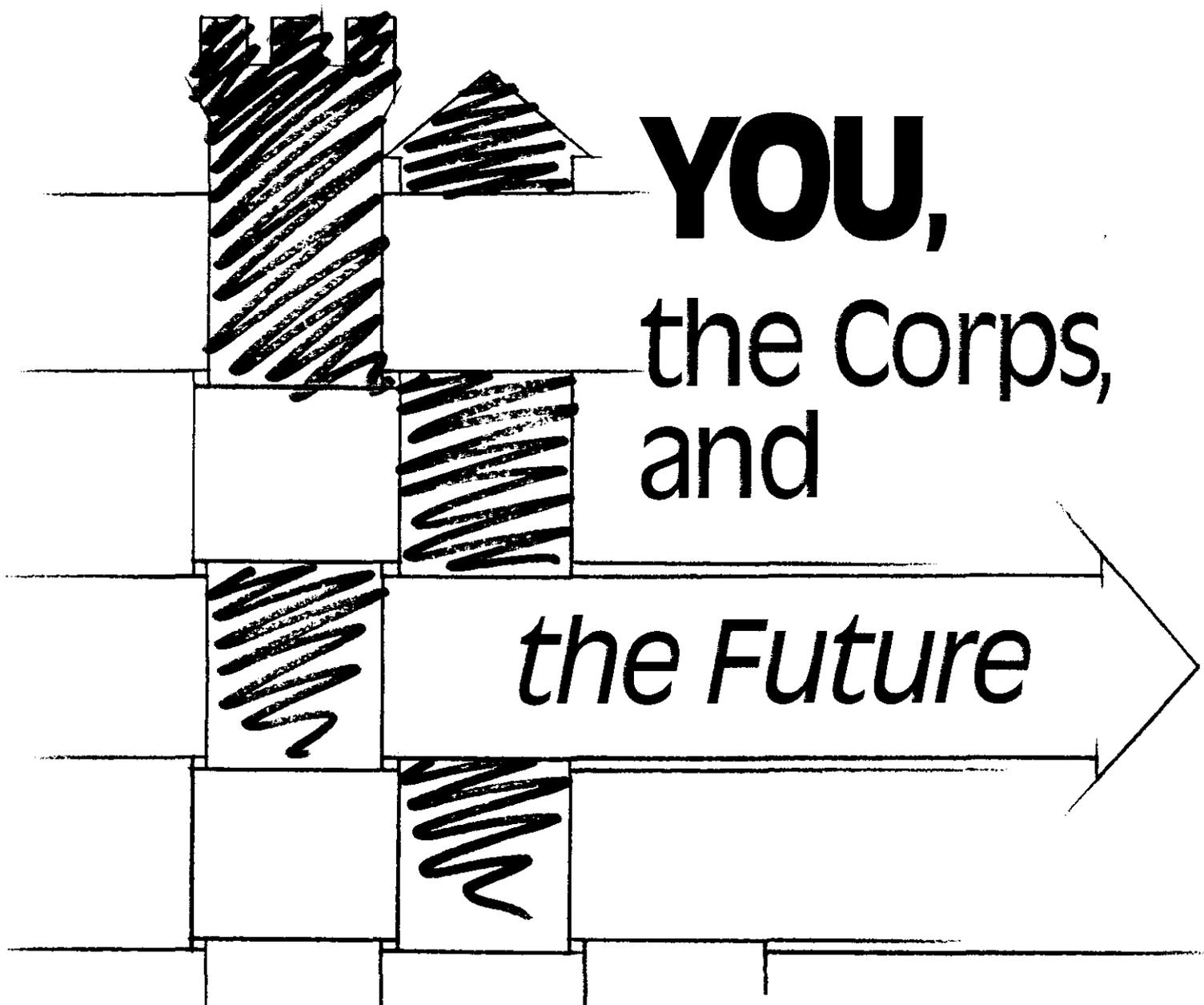


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	You, the Corps and the Future - Employment Options Upon Reorganization	
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**YOU,**  
the Corps,  
and

*the Future*

*Employment Options  
Upon Reorganization*



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers**

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## **FOREWORD**

### **The Chief of Engineers**

The reorganization of the Corps of Engineers is creating some uncertainty about the future for many of our Corps members. We have prepared this handbook to help you understand your employment options and entitlements if your job is affected by the Corps reorganization.

I hope you will want to remain with the Corps, and this handbook explains what we will do to keep you part of the Corps team including our commandwide outplacement program, reimbursement for moving expenses, and retraining. It also discusses programs to keep you employed—in the Department of Defense, elsewhere in government, or in the private sector—if continued employment in the Corps is not possible. Finally, this handbook contains information about other personnel programs and benefits such as grade and pay retention, early retirement, and continued benefits.

Of course, no publication can answer every question. Much of what you want to know will depend on your individual circumstances. For more specific information contact your human resources office. If you have other questions about the reorganization, call the Corps Reorganization Program Office hotline (202) 504-4053.

I hope this handbook serves as a good source of general information and helps you ask the right questions to determine your role in the Corps of the future.



ARTHUR E. WILLIAMS  
Lieutenant General, USA  
Commanding



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## Employment Options

# YOU and the Corps of the Future

With all this talk about reorganizing the Corps of Engineers, you—as a Corps employee—need to understand what the changes really mean and how you fit into the Corps of the future.

To help you make the most of your career inside or outside the Corps of Engineers, this handbook—

- Explains some changes in the organization and its work force.
- Gives some hints on how to help yourself.
- Describes several Corps programs already in place.

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- Describes other government placement programs.

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- Discusses other programs you should know about.

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- **Defines some of the terms and acronyms you may be hearing.**

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# Changes in the Organization

The Corps of Engineers is undergoing a major reorganization for many reasons. Current events such as base realignments and closures, the end of the cold war, and increased emphasis on environmental issues impact on our mission. So do other factors including—

- Shrinking work load.
- Fewer traditional projects.
- Work force/work load imbalance.
- High overhead costs.
- Need to enhance technical expertise.

The goal is to organize the Corps into a more flexible, cost effective, competent organization that can adapt quickly to new missions and challenges.

## A TRADITION OF CHANGE

This is not the first time the Corps of Engineers has faced change. A dynamic organization, the Corps has a proud history of adapting to its changing missions.

- In 1929, under the Hoover administration, the Corps realigned its division boundaries according to river basins.
- In 1941 it added the military construction function to meet the demands of World War II and realigned its organization to delegate functions downward.



- 
- In the 1950s the Corps increased its staff to meet the demands of new civil works projects.
  - In 1962 the Hoelscher study transferred the Corps' military education and training functions to TRADOC.
  - In 1986 the Corps adjusted to a Department of Defense reorganization.
  - Currently, the Corps is upgrading aging water and hydropower facilities; cleaning up radioactive, hazardous, and toxic wastes; and working for other agencies.

## **WANT MORE INFORMATION?**

You and the Corps have some big decisions ahead. To help you make smart choices, we have prepared this handbook as part of an ongoing effort to keep you informed about the current reorganization.

This handbook provides general information, but doesn't provide details and can't answer every question. Your specific circumstances may be unique, and laws and regulations may govern certain situations. Your human resources office has specialists who can provide individual help.

- A companion brochure, *Why Reorganize?*, describes in detail the reasons why the Corps must reorganize. It is being mailed to all Corps employees at their home addresses.
- The Corps Reorganization Program Office is preparing these publications to help you and your family understand the changes.
- The Corps Reorganization Program Office also has a hotline that you can call with your questions and suggestions—

**(202) 504-4053.**

- 
- Regular Corpsmail issues of the *Reorganization Update* offer the latest news on the reorganization and answers to questions received on the reorganization hotline. If you don't have Corpsmail, check with your public affairs office to find out about the latest issue.
  - Private companies publish personnel guides that outline vital information on government employment, pay, and benefits. Your human resources office, admin office, or library may have copies.
  - Every division and district has a Reorganization Advisory Committee member to help keep you informed.

## WHAT THIS HANDBOOK DOESN'T TELL YOU

You won't find decisions on two important issues in this handbook. Decisions on **competitive areas** and **voluntary early retirement authority** will not be made until the Corps' reorganization plan is final. This information will be announced and provided to you separately.

