



FFAS HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION NEWSLETTER



Farm and Foreign
Agricultural Services
Human Resources Division

Web 52 System Deployment to State Offices

Olga Torres
Human Resources Specialist
Human Resources Information Systems Branch

What is Web52?

The Web52 system is an electronic version of the Standard Form 52 (SF-52), Request for Personnel Action used to originate requests for personnel actions.

Human Resources Information Systems Branch (HRISB) Oversight

The Human Resources Information Systems Branch supports development and enhancements to custom information systems such as the Web52 System. HRISB along with the Talent Acquisition Branch (TAB) and the Foreign Agricultural Service Branch (FASB) have been heavily involved in all development phases to oversee project requirements for each development phase, help define system business rules, make decisions on system constraints/issues, and design front-end interface criteria, report content and format, as well as defining timelines for system testing and deployment.

Web52 System History and Growth

Historically, the SF-52 information would be handwritten or typed, then mailed to the Human Resources Division (HRD).

- In 1998, the first electronic SF-52 application was implemented. This enabled employees to eliminate the once tedious writing and routing of paper, in favor of data entry, electronic submissions and the ability to track the status of an SF-52 during its life cycle.
- In 1999, the SF-52 Reporter was implemented as an enhancement to the SF-52 application which allows HR users to enter, view, or update information about an announcement associated with a personnel action. This version also allowed HR users to extract data in order to create reports from both the SF-52 application and the reporter.
- In 2005, FFAS implemented a new, web-based process for completing and transmitting the SF-52 via the FFAS Intranet and discontinued the use of the MS Windows-based electronic SF-52 system.
- Throughout FY 2008, HRD, in collaboration with Information Technology Services Division (ITSD) met to work on enhancements to the Web52 system. Three phases of software development were defined to produce robust management reporting capabilities with sophisticated calculation of hiring metrics. These enhancements enabled HRD to respond more *quickly to management inquiries* and *fulfill reporting requirements* from the Office of Personnel Management.

Web 52 System (cont)

- The Web52 system has been deployed to over 2,000 users in the Washington, DC and Kansas City locations.
- In FY 2008, the St. Louis and Aerial Photography Field Operations (APFO) Offices were deployed and training was coordinated and provided.
- In 2009, the Risk Management Agency Regional Offices were deployed and training was coordinated and provided.
- In FY 2011, enhancements were made to the system to enable deployment to the State offices.

What's Coming Next?

HRD has identified Program and HR users from each State office and will provide them access to the Web52 system during a Live Meeting. ITSD will send invitations to designated State office personnel; however, there are a limited number of phone lines allowed for this training. HRD encourages State office personnel invited to the training to confirm their attendance quickly in order to help maximize attendance and training delivery.

ITSD conducted training for two states the first week of April and is presently analyzing the training evaluations. HRD anticipates rolling out the training to the remaining states by geographic areas beginning **the first week of May**.

In FY 2012, development has begun on enhancements to incorporate the end to end hiring initiative and a new program area report.

What is USAJOBSAssess?

Karen Mansker, Human Resources Specialist
Delegated Examining Section
Talent Acquisition Branch

USAJOBSAssess is an online assessment platform from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). OPM is hosting this new assessment for use in hiring positions. The new online assessment process is designed to be user-friendly and attractive for both applicants and HR Specialists.

Applicants who meet minimum qualification are invited by email from OPM to complete a group of online assessments. The assessment consists of state-of-the-art assessment techniques that allow applicants to take assessments anytime, anywhere, and re-use their results when responding to other Job Opportunity Announcements that require the same assessments.

Currently assessments are only available for competitive examining announcements (those announcements open to the general public). OPM has implemented a phased roll-out of assessments that cover the most commonly filled Government-wide occupations:

USAJOBSAssess (cont)

0080 Security Specialist
0201 Human Resources Specialist
0203 Human Resources Assistant
0303 Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistant
0318 Secretary
0343 Management and Program Analyst

0501 Financial Management Specialist
0510 Accountant
0560 Budget Analyst
0962 Contact Representative
1102 Contract Specialist
2210 Information Technology Specialist

Three assessment types/methodologies are available for use:

- Computer Adaptive
- Occupational Interaction Assessment
- Animated Situational Judgment Test

USDA-Farm Service Agency, Human Resources Division was the first agency to pilot a Job Opportunity Announcement using USAJOBSAssess. Farm Service Agency's first announcement was an Accountant, GS-510-7, for the Financial Management Division, Financial Services Center, located in Kansas City, MO. This joint endeavor with OPM facilitates HRD's commitment to the President's memorandum issued in May 11, 2010, requesting Agencies to take action to improve the recruitment and hiring process.

