

BENEFACTS

Newsletter



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Dear HR Community,

Take a break from the daily grind and join our Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service (DCPAS) Benefits Team for the “premier gathering” of Human Resources (HR) Professionals at the 2018 Benefits Symposium! The symposium will be held at the Mark Center in Alexandria, Virginia from June 11-15, 2018.



The Benefits Symposium will provide opportunities to collaborate, cultivate, share success stories, develop and enhance core competencies, build organizational partnerships, hear from key speakers and attend breakout sessions conducted by the most dynamic instructors in HR! Individually and collectively; within the various HR disciplines, we all know – knowledge matters.

As HR Professionals, our day-to-day interactions are often met with complex issues that are easily resolved when coupled with the right knowledge, experience, and resources. Therefore, our subject matter experts have developed over 50 breakout sessions targeting topics tailored for participants with varying levels of experience.

Our DCPAS Benefits Team is diligent in making the 2018 Benefit Symposium the most influential, professional, and rewarding experience ever.

Please join us!

Registration starts March 26, 2018 and for event information, please select the applicable link:

Benefits: dodhra.mc-alex.dcpas.mbx.benefits-contacts@mail.mil

ICUC: dodhra.mc-alex.dcpas.mbx.icuc-contact@mail.mil

A NEWSLETTER
PUBLISHED BY THE
BENEFITS AND
WORK LIFE
PROGRAMS DIVISION



Attending any professional event can be exciting and busy with most providing a full slate of activities across a multi-day agenda. The 2018 Benefits Symposium is no exception!

With a multitude of sessions and other activities, an individual can easily miss a golden opportunity. . . so have a plan of action.

Here are 10 tips to assist you. . .

1. Read the course session descriptions and decide what sessions you want to attend. Understand that you may not be able to attend a session in every time slot throughout the day, so be sure to prioritize the ones you want to attend and register as soon as possible (registration begins March 26). If attending with a co-worker, consider making a list and dividing the list.

2. When you are back at the office, contact those that you have met. Email each contact to let them know you enjoyed meeting them, reference something you talked about. The notes on the back of their cards are helpful for this.

3. Find out who's attending and make a list of those whom you'd like to make a connection. Otherwise, at this large event, you may get overwhelmed or miss an opportunity to connect with the people you want to speak with the most.

4. Bring business cards. You will go through dozens at an event like this when you are meeting new people. Make sure to make a few notes on the back to remember each person once you're back at the office.

5. Be approachable. Don't spend all your time outside the session using your

phone or immersed in reading material. Look around, stay engaged, and network.

6. Wear comfortable shoes. You're going to do a lot of standing around talking to people. You'll do a lot of walking to and from your room to the conference halls and so forth.

7. Manage your existing connections. Events can be useful venues to solidify your current professional relationships. Make time to reconnect, but be sure to leave your schedule open for impromptu networking opportunity with new colleagues.



8. Don't be afraid to approach people.

The symposium will be filled with people hoping to make a connection. You don't need an excuse; simply walk up and introduce yourself and ask about the other person. Or ask about sessions they've attended.

9. Practice introducing yourself. You are going to be doing this over and over as you meet new people, you want to be polished and prepared.

10. Get Credentialed. There will be too close sessions to earn your credentials as an Employee Benefits Advisor (EBA).

For more information on how to register for the credentialing exam during the symposium, contact:

dodhra.mc-alex.dcpas.mbx.benefits-contacts@mail.mil.

Exercising some, if not all, of these tips will help ensure that you will get the most out of attending the 2018 Benefits Symposium.



What's New in Pipeline...Actually...What is Pipeline?

Pipeline. No, the discussion will not be about moving oil from one place to another. It's about the Department's Pipeline Reemployment Program. The program was authorized in fiscal year 2005 to help agencies reemploy workers injured on-the-job!

