

# Reduction in Work Force Manager Guide

Employee and Labor Relations  
2020



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## Introduction

Employee and Labor Relations (ELR), part of the Office of Human Resources, provides this information to assist managers of those affected by a reduction in work force. We hope you find this to be a valuable tool as you work through the process with your staff.

This pamphlet contains information to help you effectively manage employees facing a reduction in work force. Included in the information is a list of questions an employee might ask a manager as well as questions a manager might ask the Office of Human Resources. In addition, there is contact information for managers and staff members and general guidelines on how to conduct the reduction in work force meeting.

A reduction in work force is a difficult time for everyone involved managers, affected staff members, and the rest of the department. What you do as a manager will affect the way your staff members handle the situation. Communication and sensitivity are key elements at every stage of the reduction in work force process. Staff members tend to look closely for signs that management is hiding information from them. Incorrect information, or a lack of information, breeds mistrust of management and dampens morale among those who are losing their jobs as well as those employees who remain in the unit. Those who are not losing their jobs fare better when they understand the unit's business goals and how they can help achieve them. Remember that you need to be cognizant of the entire department's emotions. ELR is available to assist managers and human resource professionals leading up to and during the implementation of a reduction in work force.

Following the reduction in work force notification meeting at the department level, ELR will provide services and information to the individual affected by the reduction in work force. This includes consultation on employment services, benefit continuation, job search assistance (if needed), and referral to counseling. During the reduction in work force meeting, individuals should be referred to ELR at 614-292-2800. At the same time, you should schedule regular follow-up meetings with the staff member(s). Make sure you are aware of their internal and external job search process. As their manager, you need to provide as much positive influence as you can. If at any time during the reduction in work force you have questions and/or concerns, contact ELR at 614-292-2800.

## University Resources

### Benefits Services

1590 North High Street, Suite 300  
614-292-1050  
[hr@osu.edu](mailto:hr@osu.edu)

- Claims assistance
- Continuing benefits coverage
- Retirement information
- Unemployment process
- Financial counseling referral information available

### Employee and Labor Relations

1590 North High Street, Suite 300  
614-292-2800  
[hr-elr@osu.edu](mailto:hr-elr@osu.edu)

- Assistance in understanding reduction in work force, layoff and severance program policies and procedures
- Explains processes of appeal and displacement, if applicable
- Information and assistance regarding employment policies, procedures and campus employment opportunities
- Assistance in development of change management processes
- Assessing team development needs and assistance to increase team effectiveness

### University Online Career Site

[hr.osu.edu/careers](http://hr.osu.edu/careers)

- Listing of new and vacant positions that are available at the university
- Updated weekly
- Assistance with creating online application and email subscription available

### Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

700 Ackerman Road, Suite 580  
614-292-4700

- Short-term counseling and assessment for staff members dealing with the emotional stresses resulting from a change in job status, or who are concerned about a colleague who is experiencing a change
- Confidential counseling and referral services

## Implementation Guidelines

### Overview

Budget, reorganization, or other organizational transitions may require administrators, managers, and supervisors to consider alternative staffing measures, some of which may lead to a reduction in work force. These decisions necessarily affect the unit in question. If they involve classified civil service staff, the decisions have broader implications for the college and/or the university community. Because of the sensitive nature of a reduction in work force, it is important to handle the process of separating staff with dignity and respect.

This document provides you with guidelines, resources, and services available to help you implement a reduction in work force decision. To build collaboration and offer support, OHRC is available to further assist you with planning. The guidelines outlined below are intended to supplement Policy 9.20 Reduction in Work Force Classified Civil Service and as such should be used together.

### Management Planning and Considerations

It is your responsibility as an administrator, manager, HR professional or supervisor to carefully plan position reductions to balance business and human resource considerations, including appropriate treatment of individuals affected, impact on affirmative action objectives, and compliance with university policies.

