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BENEFACTS NEWSLETTER

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

2020 Health and Fitness	1
NAF Health Plan	2
2019 Tax Season: What Changed?	2, 3
Credentialing Boot Camp	4
Long Term Care FLTCIP 3.0	4, 6
Out of Sight Out of Mind (Forgotten LES)	5
ICUC Support in Critical Situations	6
Process Change for Handling Reemployed	7, 9
GS & FWS Wage System	8
Fun Facts about Year 2020	9
2020 Mark Center Training Schedule	10

New Year 2020: Health and Fitness

The New Year often leads many federal employees to make resolutions regarding their health and fitness. Some want to lose weight, others want to begin sculpting their summer beach bodies, and yet others want to develop habits to help them in maintaining a work-life balance. If you are new to fitness, here are some tips:

1. **Fitness is a three-part endeavor**. Fitness is comprised of physical activities, emotional health, and the foods you eat. Some laypersons like to frame fitness, and in particular, weight loss, as a "diet versus exercise" argument. While weight-loss is possible with diet alone, health and fitness are only possible by utilizing both diet and exercise mindfully together.

2. **Diet.** A "diet" refers to eating healthy and balanced meals, within your caloric limitations. How much should you eat? There are calculations that examines your height, weight, daily energy expenditure, and then calculates your recommended daily caloric intake based on your physical activities. Some apps, such as the USDA MyPlate Calorie Counter (free), automatically calculate your daily expenditure and calculate your caloric intake for you.

3. **Log what you eat.** Record the calories in all of the foods (and

drinks you consume). Not only will logging make you eat more mindfully, but it will also help you break down your macros, that is, the percentages of carbohydrates, fats, and proteins you consume.

4. **There's an app for that.** If you are new or returning to fitness, there is an app for that. Both IOS and Android offer multiple apps to get you started. There are many popular apps to help gain the speed and endurance and to maybe one day to successfully run five kilometers.

5. **Have fun.** You are more likely to succeed in achieving your fitness goals if the activity you pursue is fun. If you are not a cardio bunny, try lifting weights or a martial art.

Make 2020 your best year yet! DCPAS wishes you good health and fitness.

NAF Health Benefits: Taking Care of NAF

The quest for better health does not need to be an illusive concept. As a member of the NAF Health Benefits Program, you have access to free wellness resources and programs that help you live a healthier life. Take 10 minutes to complete the Health Assessment, receive your personalized health report action plan, and begin your self-paced journey to a healthier you! The 2020 Health Benefits Program Video (www.nafhealthplans.com/video-library/) is a great tool. It's a 24 minute video that tells you everything you need to know about your medical, dental, and prescription drug coverage, and why flexible spending accounts save you money. Visit our website at www.nafhealthplans.com for more information.

Taking Care of YOU

nafhealthplans.com

2019 Tax Season: What Changed?

It's the most wonderful time of the year, but also the time to do your taxes. Tax preparation can be burdensome and complicated, but being organized and proactive can not only save you time but also can save you money. Here are some key elements to consider for tax year 2019.

Pay attention to your adjusted gross income (AGI) and your tax rate. It is important to be aware of which tax bracket you are in and/or if you are close to falling into the next highest one, or more advantageously the next lowest one.

Here are the 2019 tax brackets for those who file as single:

- 35 percent, for incomes over $204,100 ($408,200 for married couples filing jointly);
- 32 percent for incomes over $160,725 ($321,450 for married couples filing jointly);
- 24 percent for incomes over $84,200 ($168,400 for married couples filing jointly);
- 22 percent for incomes over $39,475 ($78,950 for married couples filing jointly);
- 12 percent for incomes over $9,700 ($19,400 for married couples filing jointly).
- The lowest rate is 10 percent for incomes of single individuals with incomes of $9,700 or less ($19,400 for married couples filing jointly).

If you are making more and about to face a higher tax burden, it would be a good idea to take action now to reduce your tax liability. For example, you may want to or increase your allotment to your Flexible Spending Account. Another option, with long term benefits, would be to increase your contribution to the TSP. If you are right on the edge of the tax bracket you can lower your tax liability by increasing your contribution which lowers your taxes now and also provides more assets in retirement. (continue on next page)

2019 Tax Season: What Changed? (continued)

Tax liability should be a key factor in whether you decide to contribute to the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) Roth or Traditional. In 2019, the maximum contribution to the TSP was increased by $500 to $19,000. However, the catch-up contribution rate did not change.

