



The following questions are those most commonly asked by managers and staff. They are listed in the order of life cycle of a reduction in work force decision. Initial questions address the decision making process, then discuss issues surrounding conducting the reduction meeting and end with questions regarding benefits and the staff severance program.

## Reduction in Work Force Guidelines

### 1. What principles guide departments and colleges in determining that a workforce reduction is necessary?

Should a reduction in the work force become necessary due to lack of funds, lack of work, reasons of economy or reorganization for efficiency; the office of human resources shall lay off employees and/or abolish positions. Position eliminations should be carefully planned to balance human resource considerations. These considerations include appropriate treatment of individuals affected, impact on affirmative action objectives and compliance with university policies. The Office of Human Resources (OHR) is available to discuss options and provide recommendations as part of the decision making process. All reductions in work force, with exception to those being initiated by the OSU Health System, are subject to approval by OHR. The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center Human Resource Department reviews and approves Health System requests for reductions in force.

### 2. What are the staffing alternatives to reductions in force?

Departments should also consider staffing alternatives such as reassignments, reduced appointments or part-time positions, but must consult with OHR, to ensure the appropriate steps are followed. In addition, before reducing regular staff, departments should review the use of temporary staff.

### 3. What if I have a solid staff member whose skills are only applicable in my area but I don't want to see him/her leave the university?

Retraining staff can help open the doors for those staff affected by reductions in force. Assess your business needs and evaluate your current work force and their skills and competencies. Quite often you may find that as you are reducing staff FTE in one area, you are hiring staff members in another area (or another department is hiring staff members). Challenge yourself to come up with an alternative-staffing plan. Discuss the possibilities of training, with employees, to prepare them to perform in different roles. Connect with other Ohio State departments who are hiring and share resources. Maybe you have a staff member who would fill their needs. Instead of losing solid staff members, we need to **retrain** and **retain** them.

### 4. What necessary steps should be followed once it is determined to proceed with a reduction in work force?

Once it is determined by your department to proceed with a reduction in work force, the department should take the following steps:

The department forwards the [Request for Reduction in Work Force form](#) through the college/administrative office to OHR. When completing the form, provide specific reasons for the reduction in work force, including why the position(s) is targeted for abolishment and how the duties of the position will be reassigned. For Classified Civil Service staff reduction in work force, refer to the implementation guidelines on page 5 of the [Manager Guide](#).

OHR serves as a resource between human resource professionals, department managers and their staff. Consultants from OHR review the request, approve or deny the request and discuss the expectations and university practices with the department. If approved, for Classified Civil Service staff, the appropriate letter is issued by OHR and given to the department. The manager and a human resource professional must hand deliver the letter to the staff member, notifying them of the reduction in work force. With unclassified staff,



OHR notifies the department that the abolishment request has been approved and the department notifies the staff member in writing and in person of the job abolishment.

**5. Why do I have to notify OHR if my unit or college is reducing an unclassified appointment to 75% or greater when it is not considered a reduction in force per Policy 9.15?**

Notifying the Office of Human Resources provides an opportunity for the HRP and consultant to discuss potential alternatives to a reduction in appointment and track trends within the university. If there are multiple unclassified positions that require a reduction in FTE, prior approval from OHR is required.

## Resources

**1. What support is available to the separated staff member?**

OHR will provide services and information to the individual(s) as well as the manager. If necessary in cases of unclassified staff and with all Classified Civil Service staff, a Talent Management Consultant will meet with the staff member(s) to discuss the reduction in work force process, the roles of those involved and the services provided by the university. Additional services include confidential counseling and referral to the Ohio State Employee Assistance Program, claims processing, retirement information and continuing benefits coverage through Benefits Services.

**2. What is the Reduction in Work Force policy for Classified Civil Service staff members?**

See [hr.osu.edu/policy/policy920.pdf](http://hr.osu.edu/policy/policy920.pdf)

**3. What is the Reduction in Work Force policy for unclassified staff members?**

See [hr.osu.edu/policy/policy915.pdf](http://hr.osu.edu/policy/policy915.pdf)

## Classified Civil Service Reductions in Work Force

**1. Does a Classified Civil Service staff member whose position is abolished have the right to displace or “bump” another staff member?**

Yes. A Classified Civil Service staff **may** have displacement rights. An employee who was laid-off or whose position was abolished shall fill a vacancy or displace the employee with the fewest retention points provided in all instances that the employee meets the qualifications of that position, can perform the required duties and has met expectations in the last two annual performance reviews. Employees who have not met performance expectations in the last two annual performance reviews and who have been given specific steps for improvement, or who cannot perform the required functions of the position into which they would be placed will not have displacement rights and thus will be laid off.