First and foremost, consider all appropriate options before determining your need to actually reduce staff. These include, for example:

- ✓ Reassigning within the department or the college/VP unit.
- ✓ Examining whether the FTEs of existing appointments can be reduced and if there are staff willing to voluntarily accept a reduced appointment.
- ✓ Understanding the order of layoff. In cases of multiple people performing similar duties and/or there is a need for multiple reductions, the manager must understand that the order of any layoff shall be determined first by certification status, then by a combination of the following elements: skills and abilities applicable to the department's needs, documented performance, and length of OSU employment. An evaluation of these elements, to determine order of layoff, must be conducted in partnership with the OHRC Employee and Labor Relations consultant assigned to the unit prior to the submission of a Request for Reduction in work force.
- ✓ Reviewing all vacancies within and outside the impacted staff member's classification. In cases that a vacancy exists within the staff member's classification, the unit is required to place the staff member internally. Checking if alternative schedules are possible and seeking staff that may be interested in such arrangements. Some staff might be interested in part-time or reduced appointments, job sharing, or working the minimum allowed to bridge to retirement.
- ✓ Ensuring that you are aware of all policies impacting various staff appointments.

If you find it necessary to move forward with staff reductions, consider the following recommendations as you proceed with decisions and implementation planning:

- ✓ Identify critical business needs.
- ✓ Review individual positions in relationship to critical business needs.
- ✓ Assess staff members in identified positions, in partnership with OHRC, by:
  - Certification status
  - Skills and abilities
  - Documented performance
  - Length of service
  - Job performance. Do not use a reduction in work force as a substitution for performance management or corrective action. If staff members do not perform their jobs as expected, it is your responsibility to address the performance deficiencies by methods other than a reduction in force. The Office of Human Resources will deny a reduction in work force request when an employee's performance has not been managed effectively. This includes the completion of an annual performance review with a summative review system that includes the rating "does not meet expectations."
  - Consider alternative appointments and restructured jobs (see below).

- Develop the reduction plan and consider impact on diversity/affirmative action objectives.
- Develop a plan for ongoing operations in the face of reduced staffing levels.

### **Guidelines for Developing an Alternative Staffing Plan**

Alternative staffing options are mechanisms that can be used to:

1. voluntarily reduce staff FTE;
2. create cost savings; and
3. create a flexible work environment.

These options, while beneficial to the department, may also provide staff members with scheduling alternatives that are supportive of their personal/family needs. Listed below are some of the staffing options that are available and guidelines for implementing staffing alternatives.

### **Less-Than-Full-Time Staff Appointments**

#### *Reduction of Regular Appointments*

- **Unclassified:** Depending on FLSA status, 9, 10, or 11 month appointments, or 41, 42, 46, or 48 week appointments
- **CCS:** 41, 42, 46, or 48 week appointments  
These appointments allow departments to match staffing patterns with annual workflow. Benefit entitlements and staff member premium sharing is identical to 100% appointments, except where otherwise indicated. Vacation and sick leave accrual is pro-rated based on appointment FTE.

#### *Regular Part-Time*

- Employed more than 20 hours and less than 40 hours a week  
Employee salary and benefits are pro-rated. Part-time appointments create flexibility in staffing patterns and work assignments.

#### *Job Share*

- Two part-time or reduced appointment staff members voluntarily share the responsibilities of one full-time position  
Employee salary and benefits are pro-rated. Job sharing creates flexibility for staff while maintaining work continuity.

#### *Voluntary Reduction of FTE*

- Reduced work hours for a specified period of time with a corresponding reduction in compensation  
This option is a temporary alternative to full-time with a corresponding reduction in compensation.

### **Work at Home**

- Full or part-time staff work a portion of the schedule at home  
This alternative may enable departments to save on office-space costs, perform certain tasks more efficiently, improve continuity of services, and extend service coverage.