HRD's Director lauded "Congratulations to our trail blazing DES team!! You made the news!"
<http://www.federaltimes.com/article/20110419/PERSONNEL02/104190304/>

Healthy Eating during National Nutrition Month

Juliet McBride
Worklife Program Manager
Employee/Labor Relations and Benefits Branch

During the month of March the Worklife Program Manager encouraged participation in promoting **National Nutrition Month** throughout FFAS to influence the importance of healthy eating. Offices that sponsored activities are acknowledged and congratulated for coordinating health awareness activities.

- **The Human Resources Division at Headquarters** held a food sampling in an effort to display healthy foods selected from the Food Pyramid. Employees brought in varied healthy foods. HRD plans to promote the importance of healthy eating throughout the year.
- **Montana FSA Offices:** Sixty-seven employees participated in a potluck celebration during National Nutrition Month. Click on this [link](#) for additional information including healthy recipes.
- **Raleigh FSA Office** held a healthy potluck. Their menu consisted of a variety of green vegetables and other healthy selections.

Healthy Eating (cont)

- **RMA - Davis Regional Office** held a healthy recipe potluck. Several dishes submitted by employees were selected as winners in four categories. Those categories and winners are: Several winners were selected winners in four categories; Nutritional Significance (tie between Richard Mansfield and Jessica Klaisner); Taste (Sandy Sanchez); Colorfulness (Zandra Pendarvis), and Overall Favorite (Letty McElroy).
- **RMA - Spokane Regional Office** held a potluck and used the food pyramid as a guide for their menu. They had very nutritious food and it was **REALLY GOOD**. The problem was the food was so good that the employees tended to over eat.
- **RMA - Raleigh Regional Office** held a *walk* followed by a nutritional luncheon in the office. The office participation was excellent, and everyone is looking forward to next year's celebration.
- **RMA - Billings Regional Office** held a potluck luncheon. The staff brought many delicious and healthy dishes to share that covered all of the Food Pyramid categories.
- **RMA - Jackson Regional Office** held an **"Eat Right Luncheon."** The day was filled with delicious healthy eating and good conversation. The chefs shared recipes for favorite dishes. A competition involved portion control rather than taste. Jackson will schedule a quarterly **"Eat Right Luncheon."**

Donate Life

Tammy Lake
Program Technician
Richland County Montana FSA Office

A man walks by a burning building and sees somebody standing on the second floor. Does he go in to save them or wait for help? You are driving along when the car in front of you skids off the road over an embankment. Do you put your life at risk and climb down to assist them? What if I told you that you could possibly save or enhance 50 people's lives without being put in danger? Knowing this, what would you do?

In recognition of National Donate Life Month, April 2011, I want to talk to you about becoming an organ donor. According to <http://organdonor.gov/>:

- there are currently 110,460 people waiting for organ donations
- 10% of those are children under the age of 18
- every 11 minutes somebody is added to the waiting list
- each day approximately 75 people receive organ donations
- 18 people will die each day waiting for an organ

Donate Life

According to <http://www.webmd.com/> most of the organs that are available come from deceased donors. The reality is that the number of candidates waiting for a donation far outnumbers the organ donors available. You can change this. You can help make a difference! Here's how:

- First, don't keep your decision a secret. Tell your family and friends about your decision so that if they have questions you can answer them. This step is critical because when you die; your next-of-kin will be required to give consent for organ donation even if you made your wishes clear while you were living. If your next-of-kin refuses, your wish to be an organ donor will not be carried out.
- Second, you can go to <http://organdonor.gov/> website and register online. It is quick and easy. In some states, you can state your intent to be an organ donor when you renew your driver's license.

Now I want to take a moment to tell you a story about a gentleman who in August of 2004, at the age of 39, was diagnosed with end stage Renal Disease. He had been battling diabetes from the age of 22, but the disease was winning and his kidneys were failing to do the job for which they were designed. In December of 2004, he began the process of dialysis where he would be driven 40 miles to a dialysis center three days a week and would spend between three to five hours hooked up to a machine that would filter the waste and extra fluids out of his blood.

At that point in time, he was approved to be added to the waiting list for an organ donation which at the time could take three to five years. Unfortunately, the dialysis was not getting everything out of his blood, and his only chance for living would be the donation of a kidney. On April 20, 2005 he was given the gift of life from a rare source: a live donor. My brother's life changed that day because I gave him a kidney and a second chance at life. Please consider joining more than 86 million people in the United States that are signed up to be a donor. Presidential

Proclamation on Donate Life <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/03/31/presidential-proclamation-national-donate-life-month>

Garnishment Frequently Asked Questions

LaShawn Smith
Human Resources Assistant
Talent Acquisition Branch

A garnishment is a court order directing that money or property of a third party (usually wages paid by an employer) be seized to satisfy a debt owed. The FFAS Human Resources Division (HRD) processes garnishment orders in compliance with Federal law and regulation. We are providing some answers to frequently asked questions about wage garnishments.