**2. Can a Classified Civil Service staff member be placed in a vacancy?**

Yes. Unless an employee loses their displacement rights because of performance or if they lack the required skill necessary to perform the job, they will be placed in a vacancy if one exists in their jurisdiction. The effective date is within a reasonable period of time to allow for a move to the position, not to exceed thirty days.

**3. What happens to an employee if a vacancy does not exist?**

If a vacancy is not available within the staff members’ jurisdiction, he/she has the right to displace or “bump” the individual with the least number of retention points in their classification and jurisdiction. The displacement must meet the requirements outlined in question number 2.



**4. Is the Classified Civil Service staff member required to take the position?**

Staff members will not be forced to accept a position that they may not want. However, if an employee declines placement into a vacant position or bumping into a position to which they are entitled to, for any reason, their displacement rights will cease and the employee will be terminated.

**5. Will colleges and other business units be able to reassign Classified Civil Service staff members whose positions are abolished to vacancies within the unit?**

Colleges and VP units are expected to identify alternative employment opportunities for their staff members who have been impacted by a job abolishment. The Office of Human Resources will support an internal transfer of staff where a vacancy exists and the staff member meets the qualifications of the job. If a vacancy exists within the staff member's classification, the unit is required to process and manage the internal transfer. Managers should work with their unit Human Resources Professionals and OHR to accomplish the placement. Units are not required to create new jobs to offset a reduction in work force.

**6. Does a Classified Civil Service staff member whose job is abolished have to apply for jobs or will the university just place the staff member into a vacant position?**

As soon as a staff member learns that his or her position is to be abolished, the staff member contacts OHR at 614-292-2800 to discuss the abolishment and job search. This will increase the staff member's chances of finding a position of their choice if no vacancies exist. If vacancies exist within the staff member's classification and jurisdiction, they will be placed into the vacancy as long as they meet performance standards and they can perform the required duties.

**7. Is a staff member required to report to work after being notified that his or her position is abolished?**

Yes. Staff members whose positions are being abolished are required to report to work as directed by their supervisors.

**8. Is a staff member whose job is abolished exempt from performance management or the corrective action process?**

During this period, staff members are expected to perform work as directed. A staff member's failure to meet performance expectations may result in corrective action.

**9. Is a staff member who has had performance concerns, eligible to displace another employee if their position has been abolished?**

First and foremost, the RIF process should not be used to remove poor performers. Colleges and VP units are expected to provide employees with ongoing feedback about performance in addition to an annual performance review. If colleges and VP units have not effectively managed performance, OHR reserves the right to deny a reduction in work force request. If however, performance has been managed and employees are not meeting expectations, they may lose their displacement rights. Any employee who has had an overall "below meets" on their last two annual performance reviews, will lose their right to displace another employee. Reinstatement is also dependent on performance and skills and abilities required to successfully perform in a job in which they are requesting reinstatement.

**10. What constitutes official notice that a Classified Civil Service position is abolished?**

Official notice of a position abolishment is provided to the Classified Civil Service staff member in the form of a letter prepared by OHR. The letter must be hand delivered to the staff member by the manager and human resource professional as part of the notification meeting. If the staff member is on leave, the letter may either be hand-delivered or sent by certified mail. The letter will state the reason for the abolishment, an explanation of the staff member's right to elect displacement and/or layoff, number of retention points, the effective date of abolishment and the staff member's right to appeal the decision to the State Personnel Board of Review. If the staff member is eligible for the Staff Severance Program, the number of weeks of severance that will be paid will



also be included. Unless a staff member is on leave, the communication of a position abolishment must be in-person (e-mail or phone/voice mail communication or leaving the notice in a staff member's work area or mail box **is not acceptable**).

**11. What are retention points and who calculates them?**

Classified Civil Service staff are assigned retention points for the length of continuous service by awarding one retention point for each five hundred twenty hours (excluding overtime hours) of continuous service. Retention points are calculated by OHR Employee Relations and Wexner Medical Center Human Resources

**12. Once the official notice of a position abolishment is delivered to a Classified Civil Service staff member, how long does the staff member have to decide whether to elect displacement and/or layoff or the Staff Severance Program (if the staff member is eligible for the Staff Severance Program)?**

A Classified Civil Service staff member will receive the [Displacement Rights Election Form](#) along with the official notice of abolishment. This form must be completed by the staff member and returned to the immediate supervisor within ten calendar days after receiving the official notice of job abolishment.