### **Flexible Staffing Schedules**

#### *Flextime*

- Retain full-time appointment with hours other than 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

#### *Compressed Work Week*

- Forty-hour work week compressed into fewer than five days

Both of these options (less than full-time staff appointments and flexible staffing schedules) permit flexibility to provide coverage during low staff periods or to allow the redistribution of work assignments. The availability of this option is driven by the needs of the unit.

### **Implementation Procedures for Alternative Work Schedules**

1. Assess the essential operational and productivity requirements of the unit.
2. Based on these requirements and the budgetary parameters, determine your staffing needs and the staffing changes that are necessary.
3. As you determine different staffing and scheduling opportunities, clearly communicate the various options to your staff so that expectations will not be raised inappropriately.

4. Talk with your staff to determine if anyone is interested in an alternative work arrangement. It is important to note that any reduction in FTE (appointed number of hours) for Classified Civil Service is considered a reduction and must be voluntary. An Unclassified position that is reduced below .75 FTE or multiple unclassified positions that will be reduced by any FTE require prior approval from OHRC.
5. Develop a staffing plan that incorporates all voluntary staffing changes including reduced appointments and alternative schedules. Call the Office of Human Resources at 614-292-2800 for assistance on the operational feasibility of staffing alternatives and technical support in the design and implementation of alternative staffing plans.

### **Submitting a Reduction in Work Force Request**

You **must** consult with OHR **before** affected staff are notified. Initiate this process by completing a Request for Reduction in Work Force form, unless earlier consultation is required. When you have completed the form, forward it to your college/VP unit for approval. Upon completion by the college/VP unit, the Request for Reduction in Work Force form along with any additional justification must be submitted to the OHR. Preferably, the form should be submitted at least 4 weeks in advance of the date the staff member is to be notified of the reduction (60 days if multiple reductions/ reorganizations are to occur) to permit adequate time to review the request and to prepare required documents. As part of the approval process, the OHR team will meet with you to review the request and discuss reassignment options.

### **Office of Human Resources, OHR Review Process**

Once you submit your request to OHR, the assigned consultant will evaluate your request for rationale and completeness. Make sure you submit sufficient information and documentation with the request. OHR will consider the following in reviewing your request:

- ✓ Have you developed a transition plan that incorporates the rationale for the abolishment, an individualized plan for the affected staff member, a review of the staff member's employment history and potential internal reassignment options (units are required to place internally if vacancies exist within the impacted staff member's classification)?
- ✓ Does your rationale explain:
  - Why this position is being abolished?
  - What type of work is being performed by the staff member in this position?
  - What will happen to the duties/functions of this position?
  - Who are the other staff members in the department/unit who perform same/similar duties? You must work with OHR and include a comparison of the staff members in your detailed plan. This comparison must include certification status, skills and abilities, documented performance and length of OSU service. Any individual, performing same or similar duties, who is not certified in the classification, must be laid off first.
  - Are there contract and/or temporary and/or part-time staff members doing similar work? If so, how many?
  - Are there other positions available in the college/VP unit in which to place the staff member whose position will be abolished? Are there pending vacancies?
- ✓ Does your review of the staff member's history include/address:
  - The staff member's length of service with the university?
  - Whether or not the staff member is a bargaining unit member or Members-Only, covered by a labor agreement?
  - Whether this staff member was affected by a previous position abolishment?
  - Did the staff member have performance problems and if yes, how were they addressed (the last three annual performance reviews, if available, should accompany any reduction in work force request). If not available, explain why not? If the individual is at the third level of corrective action, please submit the suspension letter.
  - Can the staff member's job skills be enhanced by additional training?
  - Is this staff member eligible for the Staff Severance Program?
- ✓ Does your transition plan address potential internal reassignment options?
- ✓ Does your individualized staff member plan include information outlining work to be performed by affected staff member until reassignment or displacement can occur? The work plan should include performance expectations and allow sufficient time during the work day for the staff member to conduct a job search.