- The regulations on **competitive areas** and reduction in force are explained on pages 44 and 45. Specifically how they will be applied and how you will be affected can only be explained in the context of a reorganization plan, which had not been decided at the time this handbook was prepared.
- **Voluntary early retirement authority** is discussed on page 60. This authority must be requested from the Office of Personnel Management but cannot be made until after the reorganization plan is announced.

We will keep you informed of the status of both competitive areas and voluntary early retirement authority.



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# Changes in the Work Force

As the Corps' missions are changing, so are its staffing needs:

- We will need to broaden and deepen our expertise in a number of specialties so we can respond rapidly to changes in mission and workload.
- We will need fewer employees. Some of this staff reduction will occur by attrition, hiring freezes, retirement, and unfilled vacancies. The Corps will do everything it can to keep you on the team.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

In many cases jobs will not change. A few jobs will be merged or consolidated with others, and you may be given different responsibilities. Some jobs will be transferred, and you may be asked to move with your job to a new location. And yes, some jobs will be eliminated.

## Alternatives to RIF

You may think a reduction in force (RIF) is the way employees are placed in jobs during a reorganization. However, it is not the only way. We plan to use RIF procedures only when required. Instead, our goal is to increase your choices and your manager's flexibility.

This means—

- Letting you say what jobs you'd like and reassigning you to one of them—where you are or somewhere else in the Corps—using the outplacement program (page 9).

- 
- Paying your moving expenses, including the guaranteed home sales provision of the relocation services program—regardless of your grade (page 14).
  - Helping you find a job in other federal agencies or outside the government, if you cannot leave your current location and we cannot find you another job where you are (pages 19 through 35).
  - Assisting you prepare your SF 171, write a resumé, and use the automated job bank where available (page 42).

### **Transfers and RIF**

Some missions and jobs will be moved and will meet the criteria for a transfer of function. In this case, your assignment at the new location will be determined by RIF regulations (page 44).

### **Early Retirement**

Sometimes being separated through a RIF provides other benefits, for instance early retirement with a lump sum annuity. The lump sum—getting back the amount you paid into the retirement fund—is a popular benefit not normally available to federal employees. This benefit is currently available through 1995 (page 60).



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# How to Help Yourself

Here are some things you can do now to protect all your employment rights and benefits in the future.

- **Review your personnel records.** (*Your human resources office will also be updating and verifying the information in your records.*)
  - Is the service computation date correct?
  - Are your veterans or disabled veterans preferences included?
  - Are your last three performance appraisals there?
  - Does it include your performance awards and formal training?
- **Update your SF 171.**
- **Make the hard decisions early.** What kind of job will you accept? Are you willing to move to a new location?
  - *Be flexible.* You probably have experience or training that can be used in other jobs. Most placement programs let you register for as many as five skills, provided you are well qualified.
  - *Be mobile.* Consider employment outside your current commuting area.
- **Don't rely on only one referral service.** Register in as many as you can.
- **Be your own career manager.** Aggressively pursue as many options as possible. Job hunt on your own.
- **Be optimistic.** People affected by a reorganization often land better jobs than they had before.

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# HQUSACE Commandwide Outplacement Program

The Corps values each of you as an important team member and is dedicated to placing all employees affected by downsizing in vacant positions located throughout the Corps of Engineers.

## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

You are eligible to register in this program if—

- You are serving on a permanent appointment.
- Your job performance is at least fully successful.
- You have been identified as a potential loss.
- You volunteer for registration so someone else identified as a potential loss may be retained (at your commander's discretion).

## REGISTRATION

- You may register for any position at your current grade for which you are well qualified. You are encouraged to register for a lower grade if it would enhance your placement opportunities.
- You will remain registered and eligible for referral until you are placed or until you remove yourself from the program.
- If you indicate a geographic preference but later decline a valid job offered at that location, you will not be referred there again.



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## DISCUSSION

- This program gives the Corps a head start on any forced reduction. The outplacement program offers choices that other federal programs cannot provide.
- This program should not be your only option. Although our goal is to keep you within the Corps family, you should consider other placement programs such as the Department of Defense Priority Placement Program (page 19) and the Defense Outplacement Referral System (page 22).

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

***Both my spouse and I are Corps employees. Are we guaranteed placement in the same geographic location?***

The Corps will do everything possible to help you and your spouse. Although we can't make guarantees, we will work hard to place both of you at the same location. If jobs at your current grades are not available, lower graded jobs with grade/pay retention (page 54), retraining, or placement with other agencies or local businesses will be considered. Of course, our first priority will be to keep you both employed with the Corps.

***If I am willing to register for and accept a position lower than my present grade, can I retain my current salary?***

Yes, absolutely. The Corps does not intend to fuel the hardship that downsizing is having on our employees. It is our policy to grant pay and grade retention to employees accepting downgrades to positions as low as three grade intervals below their present grade. (See grade and pay retention, page 54).

***If I accept a position in another geographic area, will I receive moving expenses?***

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Yes, definitely. A permanent employee who must move will be paid for the relocation (page 12).

***May I be considered for a promotion through the outplacement program?***

No. You may only be considered for lateral reassignment or change to a lower grade.

***What if I am qualified in several areas? May I be referred for more than one occupational specialty?***

Of course. When you register in the program, your credentials will be reviewed thoroughly. If you are qualified for more than one field and wish referral, then your opportunities for placement should be broadened.

***What happens if I decide to turn down a job offer that I stated I was interested in?***

As with any program, there are some conditions that must be in place if we are to meet the needs of most people. You will have three working days to accept or decline a job offer. If you decline a valid job offer, you will be removed from consideration for that location so we can place someone else in those critical vacancies. You will, however, continue to be referred to jobs in other locations for which you register.



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# Moving Expenses

The Corps will reimburse you for moving expenses if you are asked to take a job that requires you to relocate. This includes—

- One round trip for house hunting.
- Travel costs (including mileage and per diem for lodging and meals) for you and your dependents.
- Subsistence expenses related to occupying temporary quarters allowance at your new location (up to 60 days).
- Shipment of household goods (up to 18,000 pounds).
- Temporary storage of household goods (up to 90 days).
- Certain expenses associated with selling and buying a residence.

## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Eligibility for specific benefits covered in the Joint Travel Regulations will vary for each employee based on individual circumstances such as marriage status, home ownership, and the timing and distance of the move.

## REGISTRATION

Contact your human resources office.

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## DISCUSSION

Moving expenses will be centrally funded during the Corps Reorganization. You may be advanced funds so you will not have to use personal funds.

*Note: You are on official business and should use the same care in incurring expenses you would use if you were on personal business.*

- You will not be reimbursed for expenses incurred before you receive your official travel orders.
- You must agree in writing to reimburse the government for any relocation costs if you do not remain in the government service for at least 12 months after you move.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

*What is included in subsistence expenses?*

These expenses include only charges for meals (including groceries), lodging, fees and tips (related to meals and lodging), laundry and ironing, and the cost of moving household goods to furnish the temporary quarters. No local travel expenses will be allowed while you occupy temporary quarters.

*How much does the government pay if I drive to my new location?*

If you drive, you will be paid mileage.

- 15 cents per mile if you travel alone.
- 17 cents per mile with one family member.
- 19 cents per mile with two family members.
- 20 cents per mile with three or more family members.

Usually the government pays for lodging (maximum \$40.00 per night) and per diem (\$26.00 per day).



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# Department of Army Relocation Services for Employees (DARSE)

The DARSE program is an alternative to reimbursing you for real estate sale expenses when you move to a new location. In this program, a relocation service company—under contract to the Army—buys your primary residence.

- The offer to buy your home is based on the current market value determined by independent appraisers that you select.
- The contractor orders two appraisals.
  - If the appraised values are within 5 percent of each other, they are averaged and the contractor makes an offer.
  - If the appraised values are not within 5 percent of each other, the contractor orders a third appraisal. The two closest values are then averaged.
- Other inspections required by the contractor, appraisers, and state/local laws are also performed including such things as septic tank, well, and radon.

## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

You are eligible if you fall into one of these four categories:

- Senior executive service.
- Mandatory mobility agreement.
- Management directed move—RIF, base closure, transfer of function.

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*Note: You must have official notification before you are eligible.*

- The local commander determines that relocation services may be offered and that funds are available.

You must meet all the following requirements.

