

# HR UPDATE

STATE OF ALASKA  
DIVISION OF PERSONNEL  
AND LABOR RELATIONS

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HR.....SOLUTIONS FOR SUCCESS.



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## HR UPDATE

### LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK

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 [Franklin.Hurt@alaska.gov](mailto:Franklin.Hurt@alaska.gov).

### New I-9 Form By Carol McLeod

For employees hired on or after November 7, 2007, there is a new Employment Eligibility Verification Form (I-9 form) that must be used. The US Citizenship and Immigration Service made several minor changes to the I-9 form and they have removed five documents that can be used to prove identity and eligibility to work in the United States. The following documents may no longer be used for the I-9:

- Certification of US Citizenship- (Form N-560 or N-570)
- Certification of Naturalization- (Form N-550 or N-570)
- Alien Registration Receipt Card- (Form I-151)
- Unexpired Reentry Permit- (Form I-327)
- Unexpired Refugee Travel Document- (Form I-571).

The following document has been added to the list and may now be used to prove identity and eligibility:

- Unexpired Employment Authorization Document- (I-766)
- Supervisors and managers should begin using the new I-9 immediately for any new hires. Current employees do not need to complete another I-9. The new I-9 form can be found at <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/I-9.pdf>

### Holiday Season and the Workplace By Camille Brill

This is a fun time of year when we can take some time to spend with each other that isn't "all work." It's a great time to socialize and get to know each other better. It's wonderful that some of our work units are coming together both at work and off duty in non-work settings to celebrate the holiday season.

This is special time of year that we as a public employer and public servants can renew our commitment to a workplace that is fair, productive, and harmonious.

This is also the time of year that Human Resource folks field a number of questions such as:

- My supervisor has asked me to organize the office Christmas party. I'm not Christian and I don't want to organize or go to the party. Do I have to?
- My religious beliefs don't allow me to participate in holiday gift exchanges, but I'm concerned that if I don't participate my boss will think I'm not a team player. What should I do?

For many people these are "non-issues" while others feel strongly about them. Some people feel the "PC police" are taking over and

being ridiculous while others don't understand why people can't just be respectful and polite. There's the debate whether "Christmas" is a Christian celebration or a secular American holiday or both. Bottom line is that we want everyone to feel welcome in the workplace and at work-sponsored events.

### Parties

Work-sponsored events should be fun, safe, inclusive, and professional. Everyone should be invited but attendance should be truly voluntary. There are a number of protected reasons why people may choose not to participate.

### Cards, invitations, and decorations in the workplace

The holidays coincide with important religious observances. If you allow a reasonable amount of holiday decorating of office spaces, avoid endorsing or supporting a particular religious observance in holiday decorations, party themes, or holiday cards/invitations.

### Presents

Giving presents in the workplace as part of a work-sponsored event may lead to misunderstandings or hurt feelings. They can also be fun and morale-building. Managers should carefully consider whether to sponsor gift exchanges and if so, set some parameters. The cost of even small gifts is a hardship for some. Some gag gifts, especially those in poor taste, can be offensive. Gift exchanges should

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be called names like “Gift Auction” or “White Elephant Gift Exchange.”

If you have any questions about issues arising from your workplace holiday happenings, please seek guidance from your supervisor, manager, or Management Services staff.

## The State of Alaska Diversity Value Statement:

*“The State of Alaska, as an employer and service provider, recognizes the need to respect and treat equally all people it hires and serves. We also recognize that the State is in a position to teach by example and offer leadership in sensitivity to diversity. Our concept of diversity is broad, extending beyond those categories of peoples formally recognized and protected by law. Valuing the diversity of a workforce represented of all Alaskan enriches the quality of our service to the people of Alaska.”*

### Using Feedback as a Leadership Tool By Carol McLeod

*“Managers are people who do things right, while leaders are people who do the right thing”.*

-Warren Bennis “On Becoming a Leader”

There is a lot of talk nowadays in the State of Alaska about recruitment and retention issues within state departments and how, with limited human resources, departments can continue to operate successfully. Hand-in-hand with recruitment and retention is the perception of leadership within the agency. An organization seen as having leaders rather than managers will have a greater advantage when

it comes to finding and keeping good employees than will an organization with a reputation for managers and supervisors with fewer leadership skills.

Leadership development is, in itself, a whole science with many facets and components. It is not something that can be addressed in a single column. It is not a simple topic. However, leadership is a competency and the skill sets associated with it can be defined in terms that can help the interested manager or supervisor learn and practice certain leadership behaviors.

One such behavior is the use of daily feedback to give both positive comments and constructive analysis to employees. Using feedback on a daily basis is difficult at first. Often it feels artificial or forced, and often, at least at first, its connotation is that it is always negative. Once a manager develops the practice of giving feedback frequently, it becomes less artificial and much more appreciated and expected by the employees. Managers may find that employees who are accustomed to positive feedback are more likely to accept constructive feedback without resentment and in the manner in which it is intended.

An approach to making feedback easier to give and to making your feedback have the impact it deserves is to consider the way in which it is delivered. Effective feedback is always specific, focused on a behavior (not a person), and describes how the behavior effects the rest of the team, agency, or another person. It is given in a manner that is intended to sincerely show appreciation for a job well done or offer help when performance is not up to par.

Following are some tips that managers

may find useful as they begin to use both positive and constructive feedback as part of their daily management activities in the agency:

- Successful feedback describes actions or behaviors that the employee can do something about. It involves the “how,” “what,” and “when” of an action, but not the “why.” Asking why implies asking about motivation or attitude, which are not behavioral in nature.
- Constructive feedback is descriptive and directed towards the action, not the person. It is intended to help the employee improve performance and should be followed up by observing changed behavior.
- Whether positive or constructive, feedback should be timely. It should take place as close to the event as possible.
- Effective feedback includes sharing information and observations—it is not always a one-way street where the manager talks and the employee listens. Include a “feedback loop” by asking questions to ensure that the feedback was understood and to find out what can be done to assist in making the necessary changes.
- Feedback as a motivator for effective performance is especially powerful—people appreciate being recognized for a job well done.

A recent study with 500 CEOs documented that the most successful leaders succeed by helping other people—their employees—become successful themselves. Feedback is only one tool that can help managers and supervisors grow to be leaders in their organizations. The Division of Personnel offers the Academy for Supervisors and other training to assist managers and supervisors in becoming the leaders that attract and keep talented employees.