1. What is the responsibility of the employee?

Employees are required to meet any legal obligations to provide child support, alimony and commercial garnishment payments.

2. What is the responsibility of FFAS?

Garnishment (cont)

The U.S. Department of Agriculture does not represent the interest of the employees or creditors in such legal proceedings. USDA/FFAS is bound by law to execute a garnishment order entered by a court.

3. Does USDA/FFAS follow state garnishment law or federal law?

USDA/FFAS follows Federal law found at 5 U.S.C. Section 5520a, and 5 CFR Part 582.

4. Are employees notified that wages will be garnished?

Yes, when HRD receives a garnishment order it send notification by certified mail to the employee that his/her wages will be garnished including the effective pay period, the name of the plaintiff garnishing the wages, the percentage of disposable earnings that it will be garnished. A copy of the original court order also will be forwarded.

5. What regulation provides how much of an employee's pay can be garnished?

Code of Federal Regulations; Subpart D-Consumer Credit Protection Act Restrictions (5 CFR Part 582.402 Maximum garnishment limitations)

Example: If the employee-obligor's aggregate disposable earnings for the work-week are in excess of 40 times the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) minimum hourly wage, 25 percent of the employee-obligor's aggregate disposable earnings may be garnished. The regulation provides the example of the minimum wage rate of \$5.15 per hour that was in effect in September 1997. This rate, multiplied by 40, equals \$206 and thus, if an employee-obligor's disposable earnings in excess of \$206 for a workweek, 25 percent of the employee-obligor's disposable earnings are subject to garnishment. As the minimum wage rate has since increased, the maximum garnishment limitation also has increased.

Exceptions to this 25-percent ceiling are provided at 5 CFR 582.402(a) and (b).

6. How do I get reimbursed for an overpayment on a commercial garnishment and/or child support payment?

There are two options: 1. If the creditor deposits the funds, the creditor will have to send the employee a check or 2. If the creditor returns the check to the Human Resources Division it will forward it to the Kansas City Financial Center, which will reimburse the employee for the returned payment.

7. What has priority when processing garnishment and child support?

The US Code Title 5, Section 5520a (h) provides that an employee's legal obligation to provide child support or make alimony payments shall have priority over any other garnishment action.

8. Who is responsible for processing a garnishment without prior notification?

FFAS/HRD will always ensure employees are provided prior notification of an order to garnish their wages, but can only do so if it receives the garnishment order. FFAS/HRD is not

Garnishment (cont)

responsible for misdirected mail resulting in a garnishment being sent to and processed by the National Finance Center (NFC). An employee with prior knowledge of an order to garnish their wages must ensure the creditor and/or court has been provided with the correct mailing address to HRD. If any employee is garnished without prior notification, the issue must be resolved with the creditor and/or court.

For commercial garnishment, child support and bankruptcy inquiries within FSA, RMA and FAS contact LaShawn Smith at lashawn.smith@wdc.usda.gov, by mail at 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 0594, Washington, D.C., 20052 or by telephone 202-401-0670.

Alcohol Awareness

Juliet McBride
Worklife Program Manager
Employee/Labor Relations and Benefits Branch

Be aware about alcohol and the affect it may have on individuals.

Last month we promised our readers more health and wellness news on alcohol. Follow this [link](#) to a very informative Power Point Presentation on alcohol awareness developed by Traci Ross, Worklife and Wellness Ambassador, South Dakota FSA State Office. It is portable; share with family and friends.

Helpful information can also be found at: www.FOH4You.com

Additionally, the Employee Assistance Program is a helpful professional resource available to help you and your family members resolve life challenges (large or small). For free and confidential assistance, contact the EAP at **TTY 1-800-222-0364, 1-888-262-7848**. The EAP is available 24/7.

May is recognized as “National Caregivers” and “Ride Your Bike to Work” Month.

Career Opportunities in FFAS

All jobs (headquarters and field) open throughout each Agency may be obtained by accessing:

FSA Federal (GS) positions & FSA County Office (CO) positions:
<http://jobsearch.usajobs.opm.gov/a9agfsa.asp>

FAS Positions: <http://jobsearch.usajobs.opm.gov/a9agfas.asp>

RMA Positions: <http://jobsearch.usajobs.opm.gov/a9agrma.asp>

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