- You must be a current government employee.
- The relocation must be primarily in the interest of the government and not for your personal benefit.
- You must have signed a service agreement.
- You received a PCS (permanent change of station) travel order before you incurred moving expenses.

*Note: The program lasts for two years from your report date. A one-year extension may be granted.*

## **REGISTRATION**

Your human resources office has a relocation services request form and will help you fill it out. It then goes to the finance and accounting office that will complete the paper work and obligate the funds. You will need the completed paperwork, the request form, and your travel order.

## **DISCUSSION**

DARSE is sometimes confused with the Homeowners Assistance Program (HAP). Some of the key differences between the two programs are—



- 
- HAP is a government program for civilians and the military. Only Army civilians are eligible for DARSE.
  - Benefits from HAP are triggered only by a significant decline in the local housing market directly caused by a Department of Defense action such as closure or realignment of an installation. We don't expect this to happen as a result of the Corps reorganization. Anyone who meets the requirements on page 14 (for example, anyone forced to move because of reorganization or RIF) is eligible for DARSE.

The DARSE program also offers **destination services** at no cost to you or the Department of the Army. You don't need official authorization to use destination services that include—

- Home finding for buyers.
- Home finding for renters.
- Mortgage counseling.

For help, call PHH Homeequity. Their toll free number is—

**1-800-243-1033**

The National Relocation Program Office has published an *Employee Relocation Handbook*, which is available from your human resources office.

For further information, you may call the National Relocation Program Office—

**(410) 962-3166**  
**DSN 283-3311, extension 3166**

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# Retraining

You will probably remain in a job for which you are well trained. However, if the best job that can be offered is an assignment in a related field, the Corps will provide needed retraining.

## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

You are eligible for retraining if you are —

- A career or career-conditional employee.
- Transferred to a job for which you need training to perform satisfactorily.
- Interested in the job and have a related occupational skill or aptitude needed to complete the training satisfactorily and in a reasonable amount of time.

## DISCUSSION

- You must be reassigned to or identified for your new job before any training is scheduled.
- You must be willing to relocate to the new job for which you are being trained.
- Training may be conducted during duty hours, nonduty hours, or both.
- Department of Defense training resources will be used when available.



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- The Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) will provide retraining and readjustment assistance for federal employees who have lost their jobs or received a notice of separation or expected separation.

- Assistance includes retraining for jobs outside the federal government as well as counseling, testing, and placement help.

- The Department of Labor administers this program through the 50 states.

- Local agencies, which vary by state, provide the services.

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

***Who has the responsibility for retraining me—the organization I'm working for now or the office where my new job will be?***

Retraining is a joint responsibility of both offices. Your old organization is responsible for getting the ball rolling. Both organizations will determine specific training needs, sources, and scheduling. During the Corps reorganization we plan to centrally fund the cost of retraining.

***If I am eligible for retraining, how do I find out how and where to get help?***

As the Corps reorganization is implemented, Headquarters will provide more information through your local human resources office.

---

# Department of Defense Priority Placement Program (PPP)

The Department of Defense Priority Placement Program is a computerized, worldwide referral program. It places people affected by changing manpower requirements in other Department of Defense positions.

Every eligible Corps employee will be registered as early as possible in the Department of Defense Priority Placement Program.

## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

You are eligible to register in this program if—

- You are a displaced or potentially displaced employee with career or career-conditional status, or
- You are an excepted service employee with career or career-conditional status, and
- Your conduct is acceptable and your job performance is at least fully successful.

## REGISTRATION

You may register at your human resources office for referral to Department of Defense activities within the United States and Puerto Rico if you are to be—

- Separated by reduction in force.
- Furloughed for six months or more.



- 
- Demoted by reduction in force.
  - Separated because you declined a transfer outside your commuting area and are not on a mobility agreement.
  - Completing a tour of duty in a foreign area, territory, possession, Alaska, or Hawaii.

## **DISCUSSION**

- You are eligible for the Priority Placement Program while you are still employed.
- Registration is mandatory during the notice period and for one year from separation if you are entitled to severance pay.
- The program places you in positions for which you are "sufficiently well qualified" to help assure successful assignments.

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### ***What is a stopper list?***

The stopper list is a computerized list of people eligible for referral under the Department of Defense Priority Placement Program. It is updated every two weeks and sent to all human resources offices in the Department of Defense. As agencies report vacancies, individuals on the stopper list are matched with the positions. When a well qualified employee matches an appropriate job, the agency with the vacancy will make a job offer.

***Can I register in the Priority Placement Program for referral to positions in a different series and grade?***

---

Yes. You can register for up to five skills if you are well qualified and meet the appropriate Office of Personnel Management qualification standards. You cannot register for referral for any positions higher than your current grade or three grades lower than your current grade.

***Can I register if I am an excepted service employee without competitive status?***

Yes. However, you must indicate "Available for Excepted Service Positions Only" on the registration form.

***I am a part-time employee. Am I eligible to register?***

Yes, if you meet the eligibility requirements. This includes full-time, part-time, intermittent, seasonal, or on-call employees with status.

***If I am a full-time employee and I decline a part-time position offered under RIF procedures or transfer of function out of my area, do I lose my eligibility for registration?***

No. You will still be registered as if you had not received the offer for part-time work.

***Have many people been placed by the Priority Placement Program?***

Yes. The program placed 8,993 Department of Defense employees in 1990-91, and more than 100,000 since its beginning in 1965.



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# **Defense Outplacement Referral System (DORS)**

The Defense Outplacement Referral System is a voluntary program managed by the Department of Defense and the Office of Personnel Management.

This automated referral system matches both military and civilian employees and their spouses with vacancies in federal agencies, state and local governments, and the private sector.

This program provides additional placement opportunities because you can register in DORS before you are eligible for the Priority Placement Program (page 19).

## **ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

You are eligible to register in this program if—

- You may be adversely affected by downsizing (base closure, realignment, or RIF).
- You are seeking employment elsewhere, even if you are not being affected by downsizing.
- You are the spouse of someone adversely affected by downsizing.
- Your spouse has registered for placement outside your geographic area.

---

## REGISTRATION

- Although registration is not required, we recommend that you participate in this program.
- If you register, you should be ready to consider seriously any offers made to you through the program.

## DISCUSSION

- You may register for positions at your current grade level but no more than three grades below.
- You may register for up to five skills.
- You and your spouse may register simultaneously for the same geographic area.
- Your local human resources office will counsel you and your spouse on available options and will help you register. This office will receive any official offers of employment.
- Registration continues until—
  - You take yourself off the automated referral list.
  - You accept an offer of permanent employment.
  - One year has passed from your date of separation by RIF.
  - You decline a valid offer within your commuting area after you register in the Priority Placement Program. (Before you register in the Priority Placement Program, you may decline offers without penalty or removal).

*Note: If you decline a valid offer outside your commuting area after you register in the Priority Placement Program, you*



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*will remain on the register for placement to federal agencies within your commuting area.*

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

***Is DORS a substitute for the Priority Placement Program (PPP)?***

No. DORS is a voluntary referral system to federal agencies and the private sector. It does not require mandatory placement. PPP is a mandatory placement program within Department of Defense activities.

***Do I have to accept the first job offer made to me?***

No. Before receiving a specific RIF notice and registering in PPP, you may decline any offer without penalty or removal from the list.

***Can I select individual federal agencies or specific companies in the private sector?***

No. However, you can limit the geographic area for referral. Before the RIF period you can decline an offer without penalty or removal from the list.

***If I accept an offer outside my commuting area, will moving expenses be paid?***

Payment of your moving expenses is not guaranteed.

- If you accept a position with any federal agency, the Department of Defense may pay expenses, depending on whether your organization is undergoing a reduction or is closing. In some cases, the gaining agency may choose to pay expenses.

- 
- If you accept a position in the private sector, the Department of Defense cannot pay moving expenses.

***Can I make changes to my DORS registration?***

Yes. You can change your DORS registration at any time. Also, after you register in the Priority Placement Program, your human resources office may make changes to comply with the requirements of that program. You will be notified of any changes.

***If I accept a temporary appointment, can I remain active in DORS?***

Yes, if the position is with a Department of Defense activity. No, if you accept a temporary position with another federal agency or the private sector.

***If my spouse has never worked for the government, for what positions and grades can he/she register?***

Your human resources office will counsel your spouse, help select up to five skills, and determine the appropriate grade level.



