State of Alaska
Division of Personnel
and Labor Relations

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HR Update

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HR Update
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Spotlight on General Agencies Service Center

By Worth Barthel

The General Agencies Service Center (GASC) is pleased to provide payroll, recruitment, and employee relations services to the following Departments: Administration (DOA), Commerce, Community, & Economic Development (DCCED), Education and Early Development (DEED), Labor and Workforce Development (DLWD), Law (DOL), and Revenue (DOR).

Your GASC staff strives to provide professional, customer focused, human resource services to a wide variety of State departments that are tasked with providing an even wider array of services and support to the public of our great state. We will continue to look for new and innovative ways to serve you within our new service center model. As an introduction to our staff, some of whom you may already know very well, this article shares some biographical information about your Service Center's supervisors.

Sharon Dick is the Human Resource Manager for the General Agencies Service Center. Sharon is responsible for all functions and services that are offered within the GASC, as well as being the primary Management Consultant for the Department of Law. Sharon was born and raised in Juneau, received a bachelors degree in Sociology from Western Washington University. Sharon has worked in HR for the State for 18 years, and enjoys spending time with her family and traveling to sunny locales. Sharon has a dedication to customer service and professionalism that is a huge asset to her employees and the clients we serve. Sharon is open to feedback on areas that we are succeeding in, and those that we might need to improve.

Worth Barthel is the Assistant Human Resource Manager providing direction and oversight to the Payroll and Recruitment units, and is also the primary Management Consultant for the Department of Administration. Worth was born in Anchorage, raised in Juneau, attended Seattle University and San Diego State University earning a bachelors degree in Psychology and a master's degree in Business Administration. He has worked in HR for 6 years, been with the State for 2.5 years, and enjoys outdoor sports and activities such as hiking and skiing.

Within our service center we have a staff of 12 individuals dedicated to processing your payroll for 7,129 employees accurately and in a timely manner. Rachel Atkinson is your GASC Payroll Supervisor. Rachel was raised in Juneau, attended University of Montana earning a degree in Business Administration. She has worked in HR for 6.5 years, been with the State for 7 years, and enjoys all things that are related to frogs. Rachel is a great asset to our clients when they are tackling unique payroll situations, responding to complaints or grievances that are payroll related, or needing guidance on interpreting the pay and leave portions of our various union contracts. Rachel supervises two Lead Payroll Technicians, Susan Till and Kathleen Lyden.

Susan Till directly supervises the HR Technicians that are responsible for the payrolls of the following Departments; DOA, DEED, and DCCED. Susan was born and raised in Juneau, attended the University of Phoenix. She has worked in HR for a year and a half, been with the State for 5 years, and enjoys spending time with her grandchildren. Working with Susan are Stephanie Cave (DCCED), Marc Mulkey (DEED), Stephanie Nelson (DOA), and Anvalara Pearce (DOA).

Kathleen Lyden, our second Lead Payroll Technician directly supervises the HR Technicians that are responsible for the payrolls of the following Departments: DOL, DOR, and DLWD. Kathleen was raised in New York, attended Arizona State University earning a bachelors degree in Zoology and a master's degree in Animal Nutrition. She has worked in HR for a year and a half, been with the State for 2 years, and enjoys reading, walking, and gardening. Working with Kathleen are Ampy Cruz (DLWD), Rose Foley (DOL), Marylyn Peralta (DLWD), and Erika Vejar (DOR).

Navigating the process and requirements of recruitment for the State can be challenging. Our client agencies are very fortunate to have a dedicated, experienced and client focused Recruitment Team. Supervising all recruitment functions for the GASC is Cindy Pfaff. Cindy was born in Germany, raised in Juneau. She has worked in HR for the State for 2 years, and enjoys camping, baking, and spending time with her family. Cindy, along with Tami Brown, are ready and able to assist you with posting positions on Workplace Alaska, approving hires, assisting with advanced step placement requests, Minimum Qualifications determinations, and any recruitment related matters.

If you need assistance with employee performance management (discipline, evaluations, investigation of employee misconduct, etc), grievance or complaint response, or just need assistance finding the HR services you are in need of, please contact one of our excellent Management Consultants. Teri Moss, is the only GASC staff member based in our Anchorage office and provides back-up assistance as needed for managers of the agencies we serve in the Anchorage/ Mat-Su area. Teri also is the statewide primary contact for the Division of Child Support Services and the Division of Motor Vehicles. Donn Heflin, is the primary contact for the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development and the Department of Revenue.

