DCPAS

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BENEFACTS NEWSLETTER

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

2019 Open Season Preparation for 2020

It is that time of year again: Open Season! Are you prepared? If not, this article is for you. In 2019, Open Season begins November 11, 2019 and ends December 9, 2019. It affects the following benefit programs for federal employees:

-Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB)
-Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP)
-Federal Flexible Spending Account Program (FSAFEDS)

Open Season

Now is the time to evaluate what benefits are best for you (and your family) in the upcoming calendar year. An overview of each benefit type is provided in the following paragraphs:

FEHB
When evaluating a health plan, there are multiple factors to think about before making a change or election. During Open Season, eligible employees can enroll, change enrollment type, change their current plan, or cancel their enrollment. They can even waive or participate in Premium Conversion. OPM has a useful tool on their website, Compare Plans at https://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/healthcare/plan-information/compare-plans/, which presents plan information and premiums for all FEHB carriers. If you are unable to use your agency's electronic method of changing, stopping, or enrolling into the FEHB Program during Open Season, you must submit a SF 2809 to your HR Benefits Office. All enrollment elections or changes must be submitted by or before December 9, 2019, and all elections become effective the first day of the first full pay period in January 2020.

FEDVIP
FEDVIP is administered by a government-authorized third party responsible for the supplemental insurance dental and vision program benefits. Information regarding plan information and premiums can be found at the BENEFEDS webpage at https://www.benefeds.com/Portal/EducationSupport. You can use the comparison tool to help make an informed decision about your supplemental dental and vision benefits for the following year. However, all elections must be made by December 9, 2019, through the BENEFEDS portal, and the effective date is January 1, 2020. For more information, visit www.benefeds.com.

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What is the Catch 62?

A Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) employee contemplating retirement who has prior military service and was employed before October 1, 1982, needs to know the answer to this question.

If the employee hired prior to October 1, 1982, under CSRS, they will receive credit for post-1956 military service. But if they are eligible for Social Security and a military deposit is not made for this service prior to retirement, at age 62 the years of military service will be removed from the annuity calculation, thus causing a reduction to the annuity.

How to determine Catch 62?

Key points used to determine the Catch 62 rule:

- Employed under CSRS before October 1, 1982
- No deposit paid for Post-1956 military service
- Eligible for Social Security at age 62

If all these are true, the employee falls under the Catch 62 rule. They will need to consider if it is beneficial to make a military deposit for post-56 military service. The employee will receive full credit for military service prior to age 62 whether they paid a deposit or not. However, if they are eligible for Social Security, then no military deposit means no annuity credit after age 62.

How do I make a military deposit?

Here is the link to a prior BENEFACTS article on Military Deposits and Retirement that lists the steps needed to take in order to begin the process to pay a deposit for post-56 military time. https://www.dcpas.osd.mil/Content/documents/BWN/BENEFACTS%20Volume%2012%20Issue%204.pdf. The military deposit must be paid in full prior to retirement. Employees should allow time for the processing and receipt of a paid in full letter from DFAS prior to retirement to ensure credit is received.

For additional information on this topic please contact your HR Benefits Office.

2019 Open Season Preparation (continued)

FSA

The Flexible Spending Account (FSA) is another useful benefit federal employees have to cover medical and dependent care expenses using pre-tax dollars. FSA has three options from which to choose: Health Care FSA (HCFSA), Limited Expense Health Care FSA (LEX HCFSA), and the Dependent Care FSA (DCFSA). The maximum allowable contribution amount is $2,700 for 2019. If you choose to participate, you will need to decide how much to contribute for 2020. The FSA website is user-friendly with tabs of varying information, see https://www.fsafeds.com/explore

Note: FSA requires yearly re-enrollment in order to maintain the benefit. (FEHB and FEDVIP, however, carry over from year to year.) Any carry over funds are lost if not reenrolled. FSA and the FEDVIP are alike in terms of the effective date for Open Season, January 1, of the following year. (FEHB changes are effective the first pay period after the new year.) For more information, visit www.fsafeds.com.

The links provided in this article pertain to that specific benefit. For more information regarding Open Season, visit www.opm.gov. For questions or assistance with the Open Season, call or visit your agency HR Benefits Office.

Retiring in 2020? What is the Best Date?