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## **Reemployment Priority List (RPL)**

A reemployment priority list includes employees who were separated by a RIF. The Corps will—

- Put all career and career-conditional employees separated by a RIF on this list for referral to positions within the Department of Defense and in the local commuting area.
- Give former employees on this list priority consideration over most outside applicants for job vacancies that may occur.

### **ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

You will be entered on the reemployment priority list if—

- You are a career or career-conditional employee who has received a RIF notice that you will be separated.
- You have received at least a fully successful performance appraisal on your current annual performance rating.
- You have not declined an official offer of a permanent competitive position at your same grade or salary through the RIF being conducted at your activity.

### **REGISTRATION**

Contact your human resources office.

---

## DISCUSSION

- A reemployment priority list will be established for each commuting area.
- You can be placed on the list the day after you receive a RIF notice, but no later than 30 days after the RIF separation date.
- You are eligible for the list for—
  - Two years from the date of registration if you are a **career employee**.
  - One year from the date of registration if you are a **career-conditional employee**.
- You are eligible for consideration over most outside candidates for permanent and temporary vacancies—for which you are qualified and available—in your commuting area.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

***Can I be entered onto the reemployment priority list for positions that are not in my current series and grade?***

Yes. To give you proper consideration and to operate the reemployment priority list as efficiently as possible, your activity may ask you to indicate other jobs at the same salary that you would accept. This lets you specify the grades and job series that you are interested in and for which you are qualified.

***Can my name be eliminated from the list for any reasons, or am I guaranteed referral for my entire period of eligibility (two years for career/one year for career-conditional employees)?***



---

Your name can be removed from the list for several reasons if you—

- Request it.
- Decline a position at a salary no lower than what you had when you were separated.
- Accept a permanent reemployment in the Corps or a different agency.
- Fail to respond to a specific job offer at the appropriate grade.

***I live in a large metropolitan area. Since the location of some Corps components will require extensive commuting, am I still required to accept an offer of employment anywhere in this commuting area?***

No. If your activity is in a large commuting area such as Washington, DC, Los Angeles, or Chicago, the Corps will let you indicate your availability for only certain subareas within the total commuting area. However, be prepared to accept a valid offer of employment in any subareas if you indicated you were available.

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# Displaced Employee Program (DEP)

The Displaced Employee Program helps employees find jobs in other federal agencies including the Department of Defense. Qualified displaced employees will be automatically considered by federal agencies filling vacancies from the Office of Personnel Management applicant lists.

If you qualify for this program, your application will be referred ahead of other candidates. Referrals may be at or below your current grade.

## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

You are eligible to register in this program if—

- You are a career or career-conditional employee.
- You are an excepted service employee with competitive status (but not under Schedule C).
- You have received a specific RIF notice.
- You declined to transfer with your function to another commuting area.
- You declined to accept a new assignment in another commuting area.

## REGISTRATION

- You may register for positions at or below the grade you held when you were separated.



- 
- You may register for positions if you meet the current Office of Personnel Management qualification standards.

## **DISCUSSION**

- You are eligible for this program for—
  - Two years if you are a career employee.
  - One year if you are a career-conditional employee.
- This eligibility runs from the date of separation or from the date you entered the program, whichever is later.
- If you accept a permanent federal job, eligibility ends.
- If you accept a temporary federal job, eligibility continues and placement help will continue.

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

***Can I register for DEP placement in geographic areas outside my commuting area?***

Yes. You may enroll for any geographic area where the Office of Personnel Management provides service. However, if you decline to transfer with your function or decline an assignment to another commuting area, you are eligible for DEP assistance only in the commuting area where you live.

***Is there a time limit for applying for assistance through the Displaced Employee Program?***

Yes. You may apply as soon as you receive an official RIF notice or other notice of displacement but not later than 90 days after you have been separated.

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***If I am placed through the Displaced Employee Program, am I entitled to my highest previous salary?***

Agencies are not required to match your previous salary. They may offer you the entrance salary of the grade rather than the step you previously held.

***Can I be dropped from this program if I decline an offer out of my geographic area?***

Yes. But be realistic when choosing geographic areas where you will accept a job. If you decline a permanent job offer under conditions that your application showed you would accept, you will no longer be eligible for referral assistance.



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# Interagency Placement Assistance Program (IPAP)

The Office of Personnel Management administers the nationwide Interagency Placement Assistance Program to give priority referral to other agencies. Because it goes into effect before a RIF action, it helps you find new employment before you are separated.

## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

You are eligible to register in this program if—

- You are a career or career-conditional employee, or
- You are an excepted service employee with or without competitive status, or
- You are serving an appointment not limited to one year or less, and
- You have been identified as a potential loss under one of the following conditions:
  - Your position is scheduled to be abolished.
  - Your activity is undergoing an efficiency (contracting out) study and solicitation of bids has begun.
  - You are liable to be separated in a RIF because a higher standing employee whose job was abolished can bump or retreat into your position.

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## REGISTRATION

You can register in this program before any RIF, as soon as you meet the eligibility requirements.

You can receive placement assistance for 120 days after you register.

- After each 120-day period, your agency must notify the Office of Personnel Management if you still face losing your job through a RIF. If so, you are eligible for another 120 days.
- These increments will continue until you are placed or are no longer eligible.

## DISCUSSION

- This program provides nationwide placement opportunities in all federal agencies before official RIF notification.
- This program provides placement assistance for vacancies at or below your current grade level in agencies that are filling positions through Office of Personnel Management registers, delegated examining authority, special recruiting, or direct hire authority.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

***How does the Interagency Placement Assistance Program differ from the Displaced Employee Program?***

Both the Displaced Employee Program and the Interagency Placement Assistance Program are administered by the Office of Personnel Management. They are essentially alike in how they operate except that:



- 
- IPAP is opened to both employees who are on competitive and excepted service appointments.
  - IPAP is a pre-RIF program that lets you enroll **before** separation. You can enroll in DEP only **after** you have received an actual notice of separation by RIF.
  - IPAP registration is effective for renewable periods of 120 days until you are no longer eligible. DEP registration is effective for two years for career employees and one year for career-conditional employees.
  - Both programs offer placement assistance for employees losing their jobs because of a RIF or because they declined a transfer of function out of the commuting area. DEP also offers assistance to employees separated or furloughed because of a compensable injury or because they have applied for an annuity, retired under the discontinued service provision, or retired due to disability.

### ***How do I register in IPAP?***

Your human resources office will help you register. This office assists you with the required registration forms, assures the forms are completed accurately, and sends your registration package to the appropriate personnel management offices or agencies with delegated examining authority.

### ***I am an excepted service employee who will be separated by RIF. Can I be placed through IPAP in a competitive service position?***

If you are an excepted service employee who holds competitive status (for example, you previously held competitive status before accepting an excepted appointment without a break in service) you may be referred for competitive service positions. However, if you hold an excepted service appointment and do not have competitive status, you can be referred only for other excepted service jobs.

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***If I accept a permanent job outside the federal service, can I continue to be referred for federal jobs through IPAP?***

No. If you accept a permanent job offer outside the federal service, you are no longer eligible for referral through IPAP.

***Can I register for job placement opportunities outside my commuting area?***

Yes. Placement assistance for both IPAP and DEP is available through Office of Personnel Management offices nationwide unless you have already declined a transfer of function or reassignment outside your commuting area.



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# Family Member Employment Assistance

These programs help family members who are relocating because their military or civilian sponsor changes permanent duty station.

*Note: Although there are many employment initiatives available to assist relocating families, the number of people seeking employment normally far outnumbers the actual job opportunities.*

## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Eligibility requirements vary for different programs. See the discussion below. You should contact your local human resources office for complete details on your eligibility.

## REGISTRATION

Registration requirements also vary for different programs. See the discussion below. Your local human resources office will help you register.

## DISCUSSION

The Department of the Army has incorporated several employment initiatives into its family member employment program.

- **Family Member Employment Assistance Program (FMEAP).** The human resources office and the Army Community Services work together to provide family members with a full range of services including:
  - Local federal and nonfederal employment information.

- 
- Individualized career counseling.
  - Help completing employment applications.
  - Job skills training information and classes.
  - Educational opportunities information.
  - Job search and personal development workshops.

Family members should use these services before leaving an area and after arriving at the new location.