Aaron Gelston is the primary Management Consultant for the Department of Labor and Workforce Development as well as the supervisor of our Support Staff within the GASC. Aaron was born and raised in Juneau, attended the University of Alaska Southeast earning a degree in Business Administration. He has worked in HR for the State for 8 years, and enjoys outdoor recreation and spending time with his family. Aaron directly supervises Chris Broussard, another Human Resource Assistant (currently vacant) and an Administrative Clerk II (currently vacant). While many of our clients do not have the pleasure of directly interacting with our support staff they are critical to our operations and make a huge impact on many of our clients by processing leave cash-ins, managing the huge amount of paperwork that is processed here, and distributing pay warrants to our departmental contacts here in Juneau.

All of your HR staff is dedicated to finding solutions for the personnel matters you face as you navigate your agency to continued successes. While we may not always have the specific tools or avenues you desire to achieve your goals, please understand that we are always working to find solutions that are practical and work within our personnel system. This allows us to play the critical role of limiting your liability by ensuring that all aspects of your personnel issues are cared for appropriately and according to all applicable laws, statues, regulations, and bargaining unit contracts.

We look forward to working with you in 2008 and beyond!

General Agencies Staff Left to Right: Worth Barthel, Aaron Gelsotn, Stephanie Nelson, Sharon Dick, Ampy Cruz, Marc Mulkey, Tamara Brown, Cindy Pfaff, Stephanie Cave, Kathleen Lyden and Rachel Atkinson. **Not Pictured:** Donn Heflin, Anvalara Pearce, Marylyn Peralta, Rose Foley, Rayisa Boone, Ebony Cortese and **Anchorage Staff:** Teri Moss

FMLA Changes for Military Families

By Krisi Hicks

President Bush signed into law the first expansion of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) on January 28, 2008, since the statute was first enacted in 1993. This amendment provides for dealing with care for family members injured in the course of military service, and in advance of being called up to active duty. Generally, the new FMLA provisions create two new entitlements for employees who are eligible for leave under the FMLA:

- 26 weeks of job protected leave during one 12-month period for the employee to care for a spouse, child, parent, or "next of kin" who is a service member, injured in the course of military service and undergoing medical treatment, recuperation or therapy, is on out-patient status, or is on the temporary disabled retired list for a *"serious injury or illness"*; and
- 12 weeks of job protected leave during any 12-month period for *"any qualifying exigency"* (to be defined by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) in regulations) when the employee's spouse, child or parent is on active duty or is notified of an impending call or order to active duty, or when the service member is already on active duty, in the Armed Forces.

Employees may take either type of leave intermittently or on a reduced leave schedule. Leave used to care for the injured or ill service member is different from traditional FMLA leave in that it is a one-time leave that must be used in one 12-month period. Any combination of other FMLA leave with the 26-week leave is limited to the 26 weeks. For example, an employee might qualify for 12 weeks of non-military related FMLA leave for his or her own serious health condition, *and* an additional 14 weeks of FMLA leave to care for a covered service member.

What is a "qualifying exigency"?
DOL still needs to issue final regulations which will include clarifying covered "qualifying exigencies," the intent is clearly to provide service members with full family support to assist in getting their affairs in order before they depart. Exigencies may include formally structured events, such as pre- and post-deployment meetings, that someone called up to active duty must attend. Other covered events would be for families to make financial plans for the deployment and other similar meetings that would occur while the family member was away, and for reunion and reintegration when the family member returns.

Who are "next-of-kin" to "covered service members"? "Next-of-kin" is defined as the "nearest blood relative" of the injured veteran, opening FMLA protection for these limited purposes to provide care for brothers, sisters and other blood relations. A "covered service member" is defined as a member of the "Armed Forces, including a member of the National Guard or Reserves, who is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation or therapy, is otherwise in outpatient status or is otherwise on the temporary disability retired list, for a serious injury or illness."

"Serious Health Condition" v. "Serious Injury" The amendments relating to care for service members do not use the term "serious health conditions" (which applies to traditional forms of FMLA), but rather, incorporate a different term, "serious injury or illness", which covers injuries and illnesses incurred in the line of duty (while on active duty) in the Armed Forces that leaves the service member medically unfit to perform the duties of his or her office, grade, rank or rating. At the same time, the amendments' protection is limited to individuals on active duty service, which excludes reservists who are injured in the course of performing their regular reserve duties, such as monthly weekend service or during their two weeks of annual training, but would cover the same individuals if they are called to active duty service.

The expansion of FMLA protections resulted from a need to provide support to military families whose lives have been impacted and disrupted by service and serious injuries that require extended care and recuperation. The rest of the FMLA provisions, including which employers are covered, remain in effect.