"...Deciding on the best calendar date depends on many variables, including the employee's retirement system, end of the leave period, and accrued annual leave."

While understanding that only an employee can choose for themselves the *best* day to retire, deciding on the best calendar date depends on many variables, including the employee's retirement system, end of the leave period, and accrued annual leave. To maximize their annuity benefit, Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) employees should retire no later than the last day of a month to have the annuity payment begin the first of the following month. Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) employees have a few extra days, and can retire either the last day of any month, or no later than the third day of any month and their annuity payment will also begin the following month. Additionally, the last day of each leave period is important to consider since annual and sick leave accrues only if 80 hours of work were completed for a pay period. If an employee were to retire in the middle of a pay period, they would not receive partial leave credit and also their salary would be pro-rated for the partial pay period.

When it comes to annual leave, retiring at the end of the year can potentially bring the most benefit. If an employee accrued 240 hours of annual leave from the previous year and did not take any leave throughout the year, they would be paid for 448 hours of unused annual leave. Any annual leave balance at the time of retirement will be paid in a lump sum. (The annual lump sum payout equals the total hours multiplied by hourly salary.) The lump sum calculation would include any general/locality pay increases in the new year and the income would count towards the new tax year. See the chart below for dates to consider.

2020 Retirement Calendar Dates to Consider

Best for CSRS Only	Best for FERS & CSRS
January 3: Last work day of the pay period and end of leave year! Earn a full pay period of salary, leave, and take a lump sum of all annual leave over 240 hours without forfeit.	**January 31:** If extra annual leave is not a factor, this date falls on the end of a pay period at the end of the month. Earn full salary and annual leave for the pay period.
July 3: End of pay period, annuity begins July 4. Can benefit from 6 months saved annual leave over 240 hours.	**February 29:** End of month, end of pay period. Full salary and annual leave earned.
Jan 2, 2021: End of pay period and end of leave year!	**July 31:** End of pay period, end of month. Can benefit from 6 months saved annual leave over 240 hours.
	**August 29:** End of month, end of pay period.
	December 31: End of pay period and end of leave year! Earn a full pay period of salary, leave, and take a lump sum of all annual leave over 240 hours without forfeit.

Put Your Knowledge to the Test

The 2019 DCPAS Benefits Training Cycle has ended. We have trained over 400 Human Resources Specialists. Now it's time to put your knowledge and experience to the test, the DoD Employee Benefits Advisor (EBA) Credentialing Exam.

2019 Credentialing Testing Dates

Our testing center will be open for Credentialing testing at Levels I, II, & III at the Mark Center, 4800 Mark Center Drive, Alexandria, Virginia, every Monday (except Federal Holidays) beginning November 12, 2019 through December 16, 2019. Testing time starts at 0900.

Eligibility Requirements

- Credentialing Proficiency Level I – Successfully complete Basic Benefits Course with an 85%+ on course post-test (All 201s, 203s)
- Credentialing Proficiency Level II – Successfully complete Benefits Intermediate Course with an 85%+ on course post-test, must score 85%+ on Level I Credentialing Exam (Only EBA 201s)
- Credentialing Proficiency Level III – Successfully complete Advanced Benefits Workshop with an 85%+ on course post-test, must score 85%+ on Level II Credentialing Exam (Only EBA 201s)

Successful Completion

Successful completion of the DoD EBA Credentialing Program demonstrates expertise in the principles and core competencies critical to the Employee Benefits Advisor (EBA) and HR Community. The DoD EBA Credential positions the HR Specialist as the "DoD EBA" expert within the Federal HR profession. In addition, the designatory letters "DoD EBA" are added to the HR Specialist's professional signature.

Let's Test!

Schedule a date to put your knowledge to the test. You may email Dodhra.mc-alex-dcpas.mbx.benefits-contacts@mail.mil.

Be Recognized.

Get Credentialed.

Nonappropriated (NAF) Health Benefits Program (HBP) Open Enrollment

It's time, once again, to review your current benefit elections and think about your health needs for 2020! The NAF HBP Open Enrollment will take place October 28, 2019, through November 29, 2019. During this period, NAF employees can enroll in a healthcare plan based on their employment status; switch plans (if applicable); and add/remove eligible dependents. New for 2020 is an additional health plan – a high deductible health plan (HDHP) with a health savings account (HSA) option. Those individuals who pick the HDHP with HSA option are allowed to use pre-tax dollars to pay for eligible health expenses and to build a savings fund for future medical costs. To review premium rates, plan details, how to enroll, or to find out other general information about the NAF HBP, log onto www.nafhealthplans.com. We encourage you to continue to focus on health and wellness by taking charge of your health care.