- **Hiring Preference.**

- *Military Spouse Preference.* Military spouses relocating because of permanent change in duty station (not separation or retirement) are eligible for employment preferences in the Department of Defense at grades GS-1 through GS-15.

- *Family Member Preference.* Family members of military and civilian sponsors are eligible for hiring preferences in overseas areas. Contact the human resources office in the overseas area for additional eligibility information.

- **Noncompetitive Appointment.** Under Executive Order 12721, family members may be noncompetitively appointed (they do not have to apply through the Office of Personnel Management) in the competitive service to any position in the United States if they meet all qualifications and time-in-grade restrictions.

- **Priority Placement Program.** Family members are eligible for several programs under the Department of Defense Priority Placement Program.



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○ *DOD Program.* Family members of Department of Defense personnel who have competitive status and are located in Alaska, Hawaii, or overseas may register in the program for placement in the United States. In addition, family members who are employed overseas and family members who are former employees that meet the appointment eligibility of Executive Order 12721 also may register for placement in the United States.

○ *DA Family Member Program.* Current Department of the Army employees who are family members of Department of the Army civilian or military personnel, have personal competitive status, and are accompanying or joining their sponsor on a permanent duty station move from one Department of the Army activity to another in the United States may register for a maximum of one year.

○ *DOD Military Spouse Preference Program.* This program is the only way an eligible spouse of active duty military will be offered priority referral for competitive positions in the United States at Department of Defense activities within the commuting area of the duty station of the military sponsor.

● **Family Member Counseling.** The Department of the Army provides family members with accurate and supportive information needed to make a smooth transition from one location to another.

● **Employment Information Sheets.** The Department of the Army has prepared detailed information sheets for each Department of the Army human resources office. These sheets provide information about Army employment, names of other federal agencies in the commuting area, and information about nonfederal personnel offices. You can get copies of the information sheets from your human resources office.

● **Training Resource Access Information Network (TRAIN).** Employment information is also available through this network,

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an automated system located in most human resources offices in the United States.

- **Leave without Pay (LWOP).**
  - Family members with status can be granted leave without pay for a minimum of 90 days to relocate with a sponsor to a new duty location. This allows the family member to obtain employment without a break in service. Extensions beyond the initial period may be granted if the family member does not find employment immediately.
  - Overseas family members serving on family member appointments who accompany their sponsors to a new duty station also can be granted leave without pay.

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### ***Is there a hiring preference for spouses of civilian sponsors?***

No. Congress is considering proposed legislation to expand military spouse preference to certain civilian spouses. If the legislation is enacted, Department of Defense civilian spouses who are on mandatory mobility agreements or relocating to/from an overseas assignment will get the same preference currently given to military spouses.

### ***My spouse does not work for the federal government. What assistance is available to help with our relocation?***

Your spouse can get assistance in finding nonfederal employment through the Family Member Employment Assistance Program (FMEAP) and through the Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP). Both programs provide job search information and individualized career assistance and counseling.



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***My son worked for the federal government while I was assigned overseas. Is he entitled to a job with the government now that we have returned to the United States?***

Although your son would not be entitled to a job, he may be noncompetitively appointed to the competitive service in the United States if—

- He is a United States citizen or owes allegiance to the United States.
- He worked 12 months in an appropriated fund position under an overseas local hire appointment within any 10-year period beginning 1 January 1980.
- You were officially assigned to the overseas area during the 12-month period of service.
- He accompanied or joined you on your official assignment overseas.
- He was appointed within three years of returning to the United States or before 1 January 1994.

***Note: The 1 January 1994 period of eligibility is meant to benefit all family members—including those who have never met the previous requirement and those whose eligibility has since expired. Contact your local human resources office to determine the period of eligibility.***

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# Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP)

The Army Career and Alumni Program provides transition and job assistance. It helps develop an individual transition plan and provides counseling on the effects of career change.

The program also provides individual career counseling, resumé preparation, access to national employers, and referral to other job assistance agencies.

## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To receive ACAP services, you must be planning to leave the federal government. Separation can be voluntary or involuntary.

- **Voluntary separations** include Department of the Army civilians who leave the federal service because of retirement or voluntary resignation.
- **Involuntary separations** include reduction in force, transfer of function, or base realignment and closure.

You are **not eligible** if you are separated for personal cause. This includes separation because of (or to avoid) formal disciplinary action due to performance or conduct.

## REGISTRATION

Contact your human resources office for information.



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## DISCUSSION

The Corps is working with the Army Career and Alumni Program to provide services at Corps locations affected by the reorganization. This may include setting up ACAP offices at divisions and districts. (There are already over 60 offices at Army installations.)

The offices have an automated job assistance center with thousands of potential employers listed in an Army employer network.

The offices also provide individual counseling and workshops to help you—

- Establish realistic career goals and objectives.
- Prepare an effective resumé.
- Network and follow-up job opportunities.
- Improve interview techniques.
- Negotiate pay and benefits.
- Write letters and improve telephone techniques.
- Evaluate strategies.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

*Since this program is for both military and civilians, who has priority?*

A priority order helps schedule services and make the best use of available resources. Priorities are based on the need for services and length of time remaining before separation, not on whether you are military or civilian.

It includes Army military and civilian service members and their family who are—

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Priority 1. Projected to separate within 90 days.

Priority 2. Projected to separate within 91 to 120 days.

Priority 3. Projected to separate within 121 to 180 days.

Priority 4. Moving voluntarily and projected to separate within more than 180 days.

*Non-Army Department of Defense personnel serviced by Army installations or activities also fall into priority 4.*

***Do I have to take leave to participate in any of the workshops or seminars presented by ACAP?***

No. Army civilians may be authorized excused absence to use ACAP services.

***My spouse needs help finding a job. Can my spouse use ACAP services if I may be leaving federal service?***

Yes. Family members are eligible for these services if the sponsor looking for employment is also participating.



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## **Reduction in Force (RIF)**

A reduction in force is a process an organization may use to reduce the number of positions or employees in its work force. Your job may be affected by a RIF for several reasons:

- Lack of work.
- Shortage of funds.
- Insufficient personnel ceiling.
- Reorganization.
- A former employee is exercising his reemployment or restoration rights.
- Reclassification of your position due to erosion of duties that occurs within 180 days of a formally announced RIF.

### **ALTERNATIVES TO A RIF**

The Corps will use a RIF only when required. We will first use all other possible ways to restructure our work force. These include:

- Attrition.
- Freeze or limited hiring and promotion.
- Separation of temporary employees or reemployed annuitants.
- Corps of Engineers and Department of Defense outplacement programs (pages 9 and 22).
- Voluntary Early Retirement (page 60).

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If a RIF becomes the only remaining option, the Corps will—

- Determine which jobs are essential to accomplish its mission.
- Determine which jobs will be abolished.
- Determine which employees about to lose their jobs have rights to other positions (bumping/retreating).
- Issue notices to employees at least 60 days before the RIF takes effect.
- Help employees find other jobs.

## **COMPETITIVE AREA**

The competitive area is the area in which you will compete for jobs. The competitive area will be—

- Geographic.
- Organizational.

For example, if you work at the North Pacific Division, you will not be in the same competitive area as someone who works at the Portland District, even though both are in Portland, Oregon. This is because the organizations have different missions.

Competitive areas can be changed, but should be in effect at least 90 days before a RIF—less than 90 days requires OPM approval.

## **COMPETITIVE LEVELS**

All employees in a competitive area are grouped into competitive levels.



- 
- Each level consists of positions at the same grade that are so similar the positions are interchangeable. Similarities include—
    - Duties.
    - Responsibilities.
    - Pay schedule.
    - Experience, training, and skill requirements.
  - A competitive level may consist of many positions, only a few, or only one job. That means a position that is highly specialized and not interchangeable with any other positions is put in a competitive level by itself.
  - Every position in a competitive area must be assigned a competitive level.
  - During a RIF, the names of all employees in a competitive level are listed on a retention register in the order of their retention standing.

## **RETENTION STANDING**

Your assignment rights are determined by your retention standing in the competitive area and competitive level. Four factors, established by law, affect your retention standing—

- Tenure group.
- Veterans preference.
- Length of service (military and civilian).
- Performance ratings.