How does the program work? The Pipeline Program provides an agency with the funding for an employee's salary and benefits for one year after they return to work. This reduces the initial cost to the agency since they receive the funds to pay the employee and see a reduction in their workers' compensation costs as well. The program is managed by the injury and Unemployment Compensation Branch (ICUC) who coordinates with Defense Human Resources Activity for the transfer of funds.

How successful has Pipeline been? Since its inception in 2005, the program has returned over 1,000 employees back to work. If you look at the compensation that could have

been paid to those employees for the lifetime of their claims, the amount is over \$1 billion. Yes, that is billion with a "b." The next time someone mentions Pipeline, think of the successful return to work program for DoD rather than a large pipe that transports oil.

How does this program benefit the Department? There are a number of ways in order to find out how pipeline benefits the department please join us at the 2018 DOD DCPAS Benefits Symposium.



As the field of human resources continues to trend toward promoting the role of the general practitioner, it is vital that HR Specialists understand how benefits and entitlements, in the traditional sense, intersect with returning employees to work after receiving Injury compensations and unemployment compensations (ICUC) benefits.

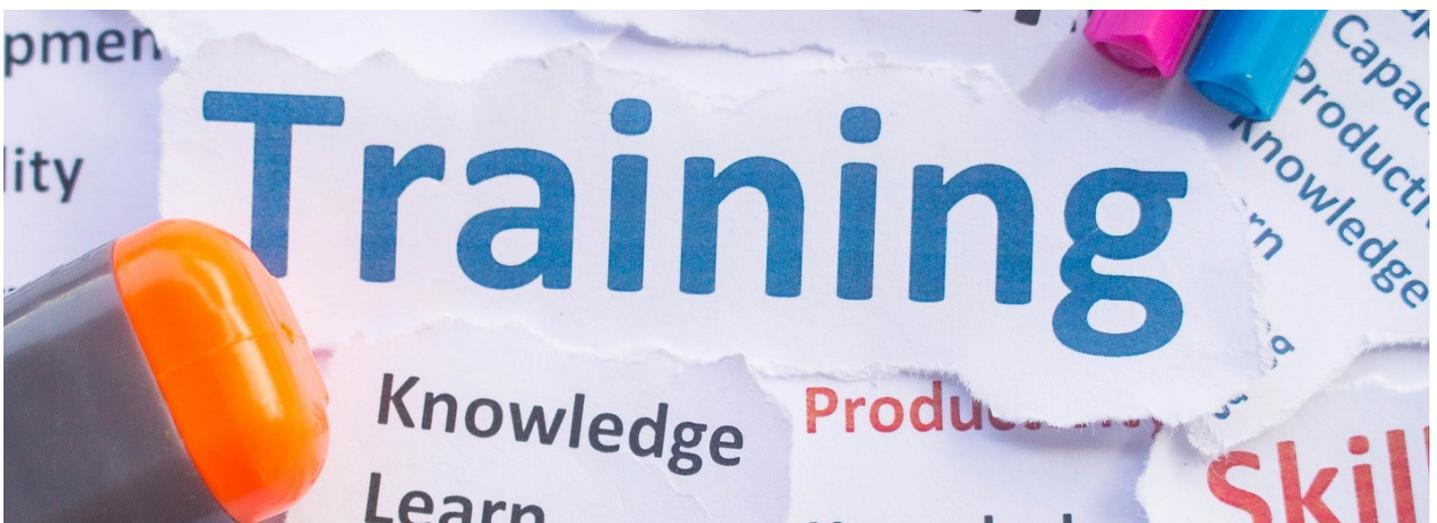
The complex and lengthy process to evaluate an individual case and provide appropriate, individualized compensation with the goal of returning the individual to work requires up-to-date knowledge of laws and regulations. The 2018 Benefits Symposium will host plenary & general sessions to engage professionals across the HR spectrum and provide insight on best practices when dealing with injury compensation and return to work rights: here are a few of the sessions being offered.