After the request to abolish a CCS position has been approved, OHR prepares the letter of notification/lay-off and sends it, along with the CCS Displacement Rights Notification Form, to the hiring manager or HR professional for subsequent issuance to the staff member. For unclassified positions, units must still receive approval from OHR, but can then process and issue the notification internally. For template letters please contact Employee and Labor Relations. Keep in mind that this will be difficult news for the staff member to receive and that it is important that the letter be delivered immediately, and it is required that the letter is delivered in person to the affected staff member.

## **Communicating a Reduction in Work Force**

### **Preparations: What to Say**

Just as you need to prepare for a hiring interview, you need to get ready for a reduction in work force meeting. Know what you want to say before you meet. Write down your thoughts. Rehearse once or twice what you will say and how you will say it (how you say it is very important, since this is an emotional situation). If you get stuck when preparing for the reduction in work force meeting, don't guess. Call OHRC, 614-292-2800. Below is a guideline for your use during your reduction in work force meeting.

1. After the usual courtesies, get quickly to the point. Place the decision within the context of what is going on at the university and make a clean, clear statement about the decision that has been made. For example, "As you know, John, the university is facing severe budget cuts and every department has been asked to reduce their budgets for next year. As a result, your position has been abolished." Do not be defensive or feel you must persuade the person that the action is justified. Just state your case with conviction.

However difficult this meeting may be for you, it is even harder for the staff member. Do not get on the topic of your needs, feelings, or problems. It is not helpful to say, "I know how you feel," because you don't. Even if you were once terminated, each person feels things differently and has a right to do so. However, do try to be sensitive to the feelings and emotions of the staff member both at the time of the reduction in work force meeting and in the days to come.

2. People who are separated have a right and a need to know the reasons for the decision. Since separations due to a reduction in work force take multiple factors into consideration it is important to stress that personality was not involved in the decision. Also, stay off the topic of criticizing the university or the State of Ohio. This is not a time to place blame on anyone.

The reason should be clear in your mind so you can make it clear to the staff member. For example, "We are going to have to eliminate the program you administer to stay within our budget." The situation is particularly difficult if the position you are abolishing is similar or has the same duties as other positions in the office. Employees should know that the following elements are taken into consideration when making decisions about specific position abolishment where multiple people perform similar duties or multiple reductions are necessary:

- certification status
- skills and abilities
- documented performance
- length of OSU employment

For example, you might say to an employee, "After a review of individuals performing duties similar to those you perform, and taking the skills and abilities of those individuals related to our ongoing business needs, their documented performance, and length of service into consideration, your position was selected for reduction."

3. You should review the policies and procedures for reduction in work force that can be found on the web at [hr.osu.edu/policies-forms](http://hr.osu.edu/policies-forms) (Policy 9.15 for Unclassified Professional Staff and Policy 9.20 for Classified Civil Service Staff). Since the staff member cannot absorb everything at once, it is necessary and courteous to provide some written materials at the meeting. We suggest that you use handouts related to continuing benefits, the unemployment process, and for referral to the University Faculty and Staff Assistance Program.



Quite often during a reduction in work force, managers feel it is the appropriate time to evaluate a staff member's performance. In reality this is not the time. It is important to manage unsatisfactory performance issues separately from and prior to the reduction in work force process. Staff performance problems must be addressed appropriately through performance management and corrective action.

Managers often assume that because staff members are not doing one job well they are unqualified to do other jobs. Through the performance management process, hopefully you have accurately assessed the staff member's skills and have a thorough understanding of their skills as well as their areas for development. With this insight, you should be equipped to guide the staff member to the appropriate internal open positions.

4. The reduction in work force meeting may or may not be the best time to discuss a transition plan. Depending on the staff member's morale, you may want to discuss the arrangements for transferring their work at the first follow-up meeting. The staff member may need to transition some of their work immediately so they can focus their efforts on their job search.

You will also 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 member's feelings – they may want to tell their fellow teammates themselves.

