

For: County and Federal FSA Employees

Solicitation for Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Intake Cadre

Approved by: Acting Deputy Administrator, Management



1 Overview

A

Background

The Administrative Disputes Resolution (ADR) Act of 1996 requires each Federal agency to provide employees with alternative methods for resolving disputes, other than the traditional grievance and Civil Rights complaint processes. As a result, by January 2000, USDA required each agency to have an ADR program to provide, at a minimum, mediation, as a means of resolving workplace disputes/conflicts.

B

Purpose

This notice provides information about:

- FSA Workplace ADR Program
- FSA Intake Cadre
- applying to the FSA Intake Cadre
- contacting the ADR National Program Manager.

C

Labor Management Obligations

Where exclusive representation exists, bargaining may be requested to the extent allowed by applicable statutes. Where contract language already addresses these policies and procedures for bargaining unit employees, contract language prevails.

<p>Disposal Date</p> <p>October 1, 2004</p>	<p>Distribution</p> <p>All FSA employees; State Offices relay to County Offices</p>
--	--

2 FSA Workplace ADR Program Definitions

A

Definition of FSA Workplace ADR Program

The FSA Workplace ADR Program:

- is a resource available to all employees who want assistance with an office conflict or tensions
- is different and separate from ADR offered for informal and formal EEO complaints, as well as ADR offered for program complaints with producers
- practices a facilitative approach. Unlike traditional administrative processes, this means that rather than telling the parties what the solution should or must be, the parties are given an opportunity to discover their interests, explore options for resolution or improvement of the situation, and are then supported as they develop new skills or enhance existing skills to manage or resolve the conflict more effectively. Thus, the facilitative approach is client driven, and is tailored to assist the employee or group being assisted.

Note: Additional information about the FSA workplace ADR Program can be obtained from the Administrative Officer.

B

Definition of ADR Intake Cadre

The ADR Intake Cadre will be assigned cases by the ADR National Program Manager and will be responsible for:

- identifying issues, positions, and interests with employees
- recommending the ADR approach
- serving as Agency contact to the employees and contractors involved in ADR
- providing timely follow up.

The Intake contact, as well as the service providers, are **neutrals**, as defined by the ADR Act, which means that communication with them is confidential, except in the cases of egregious waste, fraud, and abuse, violence, threats of violence, or criminal activity.

The individual assigned a case for Intake is responsible for determining whether ADR is offered, and, if so, what approach would be appropriate.

The ADR National Program Manager must be contacted before a determination is made **not** to offer ADR services. A decision not to offer ADR services requires the concurrence of the ADR National Program Manager.

Continued on the next page

2 FSA Workplace ADR Program (Continued)

C

Definition of Intake Person

The Intake person in an ADR Program is the employee's first contact with the program and that first impression will determine how the employee views the program. Trust and empathy must begin with the first "hello." For that reason, careful selection and training of the Intake person is essential. Individuals selected to serve in the Intake Cadre must possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities in Exhibit 1. Exhibit 1 contains the skill set necessary for Intake Cadre participants.

3 ADR Intake Cadre

A

Training

There will be a 1-week training session, conducted in Washington, D.C., that all Intake Cadre candidates must attend to be assigned cases by the ADR National Program Manager. Candidates failing to complete all required training will have to reapply to the next announcement.

All cases will be done jointly with the ADR National Program Manager until such time as the Intake Cadre participant is certified to work independently.

The initial training costs will be the responsibility of headquarters, with travel costs absorbed by the selectee's home unit. The selectee's home unit will be responsible for any additional training costs recommended by the National Program Manager, outside of the training provided by headquarters.

B

Agency Contact

The individual assigned a case for Intake is responsible for developing the Statement of Work and providing a rationale for using a specific contractor. Statements of Work have been standardized, so tailoring these to the needs of the specific location will be minimal.

C

Periodic Follow Up

Periodic follow up with ADR intervention participants is critical to ensuring successful conflict resolution or management. The individual assigned a case for Intake is responsible for periodic follow up with the intervention participants. Written reports will be due to the ADR National Program Manager.

Continued on the next page

3 ADR Intake Cadre (Continued)

D

**Performance
Standard**

Each Intake Cadre participant will be provided with a performance element to be included in their Elements and Standards. The National Program Manager will provide input on this element to the employee's supervisor. A "Non-Rated" may be appropriate where minimal time was spent on the ADR Program.

E

**Time
Commitment**

It is difficult to estimate the time commitment for Intake services. The time commitment will be driven by the complexity of the case, the number of parties involved, etc. Intake may take 5 to 10 hours per case, involving 2 to 6 employees, longer for large group interventions.

