NASA Lewis Research Center

OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES PERSONNEL NEWSLETTER

June 1997

FAMILY FRIENDLY LEAVE POLICY EXPANDED

In an effort to build on the Government's ongoing efforts to create a family friendly work environment, President Clinton recently issued a memorandum outlining an expanded family friendly leave policy. The memorandum specifically requests heads of agencies to allow employees to schedule and take up to 24 hours of leave without pay (LWOP) each year for participation in school activities, routine family medical appointments, and elderly relatives' health needs.

The following activities are covered by this policy:

1. **School and early childhood educational activities that would allow employees to participate in school activities directly related to the educational advancement of a child. This includes parent-teacher conferences or meetings with child-care providers, interviewing for a new school or child-care facility, or participating in volunteer activities supporting the child's educational advancement. The term "school" refers to an elementary school, secondary school, Head Start program, or a child-care facility.**

2. **Routine family medical purposes that allow parents to accompany children to routine medical or dental appointments, such as annual checkups or vaccinations. Although these activities are not currently covered by the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), the Family Friendly Leave Act (FFLA) does permit employees to use up to 104 hours of sick leave each year for such purposes. Unpaid leave should be available for these purposes in cases when sick leave is not available to employees.**

3. **Elderly relatives' health or care needs that allow employees to accompany an elderly relative to routine medical or dental appointments or other professional services related to the care of the elderly relative, such as making arrangements for housing, meals, phones, banking services, and other similar activities. Although Federal employees can use unpaid leave or sick leave for health related purposes under FMLA or FFLA, employees may be granted up to 24 hours of unpaid leave for this broader range of activities related to elderly relatives' health or care needs.**

The 24 hours of unpaid leave provided under this initiative is in addition to leave an employee may be entitled to under the FMLA or the FFLA. There is, however, no legal entitlement to this leave. Instead, supervisors are encouraged to grant requests for leave as mission requirements permit. The President is also encouraging managers to support employee requests for paid time off (i.e., annual leave, compensatory time off, and credit hours under a flexible work schedule) to meet family obligations.

This policy is to be used to augment the array of family friendly leave flexibilities already in place. Some family friendly options available to employees at the Lewis Research Center include the following:

- **Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) allows eligible employees to take a total of 12 weeks of unpaid leave during a 12-month period for (a) the birth of a son or daughter and care of the newborn; (b) the placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care; (c) the care of the employee's spouse, son, daughter, or parent with a serious health condition; or (d) a serious health condition of the employee that makes the employee unable to perform the essential functions of his/her position.**

- **Federal Employees Family Friendly Leave Act (FEFFLA) permits an employee to use up to 104 hours of sick leave each year to care for a sick family member, including providing routine medical and dental examinations and treatment; and to make arrangements necessitated by the death of a family member or attend the funeral of a family member.**

- **Sick leave may be used for purposes relating to the adoption of a child, including appointments with adoption agencies, social workers, and attorneys; court proceedings; required travel; and any other activities necessary to allow the adoption to proceed.**

- **The Voluntary Leave Transfer Program is available to employees with a personal or family-member medical emergency. Eligible employees who do not have accumulated, earned, or accrued leave may receive annual leave donated from other NASA or Federal employees.**

- **Employees may be excused from duty up to 7 days per calendar year to donate an organ or bone marrow without loss of leave or pay.**

- **Compensatory time may be earned for overtime work ordered and approved by management. These hours, with approval, may be used to meet family needs.**

- **Extended leave without pay, as mission requirements permit and when mutually beneficial to both the employee and the Center, may be granted to employees to meet family obligations.**

- **Credit hours may be earned by wage grade employees in accordance with the maxiflex alternative work schedule. These hours, with approval, may be used to meet family needs.**

- **Flexitime, irregular tours and/or special tours may be used to address individual employee needs regarding family responsibilities as mission and/or organizational requirements permit.**

- **The Work-At-Home Program may be used on a temporary basis in situations that would be mutually beneficial to the Center and the employee.**

Leave request procedures for family friendly or other purposes and leave program requirements are outlined in established negotiated agreements and the Lewis Research Center Absence and Leave Handbook. Questions may be directed to Lori Pietravoia, Program and Policy Office, PABX 3-2506 or Carol Mehallick, Operations Office, at PABX 3-2507.

CAREER TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM CENTER UPDATE

"WHAT WILL I DO NEXT? LIFE AFTER NASA-- THE PROS AND CONS OF STARTING YOUR OWN BUSINESS"

Starting your Own Business Seminars has been a very popular program series offered by the CTAPC. Several professionals, experienced with the pros and cons of starting a business, recently participated in a "What Will I Do Next? Life after NASA -- Pros and Cons of Starting Your Own Business" presentation. The goals of the program are to provide guidance on the many complex considerations of becoming a business owner and to help attendees become better prepared if they decided to start a business.

