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BENEFACTS NEWSLETTER

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Benefits Symposium 2019

Providing Professional Growth & Development to the HR Benefits Community

The Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service (DCPAS) 2019 DoD Benefits Symposium (Symposium '19) is fast approaching. The scheduled dates are July 8-12 and it is an opportunity for the Department of Defense (DoD) Human Resource (HR) community to come together to discuss, learn and focus on Benefits and Entitlements programs, Injury Compensation, and Unemployment Compensation. This unique event, the only one of its kind within the Federal government, is sponsored by the DoD and is open to non-DoD agencies on a space-limited basis.

The theme for Symposium '19 is "Providing Professional Growth & Development to the HR Benefits Community." This year's theme emphasizes the interchanges and exchanges that happen within the HR Community, which is the driver and impetus for the growth and development we seek and desire as HR Professionals. Together, we are able to meet the mission and provide the solutions required within our HR Benefits Community.

Beyond the theme, Symposium '19 has some exciting new features in the form of workshops, extended time periods, and more. Each workshop will afford the attendee a chance to gain a thorough understanding of a topic through exercises and scenarios. Extended time periods will ensure plenty of time for questions, answers, and instruction.

Registration for the symposium will begin April 15th; however, during the symposium attendees can attend breakout sessions and workshops of choice. Attendance is on a first-come basis. Once breakout sessions and workshops are filled to capacity, the attendee has the option to attend an alternate session or workshop. In addition, Credentialing testing will be offered for all three levels for during the Symposium. (More details on credentialing are found on page 3.)

Vendors and representatives from Medicare, TSP, and more will be in attendance. Symposium '19 is a free event. Temporary Duty (TDY) and other travel expenses are the responsibility of attendees and/or their employing agency. DCPAS Benefits, WAGE, and NAF Policy Line of Business (LOB) looks forward to seeing you there!

Symposium Tips

Engage.

Network.

Share.

Connect.

Attending any professional event can be exciting and busy with most providing a full slate of activities across a multi-day agenda. The 2019 DoD 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 for the symposium as soon as possible. If attending with a co-worker, consider making a list and dividing the list.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. When you are back at the office, contact those who 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.

5. Be engaged. 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 opportunities 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 opportunities for testing to earn your credentials as an Employee Benefits Advisor (EBA). See page 3 for more information about credentialing.

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

Take Your Career to the Next Level: Earn Your DoD Employee Benefits Advisor (EBA) Credentials

Have you been keeping up with the exciting updates on the DoD HR Employee Benefits Advisor (EBA) Credentialing Program? Receive professional recognition through the DoD HR Credentialing Program. During this year's symposium, you will have the opportunity to test and earn certification at the Basic, Intermediate, and/or Advanced proficiency level(s).

Eligibility Requirements
Participants must be current federal HR Professionals assigned to the 0201 or 0203 series and must complete the Federal Employee Benefits courses and requirements listed below.

Eligibility for Proficiency Level testing:

Credentialing Proficiency Level I
0-12 months of experience, successfully complete Basic Benefits Course and score 85% or more on credentialing exam (All 0201s and 0203s Human Resources series)

Credentialing Proficiency Level II
18-24 months of benefits experience, successfully complete Benefits Intermediate Course and score 85% or more on credentialing exam
(Only EBA 0201 series)

Credentialing Proficiency Level III
36-48 months of benefits experience, successfully complete Advanced Benefits Workshop, and score 85% or more on credentialing exam
(Only EBA 0201 series)

Successful Completion

Successful completion of the DoD HR Credentialing program demonstrates expertise in the application of principles and core competencies critical to the Employee Benefits Advisor (EBA) and HR Community. This professional distinction sets you apart from your colleagues, providing you with a high level of knowledge and skills, and denotes an exemplary level of professionalism that epitomizes achievement within the Federal HR Community.

Are You Ready?
Testing opportunities will be offered during the 2019 Symposium! In order to be eligible to test onsite, attendees must meet the eligibility requirements for the applicable Level of testing. Sign up or Walk-in to take the Basic, Intermediate, and/or Advanced credentialing exam.
To sign-up for Credentialing testing, email Kisha Wilkins at kisha.l.wilkins.civ@mail.mil

Symposium Credentialing Exam Schedule

Monday	8 July 2019 (10:00am – 12:30pm)
Tuesday	9 July 2019 (10:00am – 1:00pm)
Wednesday	10 July 2019 (9:00am -12:30pm)
Thursday	11 July 2019 (8:30am – 12:00pm)

Contact Dodhra.mc-alex-dcpas.mbx.beneits-contacts@mail.mil for general information about the credentialing program.