An average commitment of not less than 20 percent, depending on the issues, is anticipated, immediately following case assignment, for effective Intake. This time commitment will taper off as the intervention is scheduled and will increase when follow up is conducted.

However, depending on the issues, substantially more than a 20 percent time commitment may be required to adequately and timely address the issues.

F

**Case
Assignments**

It is anticipated that case assignments will be made on a semi-rotational basis to match an individual's skills and subject matter expertise, if appropriate, with a case.

G

**Removal From
Intake Cadre**

Removal from the Intake Cadre will be determined by the ADR National Program Manager, in consultation with management. The following will require immediate removal from the Intake Cadre:

- not attending the entire ADR Intake Cadre Training
 - declining 3 case referrals in a 12-month period
 - breach of confidentiality.
-

Notice PM-2340

4 How to Apply

**A
Application
Process**

Applicants have 30 calendar days from the issue date of this notice to submit their complete application packages to the designated management official in the following table.

To be considered complete, application packages must include:

- current resume, SF-171, or SF-612
- answers to questions in subparagraph B
- signed supervisor’s statement (Exhibit 2), as required in subparagraph C.

Complete application packets should be submitted to the following.

IF employee is located in...	THEN submit application packet to...
State or County Office	SED for concurrence.
National, Kansas City, or St. Louis Office	Division Director.

SED’s and Division Directors shall submit completed packages by Federal Express by COB January 17, 2003, to:

LeAndrea D. Alsobrook
ADR National Program Manager
Farm Service Agency, USDA
2101 L Street, NW
Suite 5200
Washington, DC 20037.

Direct questions about the Intake Cadre or the application process to Ms. Alsobrook at 202-418-8982 or TTY at 202-418-9116. FAXed, incomplete, or late applications will **not** be considered.

Continued on the next page

4 How to Apply (Continued)

B

Questions

All applicants must respond to the following 3 questions.

- Explain why you want to be part of the FSA Intake Cadre.
- Describe any training or experience, either on or off the job, that is relevant to serving on the FSA Intake Cadre.
- Describe a specific example, either on or off the job, where you used conflict resolution or communication skills to resolve or better manage a problem or conflict.

Responses may be no more than 1 typed, single spaced page per question, using a size 12 font.

C

**Supervisor's
Support
Statement**

For the application to be considered complete, the statement in Exhibit 2, showing supervisor's support, as well as the designated management official described in subparagraph A, must be signed and included in the application package.

D

Selection Process

Candidates for this program will be selected by a panel of ADR Program Managers from other USDA agencies. An EEO representative will also be included. FSA anticipates selecting 25 candidates for the first training class, representing a cross section of Agency employees, both county and Federal, nationwide.

Intake Cadre Skill Set

A**Knowledge of
Conflict
Resolution**

Following are the knowledge of conflict resolution skills individuals must possess to serve in the Intake Cadre:

- ability to assist persons with conflict by explaining pertinent information about conflict resolution
 - ability to provide counsel if the person would like to try to handle the conflict without intervention.
-

B**Knowledge of
Conflict
Resolution in the
Federal Sector**

Following are the knowledge of conflict resolution skills in the Federal sector that individuals must possess to serve in the Intake Cadre:

- ability to explain the various avenues of redress available to Federal employees to ensure the caller is not unknowingly missing any rights to due process
 - understanding of the labor law requirements pertaining to ADR
 - ability to discern signs of workplace violence and to know when to refer.
-

Continued on the next page

Intake Cadre Skill Set (Continued)

C**Communication Skills**

Following are the communication skills individuals must possess to serve in the Intake Cadre:

- ability to keep calm and professional in response to verbal or personal attacks
- ability to calm the caller while remaining neutral
- ability to ask "effective questions" to obtain necessary information and assist the caller with focus
- ability **not** to agree or disagree with the caller about their position on issues
- ability to remain patient with difficult callers
- ability to actively listen for a long period of time

Note: Initial calls and Intake can take about 1 hour.

- ability to work with people who express strong emotions, e.g., anger.
-

D**Office Skills**

Following are the office skills individuals must possess to serve in the Intake Cadre:

- ability to accurately record all necessary information for the file
 - ability to use word processing, spreadsheets, and databases
 - ability to organize information and file.
-

Support Statement for Employee's Participation in the FSA Workplace ADR Intake Cadre

**Support Statement
for Employee's Participation
in the FSA Workplace ADR Intake Cadre**

I support (employee's name) application to serve in the FSA Workplace ADR Intake Cadre. I realize that I will be responsible for providing funding for 1 annual training activity in support of the skills necessary to function as a member of the Cadre. I also recognize that the time commitments involved in serving as part of the Cadre will change with each case assignment.

Immediate Supervisor
Date

Second Management Official (see subparagraph 4 A)
Date