Mary Poldruhi, owner of Parma Perogis; Steve Adams, Founder of Adams Communications; and Wayne Zeman, Executive Director of Lewis Incubator for Technology (LIFT), shared their knowledge with attendees. Over 50 NASA people came to the March 13th program to learn the pros and cons of starting a business. Following are some of the questions that the panel members were asked to consider: What kind of business do you have? Where is it located? What motivated you to start your business? Where did you get your ideas? How long did it take you to break even? What advice would you give to someone thinking of starting a business?

The audience was surprised when Mary Poldruhi stated she does not enjoy what she is doing, but is successful because she works hard and believes in her product and business. Mary explained how she raised nearly a quarter of a million dollars, the business start-up-money, by scanning telephone books for professionals with Slavic surnames, She telephoned these people, one after another, until she raised enough money to start Parma Perogis. Mary spoke about the success of small business and the challenges many entrepreneurs face in the course of pursuing their dreams. Attendees commented that Mary was an inspiration to someone who may be considering a start-up business.

Steve Adams, Founder of Adams Business Communications and author of "Reinventing Your Career," told the audience how he became self-employed and founder of Adams Business Communications. He had been a newspaper reporter and editor for 20 years and in public relations for several years. Steve said that one of his present company's biggest customers was an organization that had laid him off during his public relations career.

Wayne Zeman, Executive Director of Lewis Incubator for Technology (LIFT), told about his organization's involvement with the Lewis Incubator for Technology (LIFT) Program. The LIFT Program is designed to nurture new and emerging businesses that have the potential to incorporate technology developed by NASA Lewis. LIFT's objective is to create new products, services, companies, jobs and economic growth in the State of Ohio. Good ideas that enhance value of a business entity or increase the organization's ability to serve the business community and our society are sought. Wayne also gave practical advice for those who are interested in starting a business.

Participants said they got ideas on marketing a new business, writing a business plan, and reference lists of books, magazines, and videos. Attendees commented on the value the presenters placed on the inspirational value of self achievement and the encouragement offered to do what one has a passion for doing. Panel members provided much information about the insights and considerations of individuals involved with new business. Attendees said it was enlightening to hear how others have started their business.

Participants mentioned the speakers' unexpected ease at talking to the audience. It was easy for the participants to understand the panel members' concepts because the presentations were not overwhelming or too technical.

Watch for future CTAPC program listings on e-mail and through interoffice mail. Learn more about CTAPC by visiting the home page http://www.acap.army.mil/nasa or calling (216) 977-0009. Also, be sure to stop in at the CTAPC office in the Analex Building, 3001 Aerospace Parkway, Brook Park, Ohio, to take advantage of the Career Transition/ Career Development resources that are available to NASA Lewis civil service employees.

CAREER TRAINING

At the time of this publication, the following CTAPC events have been planned:

CAREER MANAGEMENT WORKSHOPS
2-Day Workshop June 24-25, July 8-9, or July 29-30
9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

HOW TO START A BUSINESS SEMINAR
June 25
9 a.m. to 12 Noon

FOCUS ON INTERVIEWING
June 26 or July 24
9 a.m. to 12

ELECTRONIC JOB SEARCH
July 10
9 a.m.-11 a.m.

FINANCIAL PLANNING FOR RETIREMENT
July 16
9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

DEVELOPING COMMUNICATION SKILLS TO ENHANCE YOUR CAREER
July 17
9 a.m. to 12 Noon

WHAT KIND OF RIGHTS?

Weingarten rights are mandated by law and came to be through an actual case decided by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1975. In that case, management had suspected an employee, named Weingarten, of theft and called the employee in to ask questions. The employee insisted on having a union representative present to help her respond to the questions. The manager refused to allow such assistance. When the employee refused to answer the questions without a representative present, the company fired the employee.

An unfair labor practice complaint was filed and eventually was heard by the Supreme Court. In the decision, the Court determined that if the meeting included both management and a bargaining unit employee, was investigative in nature, and the unit member feared discipline as a result of the discussion, upon request, Ms. Weingarten was entitled to union representation at the meeting. Agencies are required to post annual notices of these rights. The following "Annual Notice of Right to Request Union Representation" satisfies this requirement.

ANNUAL NOTICE OF RIGHT TO REQUEST UNION REPRESENTATION (WEINGARTEN RIGHTS)

The Civil Service Reform Act gives employees in units represented by an exclusive labor organization the right to request union representation at an examination by a representative of the agency in connection with an investigation if the employee believes the examination may result in disciplinary action.