Divorce, Remarriage, and Survivor Annuity Elections in Retirement

"...Both annuitants who are unmarried at retirement as well as those who elected less than the maximum survivor annuity election for their spouse at retirement, retain a plethora of options for adding and/or increasing their survivor annuity benefit"

While most retirement literature focuses almost exclusively on survivor options prior to retirement, both annuitants who are unmarried at retirement (but later become married), as well as those who elected less than the maximum survivor annuity election for their spouse at retirement, retain several options for adding and/or increasing their survivor annuity benefit (should they later change their mind). These options are popularly termed "Post-Retirement Marriage" (PRM) by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

Annuitants, and employees about to retire, should consider the following when considering divorce, (re)marriage, and survivor annuity elections:

- There are two categories of PRMs: 18 month and "regular."
- 18 month PRMs require that the annuitant have been married at the time of retirement, but have elected less than the maximum survivor annuity for their spouse. Annuitants have 18 months from the time they retire to make this election. 18 month PRMs require a deposit payment to cover survivor annuity deductions for the months back to the date of retirement, and then further apply an actuarial deduction to adjust the gross annuity to withhold future survivor deductions. (Annuitants should be aware that the deposit is not refundable and the actuarial reduction is permanent; regardless of death, annulment, or divorce, the reduction remains.)
- "Regular" PRMs require that the annuitant have either been unmarried or divorced at the time of retirement. The deadline to make the election is two years from the date of marriage. A "regular" PRM requires no deposit payment. Payment is deducted across the span of the annuity, and the annuity is also reduced to fund newly elected survivor benefits. As with the 18 month PRM, the actuarial reduction is permanent and cannot be removed as a result of death, divorce, or annulment.
- An annuitant must have been married to their spouse for a minimum of nine months prior to processing any PRM request.
- All annuitants, no matter their circumstance(s), are charged 6% interest on any payments that are due to survivor benefit adjustments.
- Annuitants considering divorce should be aware that a court cannot award their spouse a benefit that is not available. For example: if the annuitant elected no survivor annuity election, the divorce decree cannot award the (former) spouse a survivor annuity.

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National Guard Special Disability Retirement Returning Back to a Federal Position

A *National Guard technician* means an individual employed under 32 U.S.C. 709(a) who, as a condition of employment, is required to be a member of the National Guard with a specified military grade. In most circumstances, Technicians must meet the same requirements as regular employees to be eligible for immediate unreduced retirement. (See CSRS/FERS Handbook Chapter 41, Voluntary Retirement Based on Age and Service, section 41A1.1-2.) Under special conditions, however, a National Guard technician may qualify for retirement under disability provisions, even if he or she is not eligible for retirement under the regular disability retirement provisions. A National Guard technician who performs at least (5 years of civilian service under CSRS or 18 months under FERS) may retire under the disability provisions if he or she:

- Is separated from employment as a National Guard technician because of a disability that disqualifies the individual from membership in the National Guard or from holding the military grade required for such employment;
- Is not considered to be disabled in his or her position under regular requirements;
- Is not appointed to another position in the Federal government; and
- Has not declined a reasonable job offer

One important item the National Guard technician must keep in mind, is that the disability annuity will terminate under certain circumstances. The annuity of a technician who retires under special disability retirement provisions terminates on the date he or she is appointed to any position in any agency of the government, or declines an offer of appointment to a vacant position in any agency of the government. If a disability annuitant is found restored to earning capacity, he or she may be eligible for priority referrals under the Displaced Employee Program. "Priority referral" does not mean that the former agency must or will offer the individual his or her former position or place them in another position. It simply means that all Federal agencies will consider the individual for placement if there are vacancies for which he or she is qualified. To exercise this right, the annuitant should contact his or her former agency or nearest OPM area office. The individual may apply at any time after receiving a notice of restoration to earning capacity from OPM, but no later than 90 days after the annuity has been terminated.

