
- Management consultations. Direct assistance and advice on employee interventions.
- Critical Incident Stress Debriefings. Counseling sessions and debriefings after a critical incident has occurred.
- Employee and Supervisory orientations to EAP services. Group orientations to the EAP contract and the services provided.
- Financial Services - ½ hour free advice per issue, on financial matters.
- Legal Assistance - ½ hour free advice per issue, on legal matters.

Obtaining services:

Call 1-800-222-0364 and identify yourself as an USDA/APHIS employee. You can call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The telephone will be answered by a certified counselor who will ask you several questions about why you are calling (triage). If it is an emergency, you will be directly connected to a counselor. If it is not deemed an emergency, you will be contacted by a counselor within 24 hours, who will begin working directly with you.

If you are calling for elder/child or personal care services, you will be transferred to LifeCare.com after being initially triaged. LifeCare.com will then provide you with elder/child or personal care resources.

For additional information:

If you need more information about these services or experience problems contacting EAP, please contact Tara Coker, EAP Program Manager at (301) 851-2883 or via e-mail at tara.l.coker@aphis.usda.gov. Confidentiality will be maintained.

Employee Wage and Employment Verification
“The Work Number for Everyone”

*By **Laura Frantes** (Laura.L.Frantes@aphis.usda.gov, 612-336-3312)*

Are you buying a house, signing a lease, taking out a loan or perhaps planning a large purchase? You may be asked to provide wage and employment verification as part of a credit or reference check. As a USDA employee, you have access to **same-day** wage and employment verification services though the “Work Number for Everyone”, also known as TALX.

TALX is a national employment verification service available by touch-tone telephone at 1-800-367-2884 or via the web at: http://www.theworknumber.com/Employees/index.asp.

As an employee, it is your responsibility to authorize the release of your information to verifiers. Requesting an authorization code through TALX is as simple as calling their toll-free number or accessing their website and entering in three pieces of information when prompted:

- **The USDA company code (10284)**
- **Your Social Security Number**
- **Your PIN (The month and day of your birth in 4 character format. For example, if June 18 was your birthday, your PIN would be 0618)**

Once you have obtained your authorization code, you will need to provide it, along with your Social Security Number and the USDA company code, to the verifier. The verifier completes the process by calling TALX at 1-800-367-5690 or via the web at: http://www.theworknumber.com/Verifiers/index.asp.

For more information on the “Work Number for Everyone”, click here: The Work Number.

Retirement:
Does Previous Temporary or Intermittent Service Count?

*By **Kristi Carrier** (Kristi.M.Carrier@aphis.usda.gov, 612-336-3313)*

Have you worked for the federal government in a temporary position or in a position with intermittent service, and are wondering if it will have an impact on your retirement eligibility or benefits? Here is a brief overview of how this time is credited for CSRS and FERS employees.

CSRS Employees

If you are a CSRS employee and had temporary or intermittent service before October 1, 1982, you will receive credit for retirement eligibility and annuity computation purposes. However, your annuity will be reduced by 10 percent of the amount of the deposit.

If your temporary or intermittent service was on or after October 1, 1982, you will receive credit for retirement eligibility purposes. However, you will not receive credit for annuity computation purposes unless you pay the deposit. For example, if you are age 55 with 30 years of service and two years of that service was temporary or intermittent after October 1, 1982, you would still be eligible to retire, but your annuity will be computed based on 28 years of service instead of 30 years.

The amount of the deposit is equal to the retirement contributions that would have been withheld, if it had been CSRS service plus interest.

FERS Employees

If you are a FERS employee and had temporary or intermittent service before January 1, 1989, you will not receive credit for retirement eligibility or annuity computation purposes unless you pay the deposit.

If the temporary or intermittent service was on or after January 1, 1989, it is not creditable for any retirement purposes and you cannot pay a deposit to receive credit.

If you think you have eligible temporary or intermittent service you should request a service credit review. The question of whether or not to make the deposit will depend on how it will affect you financially. It may make more sense in some cases to have your annuity reduced rather than pay the deposit. If you decide to pay the deposit, you will need to complete the appropriate form. CSRS and CSRS Offset employees need to complete an SF-2803 and FERS employees need to complete an SF-3108.