Section 7114(a) of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 (CSRA) states that:

(2) An exclusive representative of an appropriate unit in an agency shall be given the opportunity to be represented at
(B) any examination of an employee in the unit by a representative of the agency in connection with an investigation if
(i) the employee reasonably believes that the examination may result in disciplinary action against the employee; and
(ii) the employee requests representation.

Section 7114(a)(3) of the CSRA requires that employees receive annual notice of the rights set forth above. If you have any questions relative to this notice, please contact Lori O. Pietravoia, Personnel Management Specialist, at PABX 3-2506.

NASA EXTERNAL AWARDS

Every quarter, the Center receives requests for nominations for a wide variety of non-NASA awards. A call letter with nomination criteria summaries is sent to the directorate offices for distribution. Please call the Awards Office at 433-2848, for specific information.

The following is a list of non-NASA External Awards solicitation due this quarter, July to September 1997:

Elder Statesmen of Aviation Award
Executive Excellence Award
Women in Aerospace (WIA) Awards
Aviation Week and Space Technology - Distinguished Service Award
Rotary National Award for Space Achievement
American Astronautical Society Awards
American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics
GEICO Public Service Awards
National Partnership Award
National Medal of Technology
Black Engineer of the Year Award
Federal Section All Star Team and the Linda Trunzo Humanitarian Award
President's Quality Award Program

NASA DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE PROGRAM

In September 1986, Executive Order 12564, Drug-Free Federal Workplace, was signed by President Ronald Reagan. This Executive Order established the goal of a drug-free workplace and made it a condition of employment for all Federal employees to refrain from using illegal drugs on or off -duty.

The NASA Drug-Free Workplace Program (DFWP), which was established in accordance with Executive Order 12564, has been in place since 1989. NASA's program is based on the principle that NASA has a compelling obligation to eliminate illegal drug use from the workplace due to the Agency's scientific and research missions and responsibilities and the sensitive nature of its work. Illegal drug use would be detrimental to NASA employees accomplishing the goals, objectives, and missions of the Agency. As a result, it is NASA's policy to assure a workplace that is free of illegal drugs and to eliminate illegal drug use by all employees in the NASA workplace.

The primary goal of the NASA drug-free workplace policy is to ensure that illegal drug use is eliminated and that the workplace is safe, healthful, productive, and secure. In order to achieve this goal, NASA's Drug-Free Workplace Program establishes a comprehensive drug prevention program as a deterrence to illegal drug use. Specifically, the program includes limited drug testing coupled with a strong emphasis on education, training, and assistance through the NASA Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

A cornerstone of the DFWP is the Employee Assistance Program. The EAP is available to employees experiencing personal problems such as emotional problems, illegal drug use, and alcoholism. Employees experiencing such problems are encouraged to take advantage of the counseling and referral services available through the EAP. Employees may contact the Lewis EAP Coordinator, Joseph Wasdovich, Ph.D., at PABX 3-2989, for more information regarding these services.

Throughout each fiscal year the NASA Lewis Research Center offers awareness and training opportunities to employees, managers, and supervisors regarding illegal drug usage. Educational materials on such things as the types and effects of drugs, symptoms of drug use, and treatment and rehabilitative options, including EAP information, are also made available to employees and managers.

In addition to the use of education, training, and EAP assistance, the NASA DFWP provides for testing:

1. **When there is reasonable suspicion of illegal drug use;**
2. **When an accident or unsafe practice results in death or personal injury requiring hospitalization, or damage to Government or personal property estimated to be in excess of $10,000;**
3. **Randomly, when an employee occupies a "test designated position" (TDP);**
4. **When an employee volunteers for random testing; and/or**
5. **On a follow-up basis for any employee who is found to be an illegal drug user and successfully completes rehabilitation.**

Test Designated Positions are positions that are considered "sensitive" because they involve national security, law enforcement, protection of life and property, public health or safety ,or other functions requiring a high degree of trust and confidence . For example, these may include positions whose duties require working with explosive, toxic, radioactive or other dangerous materials when a significant risk exists, or the operation or maintenance of transportation or major mechanical or electrical equipment.

If an employee is subject to random testing (i.e., in a test designated position) or volunteers for random testing, he/she will receive an individual notice at least 30 days prior to being included in our employee random test pool. Accident and reasonable suspicion testing may occur without notice. In all cases, testing will be conducted in accordance with the Mandatory Guidelines for Federal Workplace Drug Testing Programs issued by the Department of Health and Human Services. The guidelines require that an initial screening test be conducted of all urine samples collected as part of the testing process, and if positive, a verification test also be conducted to further assure accuracy and reliability.

