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HRDG 4335 - Introduction

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Subchapter 4335

Voluntary Change in Official Duty Station

Introduction

Introduction to Voluntary Change in Official Duty Station

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Note: This Subchapter does **not** apply to bargaining unit members.

Marketing and Regulatory Programs (MRP) is committed to supporting a balance between a family-friendly workplace and a results-focused Agency which expects its mission to be carried out as efficiently and effectively as possible. When employees are faced with significant life events and it is in the Agency's best long-term interest, alternatives to traditional duty station designations may be considered. This is typically referred to as a voluntary reassignment which may be on a permanent or temporary basis.

Introduction For the purpose of this Human Resources Desk Guide (HRDG) Subchapter, "voluntary reassignment" and "voluntary change in ODS" are synonymous. Approval of a voluntary reassignment request, whether temporary or permanent, is not guaranteed.

A new Official Duty Station (ODS), whether temporary or permanent, may be located within the 50 states, U.S. territories or possessions. In cases where a reassignment is requested to a location outside of the 50 states, i.e., a U.S. territory or possession, eligibility for an expanded annual leave ceiling and home leave entitlement must be reviewed by the Leave and Compensation Team, Human Resources Operations (HRO), Minneapolis, Minnesota.

This Subchapter supplements the following regulations, policy and guidance:

Related Regulations

- 5 United States Code, Chapter 65, [Telework](#).
- Title 5 Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) Part [335.102, Agency Authority to Promote, Demote or Reassign](#).
- [Guide to Processing Personnel Actions](#), Chapter 23, Change in Duty Station
- General Services Administration, [Federal Travel Regulations](#)
- USDA Department Regulation (DR) [4080-811-002, Telework Program](#), dated 01/04/2018
- Office of Personnel Management (OPM) [Official Worksite for Location-Based Pay Purposes Fact Sheet](#)
- MRP Directive Voluntary Change in Official Duty Station – forthcoming

This Subchapter applies to all MRP employees who want to continue to work in their current position but need to do so, due to personal reasons, from another location on a temporary or permanent basis, who are:

Eligibility

- General Schedule (GS) employees;
- Performance Management and Recognition System (GM) employees;
- Administratively Determined (AD) employees; or,
- Term Appointments.

This Subchapter excludes MRP employees who:

- Want to move into a different job in a different location;
- Want to work in foreign countries either on a permanent or temporary basis;
- Are assigned overseas;
- Are temporary (Not To Exceed [NTE] 1 year);
- Are Prevailing Rate;
- Are members of a bargaining unit; or,
- Are on detail with another Federal Agency or international organization.

Exclusions

This Subchapter is excluded from the administrative grievance system.

An appeal process has been established within this Subchapter for denied requests. See [Section A](#) & [Section C](#) within this Subchapter.

Using the appeal process within this Subchapter does not negate, limit, or diminish an employee's rights under any discrimination law or whistleblower protections.

When contemplating to request a change in ODS, it is important to ensure that you follow the correct process.

If you are:

A supervisor directing an employee's reassignment to a new permanent duty location

Then:

This HRDG subchapter does **not** apply to your situation

And you must:

Contact your servicing staffing specialist in HRO for assistance.

Follow this process by working with your supervisor. And, if necessary, refer to [**Departmental Regulation: Telework Program.**](#)

Note: For temporary telework at a different location see

[**Departmental Regulation: Telework Program.**](#)

An employee requesting a temporary or permanent change in ODS for personal reasons for yourself or a family member.

This HRDG applies to you

Note: Work with the Reasonable Accommodations (RA) staff for RA issue(s) only when they pertain to your own medical situation. The RA process is handled by the RA staff. This HRDG only applies for the purpose of submitting a Request for Personnel Action, Standard Form (SF)-52 to document the change in ODS. All other forms included in this HRDG Subchapter do not apply to the RA process.

Once you have determined that this is the proper HRDG Subchapter, you must decide how to proceed based on your personal circumstances. In each of the scenarios outlined below, management must determine that your position is portable and may be performed at another duty station that is either in another MRP office location, other office location or at an approved nontraditional

The “[Request for Voluntary Change in Official Duty Station](#) (182.34 KB)” flowchart was developed as a starting point to:

- Assist both supervisors and employees when initiating / evaluating change in ODS requests.
- Assist supervisors and employees with determining if the request is more appropriate under Telework arrangements or Reasonable Accommodation.
- Provide guidance on where / how to obtain additional information.

Note: The flowchart illustrates the following possible scenarios:

**ODS
Flowchart**

1. Temporary Telework of six (6) months or less which does not require a change in ODS or an SF-52.
2. Temporary Change in ODS in excess of six (6) months but not permanent. This requires an SF-52 from the Program.
3. Permanent Change in ODS. (This requires an SF-52 from the Program.)
4. Agency directed reassignment. (Contact your servicing personnel office for guidance.)
5. Reasonable Accommodation for an employee’s own medical situation. In this scenario, the Change in ODS may consist of #1-3 above.

The chart can be viewed here - [Request for Voluntary Change in Official Duty Station](#) (182.34 KB)

Requests for permanent or temporary changes to ODS may include, but are not limited to:

- Care for a family member with a health crisis when an employee (or the employee's spouse) is the primary caretaker and the medical condition requires the employee (or the employee's spouse) to relocate to another geographic area;
- Lack of medical facilities at the current location for specific treatments for the employee or his/her family members;
- Recovery from a personal health crisis;
- Relocating closer to minor children after a divorce when the ex-spouse has custody;
- Relocation of a partner/spouse; or
- Another significant life event that creates an undue hardship on the employee or his / her family.