You may submit your request for a service credit review by contacting your benefits service provider.
http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/contact_us/downloads/benefits.pdf

Using Up-To-Date Forms

By ***Kristi Carrier*** *(Kristi.M.Carrier@aphis.usda.gov, 612-336-3313)*

Have you ever completed a benefits form just to have it sent back? This can be frustrating and time consuming, especially if you have to have other people sign off on the form too. The Human Resources Office does not want to send these forms back for you to complete again. We are doing it for your protection. When a benefits form makes an update, all previous forms become "obsolete" and unusable. This means the form is not valid unless you are using the most up-to-date edition. In 2011 almost all of the most common benefits forms sent into the Human Resources Office have been updated, including the health, life, TSP, and beneficiary forms.

To ensure you are using the current edition of a form we recommend visiting the OPM website each time you are making a change to print the form you need to complete. To do this, go to www.opm.gov/forms and select "Standard Forms". This will take you to a list of most of the benefits forms you would need to complete during your Federal career. The forms you will not find on the OPM website are related to TSP. To access TSP forms, go to www.tsp.gov and select "Forms & Publications". In addition to using the most up-to-date benefits forms, please read and follow all instructions listed on the form. Following these steps will expedite your request, and give you the best chance of not having to go through the hassle of completing the same form twice.

If you have a question about whether the form edition you are submitting is current, please contact your benefits service provider.

*Supervisors: Please recycle all obsolete forms that you may have on file.

Personal Benefits Statement is now available on the Employee Personal Page

By ***Barb Watry*** *(Barb.J.Watry@aphis.usda.gov, 612-336-3301)*

Every year, the National Finance Center (NFC) generates a Benefits Statement which provides you an overview of all of your federal benefits. This statement is posted on your Employee Personal Page (EPP), and shows your benefits as of January 11, 2015. You may find your Benefits Statement on your EPP at https://www.nfc.usda.gov/epps/index.aspx

In this statement, you will find information on these topics:

- **Annual compensation**
- **Leave balances**
- **Health and life insurance elections**
- **Thrift Savings Plan**
- **Retirement information**
- **Social Security/Medicare deductions**
- **Dental and Vision insurance**
- **Long term care insurance**
- **Flexible Spending Account**
- **The annual deductions listed are the total amounts paid for the 2014 calendar year.**

Please note that the information provided regarding retirement, TSP annuities and length of service dates are estimates only. If you are considering retirement and would like more precise information, please contact your Benefits Specialist at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/contact_us/downloads/benefits.pdf

Federal Employees Retirement and Benefits Webinars

*By **Brian Fleming** (Brian.B.Fleming@aphis.usda.gov, 612-336-3621)*

BENEFITS BUZZ

Whether you are eligible to retire now or are planning to be eligible to retire from federal service, you need to know about your federal retirement and benefits so that you can make decisions and prepare for your financial future. The Benefits Team is offering monthly retirement and benefits webinars for employees covered under the CSRS and FERS retirement systems to provide you information on your retirement plan and benefits. Each webinar is expected to last up to three hours, and will include time for a Q&A session.

<u>NO</u> **REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED,** but you must get approval from your supervisor before attending. There is NO call-in number for these presentations. All audio will only be delivered online. Links to the webinars will be disseminated via email along with directions on how to download the slide handouts for the presentations. Please monitor your email for further information.

For questions, please email Brian Fleming at <u>Brian.B.Fleming@aphis.usda.gov</u>

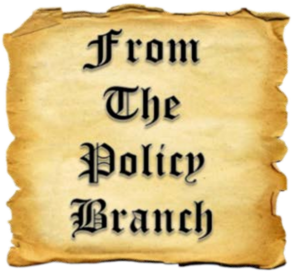
WHEN:

<u>CSRS Employees</u>

Wednesday, June 17, 1:00 p.m. ET/12:00 p.m. CT
Tuesday, July 28, 9:00 a.m. ET/8:00 a.m. CT
Wednesday, August 19, 2:00 p.m. ET/1:00 p.m. CT

<u>FERS Employees</u>

Tuesday, June 30, 9:00 a.m. ET / 8:00 a.m. CT
Wednesday, July 15, 1:00 p.m. ET/12:00 p.m. CT
Tuesday, August 25, 9:00 a.m. ET/8:00 a.m. CT



Performance Plans in place by June 30, 2015

*By **Gwen Montgomery** (Gwen.Montgomery@aphis.usda.gov, 301-851-2928)*

As we move towards the end of the FY 2015 performance year, managers/supervisors are reminded that employee performance plans should have been established and in place by **June 30, 2015**, (90 days prior to the end of performance cycle) in order for employee performance to be evaluated and rated at the end of the performance cycle **(September 30, 2015)**. Steps should be taken to ensure all employees, including new hires, those who have been reassigned or promoted, and employees who are on temporary promotions or details of more than 90 days are covered by appropriate performance plans.

