

HR UPDATE

STATE OF ALASKA
DIVISION OF PERSONNEL
AND LABOR RELATIONS

FY 07 - ISSUE 12
JUNE 16, 2007

HR.....SOLUTIONS FOR SUCCESS.



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HR UPDATE

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Please let us know what you think of our publication. If you have any suggestions about how to improve the HR Update or topics you think should be addressed, please contact (Inga.Aanrud@alaska.gov).

ALTERNATE WORKWEEK AGREEMENTS BY TERI HILL

The standard workweek for employees is Sunday midnight to Sunday midnight. Employees must satisfy the 37.5 hour minimum workweek guarantee within the specified workweek of 7 consecutive days (168 consecutive hours). Several of the collective bargaining agreements provide alternate workweek options by entering into a Letter of Agreement. There are several things to remember in order to ensure that employees covered by an Alternate Workweek Agreement are appropriately scheduled and accurately compensated.

An Alternate Workweek Agreement is a Letter of Agreement between the State and the Union which amends the master collective bargaining agreement. The Agreements do not become effective until both designated parties have signed the Letter of Agreement. Therefore, until it is signed, the standard workweek is in effect. Approval must be sought in advance and the agency must receive a copy of the Alternate Workweek Agreement signed by both parties before an employee starts to work an alternate workweek schedule.

Scheduling and flexing work hours must follow the provisions of the Alternate Workweek Agreement. The Agreement changes the workweek to 7 consecutive days (168 consecutive hours) other than the standard Sunday midnight to Sunday midnight. This new workweek may even begin in the middle of a day with scheduled hours. Supervisors and Managers must ensure that the minimum workweek guarantee is met in accordance with the new designated workweek. It is important for all parties involved to understand the provisions of the Agreement as unforeseen overtime may result or unnecessary leave may be charged if it is not applied correctly.

Supervisors and employees must also make special considerations when scheduling around holidays. The holiday benefit is only 7.5 hours, which can be more or less than the number of hours an employee normally works on the day in which the holiday falls. The Master Alternate Workweek Letter of Agreements provide specific guidance to ensuring that the minimum workweek requirements are met during workweeks which contain a holiday.

Alternate Workweek Agreements are position specific. When an employee moves from one position to another position, the Agreement becomes invalid. If an employee who has changed positions wishes to continue working an alternate workweek, then s/he must obtain the appropriate agency approvals and re-submit a new Alternate Workweek Agreement for approval by the Division of Personnel & Labor Relations.

Employees and supervisors must keep in mind that once an Alternate Workweek Agreement is approved, the employee cannot change the workweek without canceling the Agreement. The minimum workweek

guarantee must be met in accordance with the new assigned workweek. And, once an Agreement is cancelled, the employee may not resume an alternate workweek schedule until a new Agreement is approved by the Division of Personnel & Labor Relations.

Reviewing the Master Alternate Workweek Agreement prior to implementing an alternate workweek schedule is the best way to ensure that supervisors and managers remain compliant with its terms. As always, Technical Services can be contacted if you have any questions or need any assistance. Special training on the topic is available.

PLANNING FOR FUTURE EMPLOYMENT NEEDS: SUCCESSION PLANNING IN STATE AGENCIES BY CAROL MCLEOD

Succession Planning is a term that doesn't seem to fit within state government employment. Kings and queens do it. CEO's of Fortune 500 companies do it. Presidents do it. They plan for the day when they will no longer be there and select their successors to carry on with the job. It sounds like a process that would not be easily adaptable to state service, but if care is taken to understand that there are fair and equitable ways to apply succession planning, this can be an excellent tool to help State of Alaska managers and supervisors think about the future of the workforce in their agencies.

The State of Alaska merit system may not, at first glance, appear to be amenable to succession planning, but it depends upon the lens with which the initiative is viewed. Succession planning, in a government setting, means developing employees so that when appropriate openings and opportunities for growth occur, these employees

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will be in a position to apply for them. When implementing succession planning in state agencies, managers are creating a workplace that values employees' ambition to grow in their careers and encourages those who have that ambition to take advantage of the agency's succession planning initiative.