Classified Civil Service staff who are eligible for and elect the Staff Severance Program must notify the supervisor and/or OHR in writing within ten calendar days after receiving the official notice of job abolishment of their intention to elect to receive severance.

## Conducting the Reduction in Work Force meeting

**1. Who should lead and where should the reduction in work force meeting take place?**

The reduction in work force meeting should be conducted privately by the manager, human resource professional and the staff member. The meeting should be held at a time and place that is convenient and comfortable for all involved.

Choose an office or other space that is private, quiet and free of distractions. Make sure the place you want to hold the meeting is available. If you have concerns about a response from the employee that may result in safety issues, contact OHR Employee Relations for guidance on the notification process and developing a safety plan.

**2. If multiple positions are going to be abolished, should the initial reduction in work force meeting be held in a group setting or on an individual basis?**

An individual meeting usually seems more personalized and would most likely make the staff member feel more comfortable. As an alternative, the initial reduction in work force meeting can be conducted on an individual basis but an HR team (Talent Management and Employee Relations Consultants) can conduct the follow-up meeting. The HR team can help staff members work through the process and understand their options.

**3. What should I bring with me to the reduction in work force meeting?**

You should bring a packet of information to give to the employee that includes: the reduction in work force paperwork, the [Displacement Right Election Form](#), the Reduction in Work Force guidelines for staff members, benefits brochures, Ohio State EAP brochure, etc.

**4. Is there anyone else I should inform prior to the reduction in work force meeting?**

Unit leadership; unit HRP; OHR and the Ohio State EAP especially if you anticipate a strong reaction from the employee(s); OSU Police if you have any concerns about the volatility of the employee or safety of others; and in extraordinary cases the Office of Legal Affairs and Media Relations.



**5. What should I communicate to the affected staff member(s)? What shouldn't I say?**

Just as you need to prepare for a hiring interview, you need to get ready for a reduction in work force meeting. Rehearse once or twice what you will say and how you will say it (how you communicate the message in many instances is more important than the message itself. Be sensitive and caring). If you get stuck when preparing for the reduction in work force meeting, don't guess, call OHR.

**6. Do I communicate anything differently if the staff member has lost their displacement rights due to performance issues?**

Communicating to a CCS staff member that they have no displacement rights will be difficult, but made easier if performance has been managed along the way and the employee is aware of the concerns about their performance. If the employee's performance has been managed appropriately, the loss of displacement rights should not be a surprise to the employee. At this juncture, the employee must have been made aware at each corrective action stage of the potential of losing displacement rights. Prepare for the conversation as described in #5 above and consult with OHR about potential challenges or any concerns you have.

**7. How should I communicate the job abolishment to the rest of the team/department?**

Communication to the co-workers is as important as the communication to the separated staff member(s). You will want to discuss with the staff member how they would like to have their news communicated to the remaining staff members. Be respectful of the staff members' feelings – they may want to tell their fellow teammates themselves. If you are communicating the job abolishment decision(s) to the team, be sensitive to their feelings/emotions. Provide a process and time for them to discuss their feelings. Be open and honest as to why this happened and if their positions are in jeopardy. Those who are not losing their jobs fare better when they understand the department's business goals and how they can help achieve them. They too may be experiencing such feelings as guilt, embarrassment, lack of trust, suspicion, confusion or shock. The Ohio State Employee Assistance Program has counseling services available for Ohio State staff and faculty. You should also be prepared to discuss how the workload will be impacted and managed in the future. Determine and/or prioritize functions and identify any potential workload shifts ahead of time. If at all possible involve the staff in these decisions.

**8. Obviously this is a difficult and emotional time for the separated staff member(s) – but how will I feel?**

Implementing a reduction in work force is perhaps one of the most emotionally difficult responsibilities for a manager and it's usually a very trying experience for the person being reduced as well. Responses to the reduction vary greatly. It is crucial to recognize, acknowledge and be sensitive to the range of feelings that result from the job abolishment. The range of emotions likely to be experienced by managers is listed below:

- Guilt
- Compassion
- Resentment – why do I have to be put in this uncomfortable situation
- Anger – at upper management or whomever made this decision
- Fear – at having to face the affected staff member; fear of how the staff member will react

It is normal for managers to feel one or all of these emotions at some point during the reduction process. Although you don't want to suppress your feelings you do need to be careful how and where you express your emotions. For these reasons, it is important that you and department leadership discuss the reasons for the reduction decisions and be aligned at the implementation stage. Remember, especially at times like this, your team will be looking to you for support, guidance, reassurance and leadership. For further information regarding counseling services available at Ohio State, contact the Ohio State Employee Assistance Program, 614-293-4700.