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**Tenure Group.** The type of appointment (tenure) determines the group you will be ranked in on a retention register. The three groups in a competitive service are:

- Group I** Career employees not serving a probationary period for initial appointment.
- Group II** Career employees serving a probationary period for initial appointment and career-conditional employees.
- Group III** Indefinite, term, and status quo employees; employees serving under temporary\* appointments pending establishment of a register (TAPER); and employees under any nonstatus, nontemporary appointment.

*\*An employee serving under a temporary appointment with a specific time limit is not in group III and is not a competing employee in a RIF.*

Excepted service employees are similarly grouped but do not compete with employees in the competitive service.

**Veterans Preference.** Each of the above groups is divided into three subgroups:

- AD** Veterans with 30 percent or more service-connected compensable disability.
- A** Veterans not in AD.
- B** All other employees.

*Note: If you are eligible for veterans preference and are a retired member of a uniformed service, you must meet further conditions to be considered a veteran for RIF purposes.*



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**Length of Service.** Within each subgroup, you will be ranked by your service computation date. Employees with the most years of total federal service (civilian and military) will be listed first.

**Performance Ratings.** You will be given additional service credit based on the average of your last three annual performance ratings received during the four years before a RIF notice. *If you have not received three appraisals in the last four years, the missing appraisals are assumed to be fully successful.*

Additional service credit will be added to your service computation date for each rating that is—

Exceptional	20 years
Highly successful	16 years
Fully successful	12 years
Minimally acceptable	0 years
Unsatisfactory	0 years

For example, if your last three performance ratings were fully successful (12), fully successful (12) and highly successful (16), you would receive credit for 14 years of additional service.

$$12 + 12 + 16 = 40$$

$$40 \div 3 = 13.3 \text{ (rounded up = 14 years)}$$

## RETENTION REGISTER

Employees in a competitive level are ranked on a retention register—in order of adjusted length of service—as follows:

- I-AD** Disabled veterans on career appointments.
- I-A** Other veterans on career appointments.
- I-B** Nonveterans on career appointments.
- II-AD** Disabled veterans on career-conditional appointments or serving probationary periods (except supervisors or managers).
- II-A** Other veterans on career-conditional appointments or serving probationary periods.
- II-B** Nonveterans on career-conditional appointments or serving probationary periods.

For example:

Tenure Group	Preference Subgroup	Employee	Service Comp Date	Additional Years for Performance Rating	Adjusted Service Comp Date for RIF
I	AD	Green, J	5/30/80	15	5/30/65
	A	White, W	3/8/81	12	3/8/69
	A	Grey, R	10/5/81	12	10/5/69
	B	Brown, A	6/13/83	16	6/13/67
	B	Smith, K	3/8/84	15	3/8/69
II	AD	Jones, F	7/23/85	12	7/23/73
	B	Peters, T	8/7/86	12	8/7/74



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## **ASSIGNMENT RIGHTS**

In first round competition, you have assignment rights in your own competitive level. According to RIF regulations—

- Each employee in groups I and II who has a current annual performance rating of marginal or higher has assignment rights and remains in competition for positions.
- Each employee in group III or with a current annual performance rating of "unacceptable" has no assignment rights.

## **BUMPING AND RETREATING**

In second round competition, you have assignment rights for jobs in other competitive levels. This process is called bumping and retreating.

If you are in group I or II, you cannot be demoted, separated or furloughed if you qualify for a job in some other competitive level occupied by someone you can displace by bumping or retreating.

**Bumping.** You may bump someone in a lower subgroup at your same or lower grade. For example:

- An employee in subgroup I-A may bump someone in I-B or anyone in group II or III but may not bump another person in group I-A.
- An employee in group I-B may bump someone in group II or III but not another I-B.
- An employee in group II-A may bump someone in II-B or anyone in group III but not another II-A.
- An employee in group III may not bump another employee.

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You may bump someone, even if that person has more service than you. For example, a veteran on a career appointment with 5 years of service can bump a nonveteran on a career appointment with 30 years of service.

If you are bumping into a different type of position, you must meet the job qualifications—including positive education requirements—and must move into the duties and responsibilities of the job without any undue disruption of the activity.

**Retreating.** You may retreat back to a job you once held and were promoted from or through—or a job substantially the same. You can retreat to that job if you are qualified, if it is occupied by someone in the same subgroup, and if you have longer service than the person who now occupies the job.

*The theory behind retreating is that you would have been safe from a reduction in force if you had not been promoted. Therefore, you should not be laid off just because you were good enough to be promoted.*

## **EMPLOYEE NOTICES**

You are entitled to a 60-day notice if you are being released from your competitive level. The notice must be in writing and must explain all your rights concerning the proposed action—including your right to file a grievance or appeal.

A general notice may be issued advising all employees that a RIF action may be necessary although the activity has not yet determined the specific action to be taken.



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## **TRANSFER OF FUNCTION**

A transfer of function occurs when a continuing function is moved to another competitive area or when an entire competitive area is moved to another commuting area.

*Note: A transfer of work is not a transfer of function if the function is already being performed in the other competitive area.*

For example, it is a transfer of function if the military construction function of District A is transferred to District B, which does not have a military construction function. It is not a transfer of function if the planning function of District X is transferred to District Y, which already has a planning function. Even though District Y would be getting more work, it would not be getting a new function.

What is important about the difference? Transfer of function provisions deal with your right to accompany your work when it is moved to a different competitive area or geographic location. RIF regulations govern the following:

### **When a transfer of work is a transfer of function—**

- You have the right to move with your work if the alternative at your current location is separation or downgrading.
- If the new location has more employees than needed to do the work, everyone identified for transfer competes for existing jobs with employees already in that competitive area.
- If you decline to transfer with your function, you cannot bump or retreat into positions that may remain at your current location—again, according to RIF regulations. However, if a RIF is being conducted there for other reasons, you may be included in the RIF.

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**When a transfer of work is NOT a transfer of function –**

- You do not have any right to jobs at the new location.
- Instead of being filled by RIF regulations, the transferred jobs and existing vacancies created by attrition can be filled through outplacement programs. The primary program for placement under these circumstances in the Corps is explained on page 9.



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## Grade and Pay Retention

**Grade retention** lets you keep your current grade for two years after you accept another position at a lower grade because of a RIF.

**Pay retention**, often called "saved pay," lets you keep your current rate of basic pay if you accept a lower paying position because of management actions not due to an official RIF. It is effective until your new pay catches up.

### ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- **Grade retention** is used if you are on a permanent appointment and have served for at least 52 consecutive weeks at a grade higher than the new position. Grade retention ends after—
  - The two-year period is completed.
  - You are placed at the same or a higher grade level than the previous grade.
  - You decline a placement offer.
  - You are placed at a lower grade for cause or at your request.
  
- **Pay retention** is used if you do not meet the 52-week condition for grade retention or if you decline to transfer with your position. Its primary use is for situations not associated with RIFs or reorganizations. You are also eligible for pay retention when grade retention expires. Pay retention ends when the rate of pay of the new position is equal to or greater than the pay of your previous position.

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## DISCUSSION

- **Grade retention** will be used to determine your pay and calculate retirement, life insurance, promotion, and training benefits.
  - You will receive within-grade increases, cost-of-living increases, special rate pay, overtime, and performance awards based on the retained grade.
  - After the two-year period, your pay will be recomputed according to pay retention rules.
- **Pay retention** applies when your current rate of pay exceeds the highest amount for the top step of the new grade. If your current rate of pay does not exceed the top step of the new grade, your pay will be set at the step in the new grade that equals or exceeds your current rate of pay.
  - If your current rate of pay exceeds the highest rate of pay for the new grade, you will retain your current salary as long as it is less than 150 percent of your new grade.
  - You will then receive 50 percent of any future general pay increases until your pay equals the 10th step of the grade.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

***If I accept a job through the DOD Priority Placement Program or the Corps Outplacement Program, will I get grade or pay retention?***

Yes, as long as you meet the general eligibility requirements.

***Can I retain my grade if I accept an offer from another Department of Defense activity in my home town or from a nearby Army installation?***



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If you receive a RIF notice proposing a change to a lower grade or separation, you can retain your grade throughout the Department of Defense if the position you accept is at or above the grade level offered in the RIF notice. If the position is at a grade lower than that offered in your notice, the hiring organization may authorize grade retention if management determines that placement in the position is in the government's interest.