Instead of overloading the staff members with information, stop here and schedule another meeting for the two of you (and possibly someone from OHRC) to take place in the next two days. At this point, the staff member may experience shock and disbelief. Let them take 24-48 hours to absorb what is happening. At the initial follow-up meeting, the member may be more prepared to discuss next steps. Provide the staff member with information about the University Faculty and Staff Assistance Program.

If you are reducing a large number of staff at one time, a team of human resource professionals from OHR will be established to help staff and managers work through the process and better understand their options.

5. The next steps need to be clearly stated and it may be helpful to follow-up with a memo. Together with the staff member, develop his/her next steps. Depending on the point at which the 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 the person is extremely upset, make arrangements for someone to be with that person to accompany him/her to the necessary offices.
6. Your involvement should not end with the termination meeting. Find ways to show your continuing support for the terminated staff member. Please keep in touch and make yourself available in addition to following up on the parts of the separation or job abolishment process that you are responsible for.

Be sensitive also to the co-workers of the separated staff member. Communicate to these co-workers the job abolishment decisions and provide a process and time for them to discuss their feelings. They may be experiencing such feelings as guilt, embarrassment, and a lack of trust, suspicion, confusion, or shock. The University Faculty and Staff Assistance Program is available to provide services to the teammates of the affected staff member(s) as well. You may want to refer them to the program, or consider having a counselor in to facilitate a conversation.

### **Staff Member Responsibilities**

The affected staff member must be made aware that they have a critical role in the reduction in work force process. If the staff member is eligible for the Staff Severance Program, they need to notify the OHR of their intent to use the severance option by submitting a signed severance agreement. See Policy 2.40, Staff Severance Program for more information.

If a CCS staff member's preference is to remain at the university, the staff member is expected to report to work as usual until reassignment or displacement occurs. If no vacancies exist to support a reassignment, the staff member must also begin an internal job search. This process is initiated by contacting the OHR. The affected staff member should prepare/ update a resume and other materials and actively participate in the search process.

**Displacement Process**

Classified Civil Service (CCS) staff may have displacement rights, also referred to as bumping rights. The Ohio Revised Code and The Ohio State University Rules for Classified Civil Service establish the order and procedures for displacement. CCS staff who have not met performance expectations in their last three annual performance reviews, as indicated by an overall rating of “does not meet expectations,” or who are on major corrective action do not have displacement rights.

Because displacement is extremely disruptive to the workplace, and to minimize the impact of such disruption, it is the university's intention that college/VP units, affected staff members, and the Office of Human Resources collaborate to identify alternative employment opportunities for individuals whose positions are abolished. This means that CCS staff whose positions are abolished must be assigned to any current or anticipated job vacancy, within their classification, in their college/VP unit.

If no available vacancy is found within the college/VP unit, the affected staff member shall be assigned to a university vacancy, within their jurisdiction and classification or a classification with same or similar duties. If no vacancy exists within the impacted staff member's jurisdiction, the university will allow for 60 days to lapse before displacement occurs (to allow for a vacancy to surface or for the individual to identify a new position through their own job search). If a vacancy surfaces within this 60 day period, within the staff member's classification, they will be placed into the vacant position. If no vacancy surfaces within the 60 day period, the staff member may be entitled to exercise his/her displacement rights and “bump” the staff member with the least number of retention points within their classification and jurisdiction.

Hiring departments may not refuse to accept a placement to a vacancy without substantial and convincing evidence that the staff member is unqualified to perform the job duties of the position. In cases of displacement, hiring departments cannot refuse as we are required by the CCS Rules to displace only that person with the least number of retention points.