Agency Offered Medical Examinations: This session will address the circumstances in which the agency can require an employee to undergo a medical examination and when an agency can offer, but not require, an employee to have a medical examination. The session will also discuss the procedures to follow when arranging a medical examination.

ICUC Road Map for Long-Term OWCP

Recipients: This session will discuss the advantages of applying for a retirement annuity in addition to long term benefits under Federal Employees Compensation Act (FECA). This session will also address the relationship between receiving FECA benefits and a Federal annuity; how to contact the Office of Personnel Management to declare oneself recovered; and how to counsel employees regarding accepting the benefits offered from FECA and a Federal retirement annuity.

Retirement and Reemployment: This session will cover the interaction between FECA and OPM regarding employees that collect wage loss compensation and then return to work. Discussion will include how to document their return to work and when an employee can receive creditable service toward retirement for time spent collecting FECA wage loss benefits. Additionally, participants will also learn how to determine if a returning employee is a reemployed annuitant and how this may affect their OPM retirement.



Have you been keeping up with the exciting updates on the DoD HR Employee Benefits Advisor (EBA) Credentialing Program?

The Benefits & Work Life Programs Training Team is fine-tuning the program. To facilitate this process of doing so, the team took the Credentialing Program on the road to Fort Riley, Kansas and Portsmouth, Virginia, to pilot the credentialing exams at both the Army and Navy Benefit Centers. The pilot was valuable to all stakeholders involved.

The participants were able to experience the credentialing exam process and preview the HR competencies being tested and the training team was able to assess, evaluate, and implement improvements to the program and testing experience.

Why Seek DoD HR EBA Credentials? Earning your DoD EBA credentials makes you a recognized expert and leader in the HR Benefits field and a valuable asset to your organization. This professional distinction sets you apart from your colleagues, providing you with a high level of knowledge and skills which denotes an esteemed level of professionalism that exemplifies achievement within the DoD HR Community.

first to earn your DoD EBA credentials! In order to be eligible to test onsite, participants must provide proof of the resident courses they have attended by submitting copies of the course certificates, most recent SF50's, and position descriptions (PD) as Intermediate and Advanced credentials are designed specifically for benefits practitioners. Upon registration for the symposium, participants may be required to supply the requested information prior to registering for certain exams.

Stay tuned as further details are released...



Are You Ready? Testing opportunities will be offered during the 2018 Symposium; be one of the



The hottest prospect is the Thrift Saving Modernization Act of 2017 H.R. 3031 also referred to as Senate Bill S. 873. This Bill has passed both House and Senate; and became law on November 17, 2017 when President Trump signed it. This new law provides TSP participants with more flexible withdrawal options; it will provide the following changes to The Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) title 5 Section 8433.

The law eliminates the statutory prohibition on multiple post-separation withdrawals and multiple age-based withdrawals while a participant is still working. It also removes the restriction that participants cannot take partial post-separation withdrawals if they've already taken an age-based in-service withdrawal. Though it has no effect on required minimum distributions mandated by the Internal Revenue Code, the law also allows separated participants who are over age 70½ to remain in the TSP, eliminating the requirement to make a withdrawal election on an entire account balance. Participants will also be able to stop monthly payments, change payment frequency, or elect to purchase an annuity while receiving monthly payments. To read more visit www.TSP.gov/whatsnew

Beginning of the Year UPDATES: Why Are My Deductions Different?

All open season enrollment changes for the 2018 Benefit year will be effective at the beginning of the year. Premium deductions will be reflected in the pay received on January 26, 2018 for most.

Check Your Leave and Earning Statement (LES) periodically for deductions and to ensure accuracy of any open season or salary changes.

Health Benefits Program (FEHB) premium changes for 2018. New premium rates for every health plan went into effect January 7, 2018. The average enrollee share increased 6.1 percent and the average increase in the government share is 3.2 percent. This is a change that will be reflected in your current LES if you participate in the health benefit program.