Employees tested are afforded the opportunity to submit medical or other information which they believe may provide an acceptable explanation of positive test results, such as use of prescription medication, both prior to and following a drug test. This information is available only to the Lewis Medical Review Officer (MRO) who is a physician knowledgeable in the medical use of prescription drugs and the pharmacology and toxicology of illegal drugs. The MRO will review all test results to further verify the accuracy of the results. For positive test results, the MRO will offer the employee an opportunity to discuss the test results to determine if there is a medical explanation. If the MRO determines that a medical explanation exists, he/she declares the positive test result to be null and void. If the MRO determines that there is no legitimate medical explanation for the positive result, the employee is provided an opportunity to request a second test of the original specimen.

Based on policy guidance issued by the Department of Health and Human Services, the use of any Federal Controlled Substances Act, Schedule I drug (such as marijuana) available by doctor's prescription or recommendation will be considered inconsistent with Federal law and a violation of the NASA Drug-Free Workplace Program. Therefore, the Medical Review Officer will not accept a prescription or the verbal or written recommendation of a physician for a Schedule I substance as a legitimate medical explanation for the presence of a Schedule I drug or metabolite in a Federal employee specimen.

If an employee is found to use illegal drugs, he/she will be referred to the EAP and, if occupying a TDP, reassigned to a non-TDP position. Under the NASA DFWP, no employee will be disciplined (e.g., reprimanded, suspended, or removed) for illegal drug use if he/she voluntarily requests help (before being found to be using illegal drugs or selected for random testing), successfully completes counseling or rehabilitation, and thereafter refrains from using illegal drugs. In all other cases, however, NASA Lewis Research Center will initiate disciplinary action, up to and including removal from Federal service, against any employee found to have used illegal drugs. Failure or refusal to submit to testing also will subject the employee to disciplinary action, up to and including removal.

Additional information regarding the NASA DFWP may be obtained by contacting the Lewis Drug Program Coordinator, Lori Pietravoia, on PABX 3-2506.

ATTENTION ALL EMPLOYEES ENROLLED IN THE FEHB SERVICE BENEFIT PLAN (BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD) CODES 101, 102, 104, AND 105

Listed below are key dates intended to smooth the transition between Medical Mutual of Ohio and Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield.

June 2, 1997 Customer service begins at Anthem
Call 1-800-451-7602
Monday through Friday
8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Special extended hours for Customer Service during June and July: 8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.

July 1, 1997 Claims Processing begins at Anthem for care provided on and after July 1, 1997
Claims filing address is:
Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield
P.O. Box 425
Worthington, OH 43085

July 1, 1997 Precertification Services begin at Anthem
For inpatient hospital care beginning on or after July 1, 1997, call Anthem to precertify the admission at: 1-800-368-5810
Monday through Friday
8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

PLEASE NOTE: Your claims for care you receive before July 1, 1997, should be sent to:
Medical Mutual of Ohio
2060 East Ninth Street
Cleveland, OH 44115

Medial Mutual will process claims for services provided prior to July 1, 1997, until September 30, 1997.

To precertify inpatient hospital care beginning prior to July 1, 1997, ask your doctor or hospital to call Medical Mutual.

Please ask your providers of care to help ensure timely processing and customer service by sending your claims to the correct address during this transition.

NEW SERVICE AVAILABLE IN THE LEARNING CENTER

The Federal Retirement Calculation Program (FRC-CALC) is a user-friendly , computer-based program designed to compute retirement, disability, and death benefits for employees covered by the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS), including the CSRS Offset Plan and the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). The calculations allow you to consider the effects of making or not making service credit payments and/or military deposits, as well as making survivor benefit and/or alternative annuity elections. The software also computes estimates of Social Security and Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) benefits.

If you are interested in using this program, call the Learning Center at 3-2996 or 2997 and ask to schedule an appointment to use the FRC-CALC program. We will send you a worksheet which should be completed prior to your appointment. The worksheet will help you gather the necessary information from your SF-50 and other sources that you will need to effectively use this software program.

The Learning Center, Organization Development and Training Office, is located in building 21, room 3. The hours are: 7:30 - 4:30 (Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and 7:30 - 5:30 (Tuesday and Thursday). Stop by anytime!

THE LEARNING CENTER FEATURED PROGRAM

"TEAM BUILDING: HOW TO MOTIVATE AND MANAGE"

In this 3-part program, you will discover how to turn your staff into a team that embraces new ideas, deals with challenges, contributes with enthusiasm, and meets their goals. Management expert Mark Sanborn, leads you step-by-step through the development of a successful team. He'll show you how to use vision to inspire achievement, motivate and evaluate your team, communicate effectively, deal with conflicts, and boost the productivity and quality of your entire organization. You'll examine real work case studies and see how top performing companies are putting team building concepts to work with great results.