**Additional Resources for Staff Impacted by a Reduction in Work Force:**

Area of Responsibility	Name	Number
COBRA	Benefits Processing	614-292-1050
Flexible Spending Accounts	Customer Service Center	614-292-1050
Life Insurance	Customer Service Center	614-292-1050
Payroll	Payroll Operations	614-292-2311
Retirement Plans OPERS ARP	Benefits Services	614-292-1050
Unemployment Compensation	Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS)	1-877-644-6562 1-888-642-8203 TTY

## Management Checklist for Reductions in Work Force

- Has the employing unit completed the Request for Reduction in Work Force form and obtained approval per policies 9.15 and/or 9.20?
  - The Request for Reduction in Work Force form is available at [hr.osu.edu/policies-forms](http://hr.osu.edu/policies-forms)
  
- Schedule a time to meet with the affected employee. In preparation for the meeting gather the following:
  - Prepare written notification of the abolishment for unclassified staff or obtain classified civil service staff notification letter from OHR.
  - Obtain a copy of the appropriate RIF policy and share with affected employee. Be prepared to answer any questions related to RIF process or severance policy.
  - Prepare written documentation of severance period including the dates of the working notice period and severance pay period.
    - Calculate the total severance benefit using the OSU Continuous Service Date on the HR system
    - Refer to policy 2.40 for severance program schedule
  
- Present written notification and severance program agreement to the staff member in person (supervisor and HR designee together). Please remember there are different timelines based on the classification.
  - Classified Civil Service staff: Eligible CCS staff have ten calendar days to decide whether they will choose displacement or severance.
  - Unclassified staff: Eligible unclassified staff must sign and return the severance agreement within five calendar days.
  - Provide staff member with UFSAP information
  
- Did the staff member return the agreement?
  - If unclassified staff, retain the signed agreement in the employee's personnel file. The date the severance agreement is signed will begin the severance period.
  - If classified civil service staff, ensure that the staff member notifies the OHR in writing of their desire to voluntarily participate in the severance program
  
- How will the staff member's job data panels be updated within the HR system?
  - During the working notice period, continue to enter the appropriate timekeeping information and manage the employee's HR System record
  - During the severance pay period, update the HR system with the appropriate action/reason codes
  
- Does the staff member have accrued vacation time?
  - If so, notify the employee that Office of the Controller, Division of Payroll Services will process pay out at the end of the severance period
  
- Continue to mail paycheck or direct deposit advice to employee's mailing address

## Frequently Asked Questions

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. 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 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 (Appendix) 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 [hr.osu.edu/policies-forms](http://hr.osu.edu/policies-forms) 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.

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 (Appendix).

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 University Faculty and Staff 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/public/documents/policy/policy920.pdf](http://hr.osu.edu/public/documents/policy/policy920.pdf)

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

See [hr.osu.edu/public/documents/policy/policy915.pdf](http://hr.osu.edu/public/documents/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 who has less seniority?**

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 three annual performance reviews. Employees who have not met performance expectations in the last three annual performance reviews and who have been given specific steps for improvement, or who are on major corrective action do not have displacement rights.

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

Yes. Unless an employee loses their displacement rights because of performance, they will be placed in a vacancy if one exists and they have chosen to exercise their displacement rights. 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 no vacancies exist within the staff members' jurisdiction 60 days (including the first 30 days) will be allowed for a vacancy to surface and give the individual an opportunity to conduct a job search. If at the end of this period of time no vacancies exist and/or the staff member has been unsuccessful with their job search, he/she has the right to displace or “bump” the individual with the least number of retention points in their classification and jurisdiction.

**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.

**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 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 Office of Human Resources will require 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 possibly begin a 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.

**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, or who is in active major corrective action, 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 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 three annual performance reviews or who is in active major corrective action, will lose their right to displace another employee or to be reinstated. In these situations, the employee will be terminated from employment and will forfeit reinstatement rights.

**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 the 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.

**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.

**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, UFSAP brochure, etc.

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

Unit leadership; unit HRP; OHR and UFSAP 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. Know what you want to say before you meet. Write down your thoughts. 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 unit'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 University Faculty and Staff 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 unit 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 University Faculty and Staff 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 can be found at [hr.osu.edu/forms](http://hr.osu.edu/forms). 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<sup>st</sup> 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 online at:

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

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