So what are you waiting for?

Educate, Engage, & Elevate: *Take your Skills to the Next Level by Understanding the Intersecting Spheres of Compensation and Benefits*

"The 2019 DoD Benefits Symposium will host plenary & general sessions to engage professionals across the HR spectrum"

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 compensation and unemployment compensation (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 2019 DoD 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:

Analyzing Medical Evidence

This session will cover how you can determine: if the medical report being reviewed is of good or poor quality, whether it is ready to be used by the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) to advance your case, how you can determine if it is based on questionable premises or on solid medical evidence, and how the Injury Compensation Program Administrator (ICPA) can develop medical issues with the Attending Physician and OWCP.

Pipeline Program

The Pipeline Program enables DoD installations to overcome reemployment issues involving injured DoD civilian employees, such as budget and complement constraints, by providing funding for salaries and benefits for the first year of reemployment. The Pipeline program provides an installation with the ability to integrate injured workers back to full employment while effectively reducing lost production days during the recovery period, which supports the Department of Labor's Return to Work Initiative. Under this initiative, each executive department and agency is expected to improve its performance in seven areas. The program also has a positive effect on mission readiness and preparedness, while allowing injured workers to contribute to that mission and improve their quality of life. This course will provide an overview of the program and the ICPA's responsibilities for submitting a Pipeline packet for consideration to the Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service.

Educate, Engage, & Elevate: *Take your Skills to the Next Level by Understanding the Intersecting Spheres of Compensation and Benefits (continued)*

HR Issues Impacting FECA

The HR Issues Impacting Federal Employees Compensation Act (FECA) course covers benefits provided to Federal employees who sustained traumatic injuries and occupational illnesses, as well as the monetary benefit to qualified survivors as a result of employment-related deaths. The primary discussion will focus on the impact Leave Without Pay (LWOP) presents based upon an injured worker's lost time, separation due to an accepted work-related medical condition and/or Return to Duty action(s). Additional emphasis will be placed on Service Computation Date(s), TSP, references governing the interaction of OPM Retirement and FECA, transferring Health Insurance coverage, Life Insurance concerns, dependency updates, potential overpayments, as well as an overview of other HR issues having an impact on FECA.

The Unemployment Compensation Program

The Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees Program provides benefits for eligible unemployed former civilian Federal employees. There is no payroll deduction from a Federal employee's wages for unemployment insurance protection because benefits are paid for by the Federal agencies.

The program is administered by States as agents of the Federal government. This program is operated under the same terms and conditions that apply to regular State Unemployment Insurance. In general, the law of the State in which your last official duty station in Federal civilian service was located will be the State law that determines eligibility for unemployment insurance benefits. The law of the State (under which the claim is filed) determines benefit amounts, number of weeks benefits can be paid, and other eligibility conditions.

Each state operates its own unemployment insurance program. Many require you to file for unemployment benefits online, and some provide toll-free numbers or other ways to obtain assistance in filing.

The Injury Compensation and Unemployment Compensation (ICUC) team is your source for information about civilian unemployment compensation (UC) within the DoD. Because we serve as a liaison between DoD and State Employment Security Agencies (SESAs), let ICUC assist with training and technical assistance on claims administration and auditing support. Our services can help improve the process of UC management—so that you can deliver benefits on time and save money.

Please forward any questions to dodhra.mc-alex.dcpas.mbx.icuc-contact@mail.mil

Employees Returning to Work

"One of the most complex and time consuming processes in the Workers' Compensation world is returning an employee back to work"

One of the most complex and time consuming processes in the Workers' Compensation world is returning an employee back to work after being off work collecting wage loss benefits. This process requires coordination between a number of personnel within the agency, in addition to the Department of Labor.

The process starts with detailed and valid work restrictions for the employee. These work restrictions can come from the employee's treating physician or a physician assigned by the Department of Labor to perform an examination and provide answers to specific questions posed by the Department of Labor Claims Examiner. This process can take several months and may require multiple examinations based upon the employee's condition. For example, if an employee has an orthopedic condition it may require an orthopedic exam as well as a neurological exam if the injury expands to nerve involvement. The Claims Examiner must address all these medical questions before a determination can be made as to whether an employee can return to work.