If you would like more information on this topic please see the CSRS/FERS handbook or email our office at, dodhra.mc-alex.dcpas.mbx.benefits-contacts@mail.mil

Divorce, Remarriage, and Survivor Annuity Elections (continued)

(An apportionment, however, is different—it can potentially be awarded. An apportionment is distinguished from a survivor annuity because it is payable only during the lifetime of the annuitant. It ceases on the death of the annuitant. A survivor annuity is only payable upon the death of the annuitant.)

- Have a former spouse receiving the maximum survivor annuity? While OPM will process the annuitant's PRM election, the current spouse will not receive anything until the former spouse passes away.
- Upon the receipt of a divorce decree or a death certificate, OPM will process the removal of the survivor annuity. Annuitants cannot "keep" the existing survivor annuity election upon divorce or death of their spouse, for a new spouse; OPM is required to remove it.

How Much FEGLI Should I Take into Retirement?

"The more financial responsibilities one has, the more life insurance to consider."

The Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance Program (FEGLI) was established to help protect employees and their family members from the loss of income in the event that you or another primary wage earner were to pass away. The more financial responsibilities one has, the more life insurance to consider having. For instance, an employee with a young family may consider having more life insurance than an older employee entering retirement. With fewer financial responsibilities, a retiree might consider having just enough life insurance to cover burial costs. Whatever the situation, it is important to have all the facts in order to make the best decision.

Consider the questions below to help determine the amount of life insurance coverage to carry into retirement:

#1) How much FEGLI coverage do I currently have? Am I eligible to have it in retirement?

Before determining how much FEGLI to carry into retirement, you must first know what you currently have and if you are eligible for coverage in retirement. Check GRB Platform, MyBiz+, or comparable employee databases for your benefit information. You can also look at your most recent Standard Form (SF) 50, Notification of Personnel Action, block 27. There is a 2-character code that represents your current coverage. If you have any questions in determining your FEGLI coverage, contact your human resources office. At retirement, you are eligible to continue FEGLI if you meet certain criteria:

- You must have been insured for the 5 years of service immediately before the starting date of your annuity or the full period(s) of service during which you were eligible to be insured if less than 5 years; or for a postponed annuity, the 5 years of service immediately before your separation date. This requirement must be met for Basic and each type of Optional insurance you wish to carry.
- You must be entitled to retire on an immediate annuity (or disability annuity) under a retirement system for civilian employees.
- You are enrolled in FEGLI on the date of retirement and you have not converted to an individual policy.

#2) Who is financially dependent upon me?

Determine who will be affected most in the absence of your income. Ideally, the goal is to arrive at retirement debt free, but that is not always possible.

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How Much FEGLI Should I Take into Retirement (continued)

If, by the time you retire, you are an empty-nester and your spouse is financially self-sufficient, you may wish to forgo life insurance. On the other hand, if you have young children or a special needs child requiring ongoing care, you may wish to consider keeping it. Calculate the amount of monthly expenses that will be left behind and how much life insurance can cover in your absence.

#3) How much life insurance can I afford to carry into retirement?

Once you establish the amount of FEGLI coverage you are eligible to carry, determine how much coverage will cost as you progress into retirement. Use the FEGLI Calculator located on the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) website - https://www.opm.gov/retirement-services/calculators/fegli-calculator/. To determine the current value of your FEGLI, input your age at retirement, salary and the coverage you wish to carry. The FEGLI Calculator will allow you to calculate premiums for the various combinations of coverage and see how the life insurance carried into retirement will change over time. (Note that some FEGLI coverage with reductions over age 65 are free!) The next step is to consider the estimated amount of your monthly retirement annuity and all other earnings (i.e. TSP, SSI, income, etc.). Determine how FEGLI and other deductions will affect your bottom line. If you contemplate staying in the workforce and earning additional outside income, that salary can offset the cost of insurance. If you do not anticipate working, consider the FEGLI coverage that will be both affordable and beneficial to the loved ones you leave behind. Once you have answered all these pertinent questions, you are now better equipped to answer the question, "How much FEGLI should I take into retirement?"

The Monroney Amendment

Section 5343(d) of title 5, United States Code, commonly referred to as the "Monroney Amendment", was first enacted by Public Law (P.L.) 90-560 on October 12, 1968. Originally named after former Oklahoma Senator Mike Monroney and last amended by P.L. 107-107 on December 28, 2001, the Monroney Amendment principally requires the importation of out-of-area wage data for local wage surveys when large numbers of Federal Wage System employees are employed in specialized occupations (e.g. aircraft mechanic, electronics mechanic, etc.), but few comparable jobs in local private sector are available.