Coverage

Employees can find information about requesting a voluntary change of ODS in this Subchapter. For staffing purposes, such a change is synonymous with and considered a voluntary reassignment.

Bargaining unit employees must refer to their local collective bargaining agreement for specific guidance on requesting a "hardship transfer."

Delegation of Authority	If the request for a Change in Official Duty Station is for:	Then the approval authority is:
	Six (6) months or less	First level supervisor.*
	More than six (6) months or is permanent	Program Deputy Administrators (DA) or equivalent.** This authority may not be re-delegated to lower supervisory levels. Administrator.
	An appeal due to a denial	AMS Only: This authority may not be re- delegated. APHIS Only: This authority may be re- delegated to the Associate Administrator.
<p>*Supervisor has 30 calendar days from the receipt of the request to issue a written decision. Programs may choose to retain approval at a higher level.</p> <p>** The entire decision timeframe (from the first level supervisor's receipt of a complete package to the DA's decision) may not exceed 30 calendar days except when an employee has requested an extension.</p>		
Will My Request Be Approved?	<p>Requests for changes in official duty station, whether temporary or permanent, may not necessarily be approved. Approval is not mandatory. While the agency values every employee's contributions and wants to accommodate such requests, it may not always be possible. Transfer requests may be disapproved, for example, when there is a business reason for you to work in the current duty station that cannot be accommodated in another location.</p>	

If I have a Home Duty Station & Want to Move, Do I Use this HRDG?

If you have a home duty station and want to move to another city, county, and/or state for personal reasons, you must use this HRDG.

Remember, this HRDG does not apply to management directed reassignments.

Subsequent Requests for Changes in ODS

If your initial request was approved but your situation has changed requiring another change in ODS, you must initiate a new request. The initial approval is not transferable. A new request must be made following the process outlined in this HRDG. This subsequent request may or may not be approved.

For example, if you requested a change in ODS to move from Riverdale, MD to Dallas, TX, for personal reasons but due to personal circumstances you now need to again change your ODS to Seattle, WA, a new request must be submitted to your supervisor / DA for consideration. Management will consider this a new request and issue a decision.

Does this HRDG Process Apply to RA Situations?

No, requests involving Reasonable Accommodation (RA) and in which the RA staff is included will be handled by the RA staff through their internal process.

The following information / documentation must be maintained by the Servicing Personnel Office (SPO), as applicable, about each Change in Official Duty Station request received:

- [**MRP Form 370 - Managerial Assessment Worksheet for Change in Official Duty Station**](#) (150.78 KB)
- [**MRP Form 371 - Change in Official Duty Station Agreement**](#) (146.83 KB)
- [**MRP Form 372 - Employee Application for Change in Official Duty Station \(ODS\)**](#) (147.57 KB) with attached supporting documentation. Medical documentation will be handled as described previously.
- [**MRP Form 373 - Decision Documentation for Change in Official Duty Station \(ODS\)**](#) (177.71 KB) including copies of annual reviews.
- [**MRP Form 374 - Administrator's Decision on Denial of Change in Official Duty Station**](#) (151.62 KB)

**Records
Management**

Forms to be used when a reassignment is requested to a location outside of the 50 states.

- [**MRP Form 375 - Employee Declaration of Residence for Home Leave Determinations.**](#) (173.68 KB)

Records relating to a change in ODS may be destroyed by the SPO after three (3) years. Longer retention is permitted if required for business use. See DAA-GRS-2017-0007-0001.

Records concerning RA are to be forwarded to the RA staff, HRD. Destroy these files three (3) years after employee separation from the Agency or when all appeals, including third party, are concluded whichever is later. Longer retention is permitted if required for business use. See DAA-GRS-2015-0007- 0005.

Alternative Duty Location/Station means an approved work location that is different from the ODS documented on the employee's SF-50, Notification of Personnel Action. It is a term that is also used when referring to a telework arrangement.

Family Member: See [sick leave](#) definition.

Permanent Change in Official Duty Station means that an employee's official work station is permanently changed from the current geographic location of his/her job to a new location in a federally owned or leased space or a residence in a new geographic location (city/town, county, or State).

Reasonable Accommodation means a change in the work environment or the application process that enables qualified individuals with disabilities to enjoy the same rights, benefits, and privileges as non-disabled employees, including modifications or adjustments:

- To a job application process;
- To the work environment or manner of circumstances under which a position is held or desired; or,
- That enable those covered to enjoy equal rights, benefits, and privileges of employment.

Glossary

Temporary Change in Official Duty Station means that an employee's official work station is temporarily changed from the geographic location traditionally associated with his/her job to a new location in a federally owned or leased space or a residence in a new geographic location (city/town, county, or State).

Virtual Employment means a work arrangement in which the employee receives approval to work at an alternate worksite location (typically the employee's home) on a full-time basis. The arrangement will result in an official change in duty station if approved to last longer than six months.

Within the U.S. means a duty station within the 50 United States or Washington, D.C., to include its territories and possessions. (Note: duty stations in a territory/possession have additional documentation requirements. Contact your servicing Leave and Compensation Specialist, HRO.)

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