***Can I get grade retention for volunteering for a lower grade even though I am not personally being affected by the RIF and reorganization at my activity?***

Yes, if management determines that your change to a lower grade would place you in a more suitable position and would reduce the impact of the RIF on other employees.

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# Discontinued Service Retirement

All eligible employees are entitled to discontinued service retirement.

## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

If you are covered under the **Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS)** you must—

- Be scheduled for involuntary separation because of a RIF.
- Be 50 years old and have 20 years of creditable service (including 5 years of civilian service) or
- Have completed 25 years of creditable service (including 5 years of civilian service) regardless of your age.

*Note: In either case, you must have been employed under the retirement system for at least one of the last two years immediately before your separation.*

If you are covered under the **Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS)** you must—

- Be scheduled for involuntary separation because of a RIF.
- Be 50 years old and have 20 years of creditable service or
- Have completed 25 years of creditable service regardless of your age.

*Note: You will not receive the special retirement supplement (SRS) until you reach the minimum retirement age. The special retirement supplement is approximately the portion of a full career social security benefit earned while under FERS. It ends*



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*when you reach age 62 when social security benefits first become available.*

## **REGISTRATION**

For information about your retirement eligibility or estimates of annuity payments, contact your human resources office.

## **DISCUSSION**

- Annuity payments begin immediately after you retire.
- You may choose a lump-sum payment of your retirement deductions in addition to annuity payments.

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

*I temporarily left the federal service back in the 1960s and received a refund of my retirement deductions. Does this affect my retirement eligibility or my annuity?*

Yes. If your service ended before October 1990 and you did not redeposit the money, you will receive full credit for the service for estimating your service-age eligibility, but your annuity will be reduced.

If your service ended after October 1990, you do not get credit for the service unless you redeposit the full amount.

*What does involuntary separation mean?*

Involuntary separation, which allows you to take advantage of the discontinued service option are:

- Reduction in force (RIF).
- Abolishment of your position.

- 
- Transfer of function outside your commuting area.
  - No reasonable job offer.

***What constitutes a reasonable offer?***

- A reasonable offer must be in writing.
- You must be qualified for the position.
- The position must be within your agency, including an agency to which your function is transferred.
- The position must be in your commuting area, unless you are under a geographical mobility agreement.
- The position must be of the same tenure (same expectation of continued employment) as your current job.
- The position must not be lower than two grade/pay levels below your current grade/pay level.

***When does the discontinued annuity begin?***

You begin earning the annuity the day after you are separated from service or on the day after your pay status terminates and you meet the age and service requirements.

***Is my annuity reduced when I am under age 55 and retire under the discontinued service provisions of the retirement?***

If you are covered under CSRS, the annuity reduction is 1/6 of 1 percent for each full month (2 percent for each year) that you are under age 55.

There is no annuity reduction in FERS.



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## **Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA)**

The Office of Personnel Management may approve a voluntary early retirement authority to an activity undergoing a major reduction in force, reorganization, or transfer of function. It has several advantages—

- It allows a person not facing separation or demotion to retire early, thus creating a vacancy for someone else who would otherwise be adversely affected.
- It is less stressful because it is voluntary.

### **ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

You may volunteer for early retirement at—

- Age 50 with 20 years of government service.
- Any age with 25 years of government service.

### **DISCUSSION**

Early retirement may be approved under the following conditions—

- 5 percent or more of the employees undergoing the reduction will be separated.
- 20 percent or more of the employees face an immediate downgrade with a reduction in the rates of their basic pay.

- 
- Other significant factors exist such as severe impact on the local economy, poor placement opportunities, or serious disruption to agency operations.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

*If I opt for early retirement, when will I start receiving my retirement benefits?*

You begin earning your annuity immediately after retirement.

*Is my annuity reduced when I am under age 55 and retire under the voluntary early retirement authority?*

If you are covered under CSRS, the annuity reduction is 1/6 of 1 percent for each full month (2 percent for each year) that you are under age 55.

There is no annuity reduction in FERS.

*Can I volunteer for early retirement so someone else about to be RIFed can have my job?*

Yes. Voluntary early retirement may be used to save jobs for other employees targeted for separation.



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# Severance Pay

All eligible employees are entitled to severance pay as follows:

- One week's basic pay for each year of service for the first 10 years.
- Two weeks' basic pay for each year of service beyond 10 years.
- An age adjustment allowance that adds 10 percent of the total basic severance for each year you are over age 40.

## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

You are not eligible for severance pay if you—

- Are on a temporary appointment.
- Have fewer than 12 months of continuous federal service.
- Are eligible for any immediate civilian or military retirement annuity (including discontinued service retirement).
- Decline a reasonable offer under RIF procedures.

## REGISTRATION

Contact your human resources office for information.

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## DISCUSSION

The maximum severance pay allowance is one year's pay. It is paid at the current biweekly rate until the total amount is issued or you are reemployed by the federal government. Previous severance payments made to you will reduce this amount.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

*Will I get severance pay if I quit before I am RIFed?*

No. If you willingly leave a government job, you are not eligible for severance pay.

*My RIF notice offered me a job four grades lower than my current job. Is this reasonable?*

No. It is not reasonable. A reasonable offer is one of like seniority, tenure, and pay. This means a permanent job with the same work schedule (full or part-time), not lower than three grades below the current grade, and in the same commuting area.

If you decline a job four grades lower than your current job, you are still entitled to severance pay.

*Will payroll still withhold money from my biweekly check?*

The only deductions made from severance pay are for federal and state income tax and FICA tax, if appropriate.



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# Unemployment Compensation

The unemployment program provides a weekly income while you search for work. The amount of compensation and other employment services will vary from state to state.

## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- You can claim benefits from the state employment services office nearest your home if you are separated because of a RIF action and you do not have a job.
- The state employment services office will determine if you are entitled to payment benefits. Generally, you must be actively seeking employment and be available for work.

## REGISTRATION

Contact the state employment services office nearest your home.

## DISCUSSION

- If you are separated and do not have a job, you should file a claim for benefits as soon as possible. Some states require a waiting period before benefits begin.
- Although benefits for federal employees are federally funded, state employment agencies administer the program. Unemployment compensation laws and policies differ from state to state and are subject to frequent change because of state court decisions and legislative actions.

- 
- The amount of money you will be awarded will be up to the individual state. Work income and severance payments normally affect your eligibility for unemployment benefits.

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### ***What documents must I take to the state employment office?***

You should take your social security card, the Standard Form 50 (which separates you by reduction in force) and the Standard Form 8, *Notice to Federal Employees About Unemployment Compensation*, which you will receive on your last day of duty.



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## Continued Life and Health Insurance

You will continue to receive life and health insurance for 31 days after you are separated.

- If you are separated by a RIF, you can convert to an individual policy.
- If you retire, you can continue your policy.
- If you accept another job in the federal service, your coverage will continue.
- You may not sign up for initial or additional coverage.

### ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To continue coverage after separation, you must have been enrolled for the last five years or since your first opportunity to enroll.

### REGISTRATION

Contact your human resources office. You also can contact the life and health insurance companies.

Your copies of the insurance documents contain information about conversion and termination conditions. Consult these documents and related pamphlets from your life and health insurance companies.

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## DISCUSSION

- **Life insurance** coverage will continue for 31 days after separation. During that time you can convert to a nongroup policy without taking a medical examination. This nongroup policy may provide for different dollar amounts of coverage and may exclude disability or accidental death benefits.

If you retire, your life insurance will continue based upon the options in coverage you select when you retire. The government will continue to pay its share of the premiums.

- **Health insurance** coverage will continue for 31 days after separation. During that time you can convert to a nongroup policy without taking a medical examination or extend your existing plan for up to 18 months by paying both your and the government's share of the premiums.

If you retire, you may continue the coverage. The government will pay a share of the premiums.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

***If I am receiving medical treatments when my 31 days runs out, will the insurance company pay my claims.***

Most insurance companies give you a year after coverage runs out to submit claims for payment, but the treatments must have occurred before the coverage expired. One exception to this occurs if you are in the hospital on the 31st day of the temporary extension. In that case, coverage will continue for as long as you are in the hospital, but not beyond 60 additional days.