For example, imagine the majority number of Federal positions in the Macon, GA wage area are in the aircraft industry, but the number of private sector aircraft-related jobs found in the Macon, GA area are too few to be measurable. Under the Monroney Amendment, wage data may be obtained from the Atlanta, GA wage area, the nearest area where the required number of aircraft related jobs are located, to determine the pay rates for the aircraft-related Federal jobs, as well as all other Federal blue-collar jobs, in the Macon, GA wage area.

Currently, pay rates in approximately 32 out of 130 appropriated fund wage survey areas are based on Monroney Amendment authority.

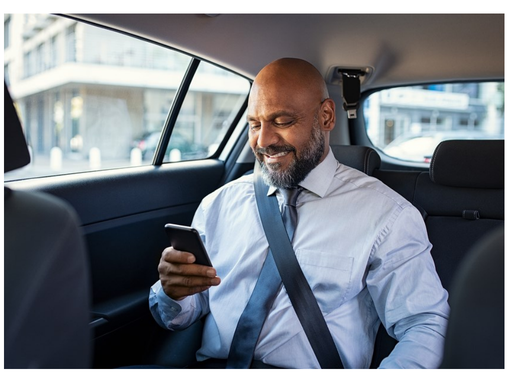
Entitlements for Department of Defense (DoD) Reemployed Annuitants When Rehired and Separated After Rehire

Reemployed annuitants are individuals who retired from federal service and return to federal employment. Entitlements for reemployed annuitants vary with the retirement plan (CSRS or FERS) and retirement type (i.e. Voluntary Immediate Retirement, Discontinued Service Retirement, Disability, Special Retirement, etc.) in addition to the appointment (i.e. permanent, temporary, or term appointment) upon reemployment. Generally within the DoD, reemployed annuitants continue to receive their full annuity benefit during the reemployment period, as well as salary without offset, but are ineligible for a supplemental annuity and/or a redetermined annuity. (Under certain conditions, the annuity may even terminate upon reemployment.)

"Entitlements for reemployed annuitants vary with the retirement plan and retirement type in addition to the appointment upon reemployment."

<u>FEHB</u>

If a reemployed annuitant is enrolled in FEHB as a retiree and is reemployed in a FEHB eligible position, he or she may elect to have health benefits transferred from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to the employing agency. This permits the reemployed annuitant to take advantage of premium conversion. If the reemployed annuitant did not have FEHB as a retiree and is reemployed in an eligible position, he or she may enroll within 60 calendar days of his or her rehire. Upon separation, a reemployed annuitant who had FEHB as a retiree and had elected to have coverage transferred to the Agency will have it transferred back to the OPM. For reemployed annuitants who did not have FEHB as a retiree, coverage will end after a 31-day extension of coverage. If eligible for Temporary Continuation of Coverage (TCC), the reemployed annuitant may enroll within 60 days after enrollment terminates.



<u>FEGLI</u>

If an annuitant is reemployed in a position excluded from FEGLI coverage, Basic and any Optional coverage held as a retiree will be retained and administered by OPM. If the reemployed annuitant did not have coverage as a retiree and the position is not excluded from FEGLI coverage, life insurance can be elected as an employee. For reemployed annuitants who had coverage as retiree and are in a position that is FEGLI eligible; Basic, Option A and Option C insurance carried as an annuitant is suspended. However, basic (and Option A and C if enrolled) coverage is automatically gained as an employee, unless waived. Any coverage waived as an employee cancels FEGLI coverage as an annuitant. (There is no need to complete a new SF 2817 (*Life Insurance Election*).)

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Entitlements for (DoD) Reemployed Annuitants When Rehired and Separated After Rehire (continued)

Even if over age 65, withholdings are made from pay and life insurance coverage as an employee will not reduce. Post-65 reductions only affect annuitants.