Call the Learning Center at 3-2996 or 2997 to make arrangements to view this program OR you can catch it on the Lewis Learning Channel 7 during the month of June, accessible through any LINK monitor.

Viewing times for "Team Building: How to Motivate and Manage People," can be found on Channel 7 or you can check the Learning Channel Schedule on our web site: http://www.lerc.nasa.gov/WWW/LC
or
type "LC" in the LeWeb transporter box

NEW AWARD

The ThankQ Card is an information, nonmonetary recognition process. The ThankQ Card is designed for immediate peer-to-peer recognition and may be presented by any Lewis Research Center employee, CS or SSC, to any person who deserves to be immediately recognized. It may be used to recognize customer service, goal attainment, timeliness, etc. The initiator may complete the ThankQ Card immediately and personally present it to the individual being recognized in an informal setting. The ThankQ Card must include the date and the reason for recognizing the individual and the initiator's signature.

This award provides day-to-day recognition as a means to express appreciation, the opportunity to increase productivity, and improve morale and customer service. It also provides the opportunity for employees who receive ThankQ Cards to offer input to their supervisors during the performance evaluation process.

Currently, ThankQ Cards, NASA C-665, are available through the Forms Office, ordered on a C-709 work order.

DEPOSITS FOR MILITARY TIME

Military service is creditable under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS), and the Federal Employees' Retirement System (FERS). It must have been active service, ended under honorable conditions, and performed before separation from a civilian position under CSRS or FERS. Military service includes service in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard, and certain National Guard service.

Deductions from military pay for Social Security began January 1, 1957. Therefore, post-1956 military service is credited under Social Security but may require the payment of a military deposit for credit under CSRS or FERS. No deposit is required for military service performed before January 1, 1957.

CSRS employees who were first employed before October 1, 1982, must pay a deposit for military service performed after 1956 in order to avoid the reduction in their annuity which would otherwise take effect when eligibility for Social Security is attained at age 62.

For FERS employees, all post-1956 military service must be covered by a deposit in order to be credited for retirement purposes.

CSRS deposits for post-1956 military equal 7 percent of military base pay. Interest is added if the deposit is not made within 2 years from the date the employee first became subject to CSRS. The annuities of CSRS retirees who have not made the deposit will be reduced 2 percent (prorated by the month) for each year of military time lost.

FERS deposits for post-1956 military service equal 3 percent of military base pay. Interest is added if the deposit is not completed within 2 years from the date the employee first became subject to FERS. The annuities of FERS retirees who have not made the deposit will be reduced 1 percent (prorated by the month) for each year of military time lost.

Questions about the above may be directed to Carol Mehallick, PABX 3-2507.

ADVANCE NOTICE FOR EMPLOYEES LEAVING THE CENTER

From time to time, employees ask about the procedures to follow when resigning, transferring, or retiring from the Center. Employees planning to resign or transfer to another installation or agency should provide written notice at least 2 weeks before they leave to provide adequate lead time for processing the necessary forms and arranging appropriate clearances.

Except applicants for retirement, the exiting employee should obtain a Standard From 52 from his/her division office and complete part E. The division office will complete parts A, B, and C, and submit the form, through appropriate channels, to the Operations Office of the Office of Human Resources (OHR), M.S. 500-301. Upon receipt of the SF-52, OHR will send the employee a Separation Clearance Record, listing various offices through which the employee will have to clear before leaving the Center. The employee will be advised of the location of an exit meeting (normally conducted on the employee's last workday). The exit meeting will cover temporary extension of coverage under the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program and the Federal Employees Group Life Insurance and TSP options. Refunds of retirement contributions can also be arranged during this session

Employees resigning from leave without pay or from a temporary duty station away from the Center can begin the exiting process by writing a letter to OHR, M.S. 500-301, stating the date and reason for resignation. This letter should be sent 2 weeks before the separation date. If it is impractical for the employee to appear for the exit meeting, the process can be handled by mail.

Because the retirement process is somewhat more involved than the resignation or transfer process, even more lead time is desirable from employees planning to retire. For example, OHR will initiate the SF-52 and assist the employee in completing the additional paperwork required in processing retirements. OHR must review the employee's civilian service record and, if appropriate, military records to assure that the proper periods of creditable service are submitted to the Office of Personnel Management for prompt and timely payment of the annuity.

Anyone having questions regarding the above should call Carol Mehallick at PABX 3-2507.