***I am transferring to a new location and have health benefits coverage from a local health maintenance organization (HMO) that provides no***



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*services at my new site. Can I change my health insurance to a new provider?*

If you are enrolled in an HMO and move outside the service area of that plan, you may change to any other plan available in the new area and may also change options from self only to self and family. If you are enrolled in Blue Cross or another plan offering service throughout the country, you cannot use the relocation as a reason for enrolling in a different plan or changing your enrollment.

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# Leave and Retirement Refunds

All employees are entitled to refunds of their contributions.

- If you are separated, you will receive a lump sum payment for your unused **annual leave**.
- You will not receive compensation for any **sick leave**. If you are reemployed within the federal government within three years, your sick leave will be recredited.
- You have the option of withdrawing your **retirement fund** contributions or leaving them in the system for future use.

## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Your participation in these programs will determine the status of your accounts.

## REGISTRATION

Contact your human resources office.

## DISCUSSION

- **Annual leave** payment is equal to the compensation you would have received if you had remained in service until that annual leave period had expired. Payment will include any premium pay that you would have received minus any tax withholding. Retirement and allotment deductions will not be taken.



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- If you retire under CSRS, your annuity will be computed by having your accrued sick leave added to your actual service time.
  - If you are covered under **CSRS**, are not eligible for an immediate annuity, and are separated by a RIF, you may—
    - Leave your contributions in the retirement system for a deferred retirement annuity or
    - Withdraw your contribution in a lump sum. If you are reemployed in federal service, you **must** redeposit the lump sum to receive credit for that period of service.
  - If you are covered under **FERS**, are not eligible for an immediate annuity, and are separated by a RIF, you may—
    - Leave your contributions in the retirement system for a deferred retirement annuity or
    - Withdraw your contribution in a lump sum. However, once you withdraw the money, you **cannot** redeposit it or receive retirement benefits for that period of service if you are later reemployed by the federal government.

*Note: The human resources office can help you compare the value of a deferred annuity with the value of a lump sum.*

- Money in the **Thrift Savings Plan** that you contributed and money earned as matching funds, interest, or investment belong to you. You can remove the money from the account when you are separated according to plan rules and tax laws. However, the 1 percent government contribution to thrift savings and its earnings do not become yours until after three years of service.

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## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

*What happens to my retirement contributions if I defer them and then die before I begin to receive an annuity?*

If you die before your deferred annuity is activated, the lump sum credit is payable as a death benefit to your survivors. Incidentally, leaving retirement contributions in the fund does not prevent you from a refund later. However, you must apply to the Office of Personnel Management at least 31 days before the date you would become eligible for the annuity.

*I have only worked for the government for two years and do not anticipate returning to federal service. Should I withdraw my retirement fund contributions?*

Yes. There is no advantage in leaving retirement funds if you have fewer than five years of civilian service and do not plan to return to the federal service.



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## Terms and Acronyms

ACAP	Army Career and Alumni Program.
Attrition	The normal process—such as retirements and resignations—by which employees leave an agency.
Bumping	Bumping occurs in a RIF when you take a job that is occupied by someone else in a lower subgroup. You may not bump someone in the same subgroup.
Career	Permanent status given after you have completed the three consecutive years of career-conditional service.
Career-conditional	The first three years of a continuous service before you reach permanent career status. The first year is the probationary period.
Change in Duty Station	A change in where a job is located.
COE	Corps of Engineers.
Commuting Area	The geographic area that you can reasonably be expected to travel back and forth daily to work. Each agency will establish the boundaries of a particular commuting area.
Comp Date	<i>See: Service Computation Date.</i>
Competitive Area	The area in which you will compete for jobs during a RIF. The minimum competitive area is a bureau, major command, directorate, or equivalent major subdivision of an agency. The competitive area can be geographic or organizational.

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<b>Competitive Level</b>	Similar jobs at the same level and classification—jobs that are interchangeable—grouped together to show clearly which employees are in competition during a RIF.
<b>CSRS</b>	Civil Service Retirement System.
<b>DA</b>	Department of the Army.
<b>DARSE</b>	Department of the Army Relocation Services for Employees.
<b>DEP</b>	Displaced Employee Program.
<b>Disabled Veterans Preference</b>	Veterans with a compensable, service-related disability of 30 percent or more. Veterans preference is a factor used in preparing retention registers during a RIF. However, further conditions may apply.
<b>DOD</b>	Department of Defense.
<b>DORS</b>	Defense Outplacement Referral System.
<b>Early Retirement</b>	Commonly referred to as "early out," this option is sometimes offered to people on a voluntary basis or as a result of discontinued service.
<b>Excepted Service</b>	Appointed positions that are excepted from the competitive system by law, executive order, or OPM approval.
<b>FERS</b>	Federal Employees Retirement System.
<b>FMEAP</b>	Family Member Employment Assistance Program.
<b>Furlough</b>	The placing of an employee in a temporary, nonduty, nonpay status because of lack of work, lack of funds, or other nondisciplinary reasons.



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<b>Grade Retention</b>	You can keep your current grade for two years after you accept another position at a lower grade because of a RIF.
<b>GS</b>	General Schedule. This schedule determines your pay based on grade level and step.
<b>HAP</b>	Homeowners Assistance Program.
<b>HMO</b>	Health maintenance organization.
<b>HQUSACE</b>	Headquarters, US Army Corps of Engineers.
<b>IPAP</b>	Interagency Placement Assistance Program.
<b>JTPA</b>	Job Training Partnership Act.
<b>Lump Sum</b>	Getting back all at once the amount you paid into the retirement fund.
<b>LWOP</b>	Leave without pay.
<b>OPM</b>	Office of Personnel Management.
<b>Outplacement</b>	Placement in a job outside the current activity.
<b>Pay Retention</b>	Also called "saved pay." You can retain your current rate of basic pay if you accept a lower paying position because of management actions not due to an official RIF. You are eligible for retained pay after grade retention expires.
<b>PCS</b>	Permanent change of station.
<b>PPP</b>	Priority Placement Program.
<b>Probation</b>	The first year of government service under a career-conditional appointment.
<b>Reasonable Offer</b>	A reasonable offer is one of like seniority, tenure, and pay. This generally means a permanent job with the same work schedule (full or part-time), and in the same commuting area.

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<b>Reinstatement</b>	The noncompetitive reentry into the competitive service. It is a privilege based on former service and not a right to which you are entitled.
<b>Retention Register</b>	Employees affected by a RIF are ranked on a retention register according to tenure, veterans preference, service, and performance ratings.
<b>Retreating</b>	You can retreat back to a job that you were reassigned or promoted out of (or a job substantially the same) if it is occupied by someone with a later service date in the same subgroup.
<b>RIF</b>	Reduction in force. The involuntary release of an employee from a competitive level by furlough for more than 30 days, separation, demotion, or reassignment. Changes in programs, lack of funds, decrease in work, reorganization, and other factors can cause an agency to conduct a reduction in force.
<b>RIF Notice</b>	An official notice that must be issued at least 60 days before a RIF takes place.
<b>RPL</b>	Reemployment Priority List.
<b>Saved Pay</b>	<i>See Pay Retention.</i>
<b>Service Computation Date</b>	Normally the day you started federal employment. However, the date may be "computed" to include credit time for such things as military service, temporary or part-time work, or a break in service.
<b>SES</b>	Senior Executive Service.
<b>Severance Pay</b>	Money you receive when you are separated from government service. The amount will vary according to your age and length of government service.



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<b>SF 171</b>	Standard Form 171, which includes your experience, educational background, and special skills.
<b>SRS</b>	Special retirement supplement.
<b>Stopper List</b>	This is a computerized list of people eligible for referral under the Department of Defense Priority Placement Program. It is updated every two weeks and sent to all civilian personnel offices in the Department of Defense. As vacancies are reported, people on the stopper list are matched with the positions.
<b>TAPER</b>	Temporary appointment pending establishment of a register.
<b>TRADOC</b>	US Army Training and Doctrine Command.
<b>Transfer of Function</b>	The transfer of a continuing function from one competitive area to another, unless the new competitive area is already performing the function. Transfer of function also occurs when its competitive area is moved to another commuting area.
<b>VERA</b>	Voluntary Early Retirement Authority.
<b>Veterans Preference</b>	Generally, veterans with "satisfactory" performance ratings are given higher retention standing than nonveterans on a retention register. However, if you are eligible for veterans preference and are a retired member of the uniformed service, you must meet further conditions to be considered a veteran for RIF purposes.