Option B is handled differently from Basic, Option A, and Option C. If an annuitant has Option B and is reemployed in a position that is FEGLI eligible, an opportunity must be given within 31 days of reemployment to choose whether to keep Option B as an annuitant or have it as an employee. If the annuitant wishes to keep coverage as an annuitant, no action needs to be taken. Withholdings will continue to be made from the annuity (unless over age 65 and has elected Full Reduction). If Option B is desired as an employee, a SF 2817 (*Life Insurance Election*) must be completed within 31 days after reemployment. The amount of Option B coverage will be based on salary as an employee and withholdings will be made from pay. The reemployed annuitant must sign for all of the insurance (Basic, Option A, Option C) and Option B. Any coverage not signed for by the reemployed annuitant will be cancelled.

FEDVIP

If a reemployed annuitant is enrolled in FEDVIP as an annuitant and is reemployed in a position eligible for FEDVIP, BENEFEDS must be contacted (1-877-888-3337) in order to have premiums deducted from pay as pre-tax dollars. If the new position is not eligible for FEDVIP, a reemployed annuitant may retain the coverage as an annuitant.

FSAFEDS

Reemployed annuitants may be able to enroll in an FSAFEDS health care flexible spending account and/or dependent care account. For the health care account, reemployed annuitants must also be eligible to enroll in the FEHB Program. Reemployed annuitants can continue their Long Term Care (FLTCIP) as annuitants. If a reemployed annuitant is not enrolled in FLTCIP, as a new reemployed annuitant he or she can apply for coverage within 60 days of reemployment using the Abbreviated Underwriting Application. He or she can apply at any time using the Full Underwriting Application at www.ltcfeds.com.

TSP

DoD Reemployed annuitants are not eligible to contribute into TSP as they are not considered employees under Section 9902 of Title 5, United States Code.

Reemployed annuitants serve at the will of the agency and can be separated from employment at any time. Upon separation from reemployment, reemployed annuitants will continue to receive their annuity and benefits as annuitants. It is important that reemployed annuitants understand the impact of reemployment on their benefits.

For more details on the entitlements available for reemployed annuitants, please refer to upcoming DoD Reemploying Federal Annuitants Reference Guide.

Fun Tips for a Less Stressful Holiday Season (if you are often stressed during the holidays)

Just say "NO"

Let it Go

Plan Ahead

Continue Traditions

Leave Guilt

Be Thankful

Just Say "No" (yes you can!) Are you always the one to travel to the ends of the earth for everyone else? Do you always have to bake enough desserts to feed an army? What about that $20 office secret Santa and you always end up with the gag gift? Perhaps you need a break from saying "yes." This time "no" could bring some much needed relief. Try it and see.

Let it Go (seriously) Typically holidays bring memories, fond ones, and horrendous ones. For some reason, the ugly memories continue to show their heads. It does you no good to rehash the pain of the past, especially in reference to others who no longer care or remember. Forgive and forget, let it go!

Plan Ahead (with a little wiggle room) Be the first to set plans so you are ready and not dependent on what everyone else is doing. Take control of your situation. Plan to see family, friends, or take a trip far far away….

Continue Traditions with Family and Friends (you can always add some spice) There is a reason why traditions are there. For ages and ages, many families have those little things they look forward to, subconsciously or not. Feel free to add some flavor, but don't destroy them. Look for a new family game to play that will add to the fun.

Leave Guilt at the Door (all of it) Do you want to split yourself in thirds and be in 3 places at once? Impossible. Have no gift budget but want to buy the latest $800 phone for your kids? Be realistic. Would you really love to cancel the holidays and New Year's because it stresses you out? Of course this won't happen. Stop wasting your time feeling guilty and try to enjoy the season. Don't worry so much about presents, but more about being present. Take time to enjoy the moments.

Be Thankful (an attitude of gratitude) There is something about being thankful that can change your mindset. We have much to be thankful for, whether we choose to admit it or not. Be sure to tell others you are thankful for them and the love that they bring to your life.

Happy Holidays!

Benefits, Wage, and NAF Policy Line of Business

WHOLE PERSON · WHOLE CAREER

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Our Service Sustains Your Service

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Alexandria, VA 22350

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2020 Mark Center Training Schedule

The Benefits and Work Life Program Division holds 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, but a DoD CAC is required: https://www.apps.cpms.osd.mil/cpmstraining/app/training.aspx

BASIC	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
March 30-April 3	April 13-17	March 9-13
June 15-19	July 13-17	May 5-8