Excerpted from various articles in Thompson Guide, Family and Medical Leave Handbook. March 2008, Vol. 15, No. 12

Quick Facts
The Gallup Group

According to a recent survey by the Gallup Group:

- 93% of mid- and large-size organizations surveyed have implemented staff retention initiatives
- 25% of employees leave a job due to uninteresting work
- Another 25% leave due to lack of teamwork and cooperation
- 19% leave due to failure by management to keep promises
- 13% leave due to poor line management.

Exit Interviews
An Effective Way to Transfer and Manage Institutional Knowledge

Knowledge transfer can be defined as a toolbox of various tools that can be used to assist an agency preserve its organizational memories. For agencies, decisions about future and current plans are more effective if past actions, experiences, and knowledge are taken into account. The Exit Interview is one tool that you may find useful in your Knowledge Transfer toolbox.

The State of Alaska has an exit survey instrument available on-line. This instrument can be quite beneficial by eliciting feedback about the departing employee's job satisfaction, supervisors, salary, and other information that can be used to uncover issues that pertain to employee retention. However, as a knowledge transfer tool, it lacks a method for capturing organizational memories and knowledge of the job that the departing employee has.

An agency may find that a qualitative questionnaire administered in person to all departing employees will do a better job of attaining information that a successor can use from the first day forward. This observation comes with a word of warning, however—the quality of the information will often depend upon the nature of the employee's departure. Frequently, an employee leaving involuntarily will focus on his/her personal objectives rather than agency needs. Disgruntled employees may intentionally mislead interviewers out of retaliation for being dismissed or out of fear of retaliation if they are perceived to be complaining. And there is even the attitude, upon occasion, of "Why bother? Nothing's ever going to change anyway." These issues need to be taken into consideration by the interviewer.

One way to help minimize biases such as these is to hold the exit interview as far in advance as possible of departure. This step has a dual advantage: it captures knowledge while the employee is still performing the work, and it allows time for the employee to carefully consider if he/she has thought of everything that needs to be passed on to the next person.

Having a neutral interviewer can help—a front line or immediate supervisor may not be the best or appropriate person in many situations. Appointing a person outside of the immediate chain of command to be the exit interviewer for all departing employees may help alleviate some of the concerns by the departing employee. It is also helpful if the interviewer is candid about why the interview is being conducted (to ensure that the employee's knowledge of the agency is not lost) and how the information will be used.

The use of this type of interview/questionnaire to gain knowledge about **what** the departing employee does and **how** he/she does it. This particular kind of exit interview is **not** to find out how satisfied the employee was with the job, the supervisor, or other issues of that nature. Supervisors can encourage departing employees to complete the on-line exit survey to share their thoughts on those issues, but *this exit interview is to gain knowledge of organizational knowledge that can be transferred to other employees*.

So what kinds of questions should be asked in this kind of exit interview? The following are some suggestions, though as an agency with unique needs, you will most likely think of others that may better serve the agency. These samples are to provide you with an understanding of the difference between a knowledge transfer exit interview and a job satisfaction exit interview.

See Exit Interview Checklist Table on Page 5

The use of exit interviews to gain agency knowledge from a departing employee can be a valuable tool in your toolbox. Taking the time to train a neutral agency interviewer in conducting knowledge transfer exit interviews will put your agency at an advantage when an employee with organizational memories leaves for other endeavors.

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Sample Exit Interview Question and Follow Up		
Issue/Item	**Possible questions**	**Necessary follow up**
Contact information	• With whom do you work on a daily/weekly/ monthly basis outside of the agency? • With whom do you work most closely in this agency? • What is their contact information?	Touch base with these contacts to introduce the change in personnel
Documentation	• What files are key to getting the job done? • Where are these files kept? • Are there written instructions for the processes used in your job?	Ask departing employees to organize their files If instructions have not been written, ask departing employee to assist in writing them—collect information about mission-critical processes as soon as you know the employee is leaving
Ongoing activities	• What activities are still in progress? • What commitments have you made for the agency that need to be completed? • Are there any loose ends to tie up?	Identify time-sensitive issues that need to be dealt with.
Future contact	• Where can you be reached in case we need to contact you? • Are you open to answering questions once your successor has settled into the job?	If time permits, it is helpful to have the successor meet face-to-face with the departing employee
Improvement	• How would you improve the way your job is done? • Are there aspects of the job that can be improved?	
Follow through	• Let the departing employee know that his/ her knowledge is valued and his/her advice will be used.	Reassure departing employee that his/her input matters
Source: Canada School of Public Service, Roundtable on Organizational Memory, (2007), Lost and Found.		