Dental and Vision Program (FEDVIP) premium changes for 2018 For a new enrollment, or an enrollment change, the effective date is Monday, January 1, 2018. For FEDVIP, which is fully funded by enrollee premiums, average vision plan premiums decreased by 0.48 percent and average dental plan premiums increased by 1.26 percent for 2018. If you participate in the dental and vision program, this is a change that will be deducted in your current LES.



Current Address

Ensure your servicing human resources office and

Flexible Spending Account (FSA) contributions for 2018.

If you enrolled or re-enrolled in FSAs for 2018, your first deduction is effective January 1, 2018.

- ◆ Last day to incur expenses using your 2017 HCFSA or LEX HCFSA
- ◆ Is December 31, 2017
- ◆ Last day to incur expenses using your 2017 DCFSA is March 15, 2018

Last day to submit all claims for the 2017 benefit period April 30, 2018

Thrift Savings Plan regular contributions and Catch-up for Calendar Year 2018. The contribution limit for regular TSP contributions increases in 2018 to 18,500. Catch-up contributions are \$6,000 . If you changed your contributions, your first deduction for the 2018 Benefit Year is effective January 1, 2018

Federal Employee Group Life

Insurance Program. The cost of Option B insurance depends on your age. When you have a birthday that moves you to another age group, you will begin paying premiums for the new age group in the first pay period that starts after your birthday. Continue to review your LES for these updates throughout the year.

W4, Employee Allowance Certificate and applicable state tax forms. Does your tax withholding need to be adjusted due to salary increases? If so, use the IRS Withholding Calculator to determine the necessary adjustments then complete and submit a new W-4 to your servicing Human Resources Office. The calculator can be found at <https://www.irs.gov/individuals/irs-withholding-calculator>





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**BE
Knowledgeable**

**BE
Informed**

**BE
Reliable**



payroll office have the most current mailing and Email address so that W2 forms, Wage and Tax Statements, insurance carrier and TSP information can be sent to the correct address.

Contact your servicing Human Resources Office **immediately** if your deductions do not agree with your elections and updates for 2018.

Designation of Beneficiary Forms

The Federal government recognizes, in this order, assignments, validate court orders and the most recent beneficiary forms. Wills or power of attorney documents do not override these forms. If you want to ensure that your survivors receive a timely notification of benefits and payments, it is important that you complete the appropriate designation of beneficiary specifying the percentage and name of those you wish to receive payment. If beneficiary forms are not completed, the order of precedence

applies when disbursing payment. Most beneficiary forms can be found on the www.opm.gov/forms and www.tsp.gov websites.

- ◆ SF2808, CSRS or SF3102 FERS (Use the appropriate form depending upon which retirement system you are under. The Office of Personnel Management will pay retirement funds to survivors and eligible dependents.)
- ◆ SF2823, Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (includes payment upon death for all life insurance coverage options.

Payments are made by the Office of FEGLI)

- ◆ SF1152, Unpaid Compensation (includes payment for monies due employee, i.e., salary, annual leave balance, and travel reimbursements)
- ◆ TSP-3, Thrift Savings Plans (used by TSP to pay TSP account balance)

Standard Form 50

Review your SF50 (Notification of Personnel Action) to ensure the following data is accurate.

- ◆ Pay Plan or Pay Band (block 16-19)
- ◆ Grade and Step or level (block 16-19)
- ◆ Basic, Locality, and Total Adjusted Salary (block 20, 20A-20D)
- ◆ Veterans Preference (block 26)
- ◆ FEGLI Code (block 27)
- ◆ Retirement Code (block 30)
- ◆ Service Computation Date (block 31)
- ◆ Duty station location (block 39)

The value of the data elements above may affect your leave accrual, retention standing, retirement deductions, wages, and premiums for benefits.

For assistance in locating your most recent SF50, contact your servicing HR office.