

**For:** All FSA, RMA, and FAS Offices, Except Overseas Offices

**Announcing Elder Care Support Program and Group for Care Givers**

**Approved by:** Deputy Administrator, Management



**1 Overview**

**A Background**

In a March 2002 memorandum, OPM discussed their studies and reviews conducted with Adult Dependent Care Working Groups, Federal agencies' Work/Life Coordinators, and employees who were currently care givers of at least 1 elder family member or who had been a care giver within the last 3 years. OPM concluded that elder care is clearly a rapidly growing phenomenon and the baby boomers, ages 38 to 56, are currently the generation hardest hit by elder care responsibilities. OPM encourages agencies to make elder care assistance, such as support groups and resource information, available to those in need.

FFAS is promoting the formulation of elder care support groups and programs to support the interests and needs expressed by employees in a survey issued several months ago. Many FFAS employees, who are care givers for an elder family member, are currently trying to work and balance family which entails having to tackle daily responsibilities of their own, their employer, and those of at least 1 family member, normally age 50 and above.

The survey concluded that care givers were in great need of elder care assistance related to domestic issues, housing, medical and disability benefits, transportation, long distance care giving, and ways for them to better balance work and family.

**B Purpose**

This notice:

- promotes a nationwide elder care support program and group for care givers at all locations deemed necessary
- provides general information about the elder care support groups and program.

<b>Disposal Date</b>  August 1, 2004	<b>Distribution</b>  All FSA, RMA, and FAS Offices, except Overseas Offices; State Offices relay to County Offices
--	--

**1 Overview (Continued)**

**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.

**2 Basic Provisions**

**A Benefits of the Program**

An elder care program can:

- reduce the amount of time employees need to spend away from work dealing with elder care issues
- help employees reduce stress and improve their overall well being
- help employees better balance work and family
- help employees make more informed elder care decisions through group activities, networking, informational materials, and the FFAS Intranet
- improve employee morale
- promote loyalty to the Agency.

**B Formulation of Care Givers Support Group**

Office heads, such as Administrative Officers, or designees shall:

- solicit interest of employees who want to participate in the support group
- formulate a support group at locations where participation is deemed sufficient

**Note:** Offices may invite employees from a collocated Agency to join the group at locations where participation is insufficient.

- oversee the formulation of the group and assist when deemed necessary.

**Notes:** Volunteers may steer activities and events and keep the Office Head or designee abreast of support group plans, activities, and events.

All participants shall work together as a group to make the group efforts meaningful and successful.

**2 Basic Provisions (Continued)**

**C Promoting the Program**

Applicable offices should promote elder care events and activities annually.

**Examples:**

- To learn about the pros and cons of a nursing home or assisted living facility, hold a 1-hour seminar on housing for the elder adult.
- To learn how to better balance work and family, hold a 1-hour stress management seminar for the care givers.
- Hold an elder care fair. Invite Federal and outside affiliations who can provide helpful advice and resource information.

**Note:** The Agency encourages the support group leader to hold meetings and/or activities quarterly or when deemed necessary.

- Share information through newsletters, publications, and Internet.

**3 Participating in Support Group**

**A Notification of Program and Support Group**

Field Offices shall notify participants about their forthcoming plans, that is, willingness to coordinate a support group, date of first meeting for their location, as soon as possible.

HRD, PMBAB shall obtain the status of elder care programs in Field Offices by **April 14, 2004.**

**B Joining the Support Group**

Since activities and events may be held during normal work hours, obtain supervisory approval and notify the Office Head or designee responsible for overseeing the program for your location. **See paragraph 5** for the contact person at your location.

## Notice PM-2404

### 3 Participating in Support Group (Continued)

#### C Time Away From Office to Participate in Activities and Events

Elder care activities and events may be held during a normal workday.

Offices are encouraged to use the following options to allow employee participation during a normal workday schedule.

- Allow excused absences to participate in Agency-sponsored elder care, such as seminars, fairs, and support group events.
- Approve use of flexible work schedules to allow employee participation in activities and events.

**Note:** See 17-PM for information governing excused absences and flexible work schedules.

If an employee is injured while participating in activities during other timeframes, such as before or after work, the employee is normally **not** compensated under the Federal Employee's Compensation Act.

### 4 Funding Elder Care Program

#### A Funding Program

Where cost is involved, such as to obtain a speaker for a seminar, offices shall review the availability of funds and make this part of their annual budget process.

**Note:** Many Federal and non-Federal affiliations provide activities and events, such as workshop, seminar, and elder care fair, at no cost or at a very low cost.

### 5 Contacts

#### A Additional Information

If there are questions about this notice:

- National Offices shall contact, HRD, PMBAB at 202-418-9029, or send an e-mail to **Juliet\_McBride@wdc.fsa.gov**
- Field Offices shall contact the Office Head or designee that is responsible for coordinating the program/support group for their location.

**Note:** County Offices shall contact the State Office for assistance.