The USDA Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) recently developed a resource document entitled "Making Performance Management a Partnership". This document provides employees with responses to frequently asked questions regarding performance management. This document, along with other performance information is available on the MRP Performance webpage at MRP Performance Management.

Questions may be referred to Gwen Montgomery at 301-851-2928 or via email at Gwen.Montgomery@aphis.usda.gov.

Leave Usage Order

*By **Nella Roberts** (Nella.Roberts@aphis.usda.gov, 301-851-2910)*

The MRP Directive and Human Resources Desk Guide Subchapter 4630, Absence and Leave, Section B – Annual Leave, is being updated to reflect MRP policy on the order of leave usage as a result of the Office of Personnel Management's updated fact sheet on leave restoration. Employees must use Leave in the following order:

1. Use or lose annual leave,
2. Compensatory time off in lieu of overtime pay,
3. Compensatory time off for travel,
4. Time off award and
5. Any other accrued time, e.g., credit hours, annual leave.

Always use sick leave as appropriate. Using use or lose annual leave first prevents leave loss at the end of the leave year. If you choose to use earned time off in a different order and it results in the loss of annual leave at the end of the leave year then leave restoration will not be an option and the leave will be permanently lost. Your RMS/AO staffs have been advised of the policy and are available to answer questions as well as HRO, Minneapolis. As you are planning your summer vacation please remember the 2015 leave usage order policy.

New HRD CTOD Training Liaison Team for AMS

*By **the Center for Training and Organization Development**, 301-851-2947*

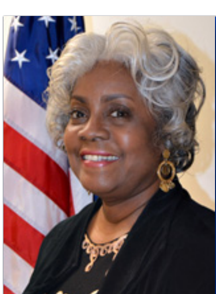
The Center for Training and Organization Development (CTOD) is pleased to introduce **James Alexander** and **Roxanne Baskett**, the two newest members of CTOD, who with **Loretta Gladden**, already a member of HRD CTOD, round out the AMS Training Service Team to provide a full range of training and development services for AMS employees. Together, the new Team has more than 75 years' experience in training and employee development!

James comes to CTOD from the Food Safety and Inspection Service, where he was a trainer and organization development consultant, designing and implementing innovative human capital management programs in the areas of cross-cutting training, virtual leadership, knowledge management, transitional leadership, and human performance improvement. James has a B.A. in Social Research and a M.A. in Planning and Administration from Antioch University; is a graduate of Georgetown University's Organization Development Program; and has certifications in the Conflict Dynamics Profile®, Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i), and the Strength Deployment Inventory.

Roxanne comes to us from the Department of Defense, where she was a training specialist providing learning and organization development solutions. Prior to that, she worked for 10 years at the Transportation Security Administration providing technical and non-technical training, and designing and developing nationwide supervisory and leadership training programs and other organization development initiatives. Roxanne is a certified trainer in Managing Workplace Conflict, a trained *DiSC* facilitator, and a certified Myers- Briggs (MBTI) practitioner. She also is a trained mediator through the University of Houston Law School- Dispute Resolution Center Mediation Program. Roxanne holds a B.A in Psychology and a M.S. in Instructional Technology with a specialization in Human Resources Management.

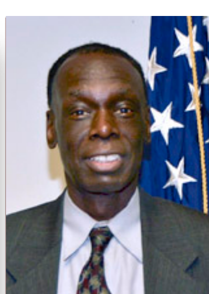
James and Roxanne join training specialist Loretta Gladden, who has over 30 years of experience in designing, developing, and delivering Government and military training and development programs. She currently manages the AMS 360-Degree Leadership Assessment Program, AMS' training policy, and training communications with AMS, and addresses AMS training requests. Loretta is certified in Franklin Covey's 5 Choices to Extraordinary Productivity.

The Team Members collaborate with individual AMS Programs to help them identify non-technical learning and organizational development needs, and appropriate learning opportunities to address those needs.



Loretta Gladden
AMS Units: CA, Dairy, LPS, and NOP

Loretta.Gladden @aphis.usda.gov
301-851-2937



James Alexander
AMS Units: FV, TM, and ST

James.Alexander @aphis.usda.gov
301-851-2920

Roxanne Baskett
AMS Units: OA, CT, and ITS

Roxanne.Baskett @aphis.usda.gov
301-851-2927