



The following questions are those most asked by managers and staff. They are listed in the order of life cycle of a reduction in 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 Force Guidelines

1. What principles guide units in determining that a workforce reduction is necessary?

Should a reduction in the 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. Employee and Labor Relations is available to discuss options and provide recommendations as part of the decision-making process. All reductions in force are subject to review and approval by Employee and Labor Relations (ELR).

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

Units should also consider staffing alternatives such as reassignments, reduced positions, or part-time positions, but must consult with ELR, to ensure the appropriate steps are followed. In addition, before reducing regular staff, units 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 unit 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 units 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 force?

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

- The unit forwards the [Request for Reduction in Force form](#) to ELR. When completing the form, provide specific reasons for the reduction in force, including why the position(s) is targeted for abolishment, and how the duties of the position will be reassigned.
- ELR serves as a resource between human resource professionals, unit managers and their staff. Additionally, ELR reviews the request, approves or denies the request, and discusses the expectations and university practices with the unit.
 - If approved, for Classified Civil Service staff, the appropriate letter is issued by ELR and given to the unit. The manager and a human resource professional must hand deliver the letter to the staff member, notifying them of the reduction in force.
 - With unclassified staff, ELR notifies the unit that the abolishment request has been approved and the unit notifies the staff member in writing and in person of the job abolishment.



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

Notifying ELR provides an opportunity to discuss potential alternatives to a reduction in FTE and track trends within the university. If there are multiple unclassified positions that require a reduction in FTE, prior approval from ELR is required.

Classified Civil Service Reductions in 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 units be able to reassign Classified Civil Service staff members whose positions are abolished to vacancies within the unit?

Units are expected to identify alternative employment opportunities for their staff members who have been impacted by a job abolishment. An internal transfer of staff where a vacancy exists and the staff member meets the qualifications of the job will be supported. 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 ELR to accomplish the placement. Units are not required to create new jobs to offset a reduction in 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?

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.



Policy 9.15 & 9.20 Reduction in Force Frequently Asked Questions

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. Units are expected to provide employees with ongoing feedback about performance in addition to an annual performance review. If units have not effectively managed performance, ELR reserves the right to deny a reduction in 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 ELR. 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 or virtually.

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 ELR.

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 must elect whether or not they wish to exercise their displacement rights and/or elect layoff within ten calendar days after receiving the official notice of job abolishment.

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. 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.

Additionally information can be found at the Leaving Ohio State website, <https://hr.osu.edu/life-events/leaving-ohio-state/>.

2. What happens to a staff member's vacation, compensatory (if applicable), and sick time?

Payout of unused vacation compensatory time is made at the time of termination in accordance with the Paid Time Off 6.27 policy.

There is no payout 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 HR Connection at 247-myHR (6947), 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



Policy 9.15 & 9.20 Reduction in Force Frequently Asked Questions

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.

Resources

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

The staff member will be provided support that includes, 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 Force policy for Classified Civil Service staff members?

See hr.osu.edu/policy/policy920.pdf

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

See hr.osu.edu/policy/policy915.pdf

Staff Severance Program

Staff Severance Program information can be found at:

Policy: hr.osu.edu/policy/policy240.pdf

Frequently Asked Questions: hr.osu.edu/policy/resources/240faq.pdf