Workforce planning begins by identifying possible *and* probable future jobs and the competencies that employees will need in order to perform those jobs. The following succession planning model assumes that some forecasting has already taken place. Once that has been done, there are some steps that managers can take now to help bridge that gap between forecasted jobs and expected limited supply of employees to fill them. This succession planning model helps ensure fair treatment, as required by state statute, and also provides agencies with the chance to find and grow talent that already exists in current employees.

Step One: Let them know what's coming

Because the agency has done some workforce forecasting, the expected shortfalls in jobs and competencies for the next five to ten years have been identified. Using whatever communication methods are acceptable in the agency, inform the current employees of the anticipated and future needs. Agency newsletters, bulletin boards, and staff meetings are just a few examples of ways to let employees know what the "hot jobs" will be in the future and what skills and competencies will be needed to fill those hot jobs. It will be critical to the succession plan that employees understand that there will be specific key competencies needed. Inform them that this is a process which will need a time commitment from both the employee and the agency and that the agency intends to use it. Depending upon the culture of the agency, this can be done either formally or informally for all interested, eligible employees.

Step Two: Find out who is interested

Allow interested employees the chance to communicate their interest in working through the agency plan. Allow a sign-up time, perhaps by email or some other writ-

ten confirmation, and find out from each individual what kinds of future positions and competencies they are interested in learning. It is imperative that any succession plan recognizes that employee career development is a key element. *It will all be wasted effort if the employee prepares for a career he or she really isn't interested in and doesn't really want.*

However, it should be made very clear from the beginning of the program that participating in the program does not guarantee that they will be selected for any future openings. The agency program should be designed to help the employees gain the necessary confidence, skills, knowledge, and competencies to apply for future jobs, but should not imply that anticipated opportunities are foregone conclusions. Another consideration is that, depending upon the number of interested individuals, there may be a need to limit eligibility to those employees who have passed their probationary period.

Step Three: Assess where the participants are right now

Together, managers and employees need to gain an understanding of what competencies and skills the employee now possesses which will be transferable to the upcoming jobs, and which competencies and skills the employee will need to gain or improve before being able to adequately fill any of the expected positions. Supervisory input will be helpful here, as well as employee self-assessments.

Step Four: Create development plans

At this point in the process, each interested employee will have indicated their preferred career tracks with the competencies that they need to master in order to be considered for future openings. Work with them as individuals or in groups of individuals interested in the same kinds of competencies to prepare a development plan. The plan should include specific learning activities with a timeline for completion and milestones for assessing progress. The Training and Development Team with the Division of Personnel and Labor Relations can help managers and employees determine what kinds of training may be appropriate for each development plan. Keep

in mind that development does not necessarily always mean formal classroom training. Different kinds of development include mentoring, coaching, knowledge management and transfer, working on committees, video and internet assignments, and other non-class activities.

Step Five: Allowing the development opportunities to happen

Help employees meet their career development milestones by allowing them time to participate in formal training opportunities through Train Alaska. Encourage more senior employees and supervisors to participate as mentors and coaches to those with development plans. Require knowledge management/transfer plans from any employee who is approaching retirement eligibility. Set aside a weekly or monthly time to work with the individuals and groups to determine if milestones are being met. Help the employee find ways to overcome any roadblocks that may have occurred since the last meeting. **Always encourage the employee to take personal responsibility in seeking out other development opportunities, such as attending vocational-technical or college level classes after work hours.** Just seeing which employee takes this kind of initiative may be a way of assessing how seriously the employee takes the succession planning process.

Keeping good employees is always a workforce planning goal. Helping good employees meet their own career goals through succession planning is one way to aid in statewide retention efforts. Please call on the Division of Personnel and Labor Relations for assistance with succession planning, competency identification, or other workforce planning issues.

Many thanks to Washington State Civil Service for their [Succession Planning Model](#). Another good source of information on this topic is [Career Planning and Succession Management: Developing Your Organization's Talent-for Today and Tomorrow](#) by Rothwell, Jackson, Knight, and Lindholm (2005). Praeger Publishers.