If the employee is determined to be able to return to work then the next phase of the process begins. The agency is asked to determine if a position is available that meets the work restrictions of the employee. If the agency has a position, then a job offer is crafted to present to the employee. The offer has to meet certain requirements laid out by the Department of Labor. If the offer meets those requirements, the employee can decline or accept the offer. If the employee accepts the offer, the process begins to bring the employee back to work. However, it is not just the Injury Compensation Specialist that needs to be involved. What Authority and Nature of Action codes are going to be on the SF-50 returning the employee to duty? How are their benefits (FEHB and FEGLI) transferred back to the agency? What happens if the employee also had an approved Disability Retirement? How does that affect how the employee is returned to work? What happens if the employee needs assistance to perform the duties of their new position after they have returned to work?

As you can see it will take the expertise of a number of people at the agency to address these questions. Later articles will discuss what happens when an employee accepts the job offer and what happens when they decline. The good news is that agency personnel do not have to face these situations alone. The Advisors of the Benefits, Wage, and NAF Policy LOB can provide guidance and assistance at dodhra.mc-alex.dcpas.mbx.icuc-contact@mail.mil. The 2019 Benefits Symposium will also cover topics such as these in great detail to help agency Specialists understand the interplay between different programs in this complex process of returning an employee back to work.

DCA's Role in Wage

The Wage and Salary Division is responsible for conducting local prevailing rate wage surveys to develop and adjust wage schedules for approximately 240,000 employees under the Federal Wage System. To carry out this responsibility, the Division operates like the gears inside of a watch. Data Collection Agents, Project Officers, and Analysts work together to fulfill the Division's critical mission. In this edition, we will examine more closely the role of the Data Collection Agents (DCA).

The "boots on the ground" of the Wage and Salary Division are its 40+ Data Collection Agents. These individuals are responsible for contacting eligible private sector organizations and persuading management officials to provide sensitive wage information. The data is then used to establish the prevailing rates of pay for federal blue-collar employees across the country. As an incentive, participating companies receive a copy of the survey summary which provides pay information for various survey jobs and industries in the local area.

The Data Collection Agents prepare weeks prior to the survey. DCAs study required and specialized jobs included in each survey, conduct research on the area, the assigned establishments, and local compensation laws. When in the field collecting data, DCAs are partnered with local Labor counterparts who aid in the collection of wage data. During the interview with company

representatives, the data collectors perform a comprehensive analysis of private sector positions to effectively match them to a number of benchmark blue-collar skilled trade federal jobs.

The surveys run from one to two weeks and are performed in 130 Appropriated Fund and 118 Nonappropriated Fund wage areas annually. To become a successful DCA, one must be able to adapt to different climates, working conditions, and effectively work with a variety of personalities on the road. Additionally, one must be able to work in a team environment, enjoy continuous travel and feel comfortable "selling" the survey to the private sector, as participation is voluntary. Once off the clock, DCAs get the opportunity to learn more about the places they visit and the people with whom they work.

Upon returning to their permanent duty station, DCAs work closely with Project Officers and Analysts for consolidation and analysis of the data gathered. This leads the other gears in our organization to turn until a finalized wage schedule is published within the required 45-day period. Not long after, the Data Collection Agents are back on the road conducting their next survey.

DoD Portability of Benefits Working Group Update

The DoD Portability of Benefits Working Group was established April 2018 as an ongoing working group to develop clearer and helpful portability of benefits guidance and procedures specific to processing a portability move between DoD Nonappropriated and DoD Appropriated Fund positions. Throughout the summer and fall of 2018, the working group met to identify efficiencies that will streamline the portability process across Components. We are making progress in clarifying many issues that have been stumbling blocks for movement between the two separate employment systems, and in reducing errors related to portability moves. We are pleased there is active engagement across the Components. We are looking forward to updating the current DCPAS Portability of Benefits Reference Guide with additional FAQs and specific portability scenarios in 2019. Please e-mail portability of benefits questions to: dodhra.mc-alex.dcpas.mbx.naf@mail.mil

Benefits, Wage, and NAF Policy Line of Business

WHOLE PERSON · WHOLE CAREER

BENEFITS • WAGE • NAF Policy

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https://twitter.com/LOB3Colleagues

2019 Mark Center Training Schedule

The Benefits and Work Life Program Division will hold training on Federal Employee benefits at the Mark Center in Alexandria, VA. Each course is four days long and space is limited to 25 participants.

Registration opens 60 days prior to the start date of each course and will remain open for 30 days, or until the class is full.

Registration is available online, however a DoD CAC is required: https://www.apps.cpms.osd.mil/cpmstraining/app/training.aspx

BASIC	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
June 4-7	April 23-26	May 7-10
July 30—Aug 2	June 11-14	June 18-21
Sept 3-6	Aug 13-16	Sept 17-20