## 9. How do we determine next steps?

Together with the staff member develop his/her next steps. Depending on the point at which your initial meeting ends, next steps might simply be scheduling another meeting, providing the names of persons or offices to call, planning a get-together with colleagues, etc. If necessary, provide the employee with the option to go home on the day of the announcement. Employees will need a reasonable time to process the decision and their options. Whatever the next steps may be, they need to be clearly stated and it may be helpful to follow-up with a memo (see the guideline on page 17 for documenting next steps).

## Benefits Information

### 1. How and when should a staff member file an unemployment claim?

Separated staff members should file an unemployment claim as soon as they become unemployed. He or she may file the claim by calling the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Toll Free number 1-877-644-6562 or by registering for unemployment benefits online at [unemployment.ohio.gov](http://unemployment.ohio.gov). Hearing impaired individuals may use the TTY Service Dial Toll Free number: 1-888-642-8203.

For more information regarding unemployment compensation and claims, visit the ODJFS web site at [unemployment.ohio.gov](http://unemployment.ohio.gov).

### 2. What happens to a staff member's vacation and sick time?

Pay out of unused vacation will be made on the last paycheck. The maximum payout is 240 hours for unclassified staff and up to the amount earned in the three years of service just completed for Classified Civil Service staff.

There is no pay out of unused sick time. If you should return to work for a state entity within ten years, the forfeited hours may be reinstated. To have your sick time reinstated, documentation of your balance is required.

### 3. What if a staff member has questions regarding the continuation of health benefits?

Both Ohio and federal law provide for insurance continuation after separation. Individuals may **continue** medical, dental and vision insurance up to 18 months by enrolling in COBRA continuation of coverage. They will be required to pay monthly premiums to continue this coverage. Coverage is not automatic and therefore, requires that the employee complete a COBRA Election Form which is available from NGS. The election form must be completed within 60 days from the date of separation from the university.

### 4. What if a staff member wants to withdraw unused funds from his/her Flexible Spending Account (FSA)?

Funds in a FSA may only be used to reimburse eligible expenses (which are those expenses received/incurred through his/her last day of employment). Reimbursement requests for eligible expenses must be made by the plan deadline of March 31 of each year. Any funds remaining in the account after the plan deadline must be forfeited, as required by IRS guidelines. If the individual continues his/her coverage with a COBRA election, he/she may be eligible to continue participating in the FSA program.

### 5. What if a staff member has questions regarding their retirement plan?

If a staff member is a member of the Traditional Plan with Ohio Public Employees Retirement System (OPERS) and they are 60 years old with at least five years of retirement service credit or age 55 with at least 25 years of retirement service credit or any age with 30 or more years of retirement service credit, they are eligible for monthly pension benefits from OPERS. Group health insurance coverage is offered to benefit recipients and their qualified dependents. OPERS currently requires 10 years of Ohio PERS employment to be eligible for their group health insurance. OPERS also offers dental and vision coverage to retirees.



A member of the Member Directed Plan may begin receiving retirement plan benefits on or after age 55.

If they are eligible to retire according to the above eligibility rules and are interested in retirement from the university, they need to contact OPERS at 1-800-222-7377. After they have confirmed they are eligible to retire, contact the Office of Human Resources, Benefits Services at 292-1050, for information regarding benefits and retirement procedures.

If a staff member has an Alternative Retirement Program (ARP) account and terminates their employment with Ohio State he/she will need to contact their ARP vendor and indicate that they will no longer be making contributions to the account. They have the option to leave the account with the current vendor, move their money to another qualified account or to receive a refund of their contributions. For more information regarding an ARP account, they should contact the ARP carrier/agent.

## **Staff Severance Program**

Staff Severance Program information can be found at:

**Policy:** [hr.osu.edu/policy/policy240.pdf](http://hr.osu.edu/policy/policy240.pdf)

**Frequently Asked Questions:** [hr.osu.edu/policy/resources/240faq.pdf](http://hr.osu.edu/policy/resources/240faq.pdf)