The next adjustment that will affect all taxpayers is a higher standard deduction. The more you can deduct, the lower your AGI will be, which in turn lowers your tax burden. The new standard deductions for tax year 2019:

- Married filing jointly: $24,400 (up $400 from last year)
- Married filing separately: $12,200 (up $200)
- Head of household: $18,350 (up $350)
- Single: $12,200 (up $200)

One major change this year is the elimination of the individual mandate penalty. When President Trump signed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, it eliminated the individual mandate penalty – which required all tax payers (who did not qualify for an exemption) to be enrolled in a qualifying health plan under the Affordable Care Act. Beginning in 2014, those who failed to enroll were required to pay a penalty when they filed their taxes. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act eliminated the penalty. Those who were uninsured in 2019 do not have to pay the penalty. It also eliminated the need for tax payers to obtain and file the 1095-C, or other documentation proving they obtained health insurance coverage.

"It is important to think ahead and make sure you withhold an adequate amount of taxes each year."

The next change under the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act is the elimination of the alimony deduction. A spouse who divorced in 2019 and pays alimony cannot write off the payments. Likewise, the spouse who receives the alimony payments cannot count the payments as income.

When thinking about tax liability, it is important to be organized and strategic, as most employees make 26 payments via payroll deduction. These actions all add up over the course of the year – whether it's a FSA or TSP election, or the amount of exemptions you withhold from your paycheck. It is important to think ahead and make sure you are either overpaying on your taxes (because getting a refund is fun), or paying as much of the tax liability as you can throughout the year so you don't get a large bill on April 15th .

Credentialing Boot Camp

You asked and we heard you! DCPAS will offer a course to prepare benefit advisors for the credentialing exam. We are here and ready to deliver the "Credentialing Boot Camp!"

Are you ready to enhance your benefits advising skills? We have developed a two and a half day, goal-oriented, outcome-driven Boot Camp to prepare the Employee Benefits Advisor (EBA) for the credentialing exam. The Boot Camp consists of three workshops that target each level of credentialing, and provide a reinforcement crash course on "all things credentialing" for EBAs who have previously attended and completed a DCPAS benefits course.

Who May Attend

EBAs who have successfully completed a Benefits Training Course: Basic Benefits Course, Benefits Intermediate Course, and/or Advanced Benefits Workshop Course but aren't sure how to prepare for the corresponding credentialing exam may attend.

Register to attend the Boot Camp for the exam level of credentialing that you are preparing to take. Get ready for a hands-on, mind-expanding experience that will get your blood flowing.

When

Mark your calendars! The Credentialing Boot Camp will take place the week of 27-31 July, 2020 at the Mark Center in Alexandria, Virginia.

Join us in preparing to conquer the EBA Credentialing Exam! Stay abreast of all updates via the BENEFACTS and Benefits Officers Meetings. Additional details on the Credentialing Boot Camp and on how to register will be coming soon!

Long Term Care—FLTCIP 3.0 (New Version)

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) launched a new long term care plan called the Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program (FLTCIP) 3.0, which has new features and rate structure. This new plan is available to federal employees and annuitants who apply for coverage on or after October 21, 2019. Please note that current participants who already have older version of FLTCIP are not impacted by this plan. If you recall, long term care premium went up as much as 126% back in 2016 and participants were shocked by that increase. This premium hike impacted roughly 264,000 FLTCIP participants.

With the current change of increasing demand of long term needs, the participants could see even higher premium increase in the future. Due to that fact, OPM worked with the FLTCIP provider, John Hancock Life & Health Insurance Company, to design a new plan that offers comprehensive coverage with premium stabilization features.

(continue on page 6)

Out of Sight Out of Mind

The Forgotten Leave and Earnings Statement (LES)

"Review your benefits when you have a qualifying life event (QLE)."

"Review your LES line by line on a regular basis, especially after changes in pay."

Employees are sometimes surprised by what they find on their LES after not reviewing it for a long time. If not viewed regularly, whether electronic or hard copy LES, it is easy to forget the details. One may learn that they are paying for a benefit they did not know they had or one that is no longer necessary. These unknowns can carry on for months and cost the employee financially. Here are some common issues that need attention and tips for managing the data on your LES.

Common issues:

Overpaying for life insurance: You may no longer have eligible family members for Option C coverage or no longer need as many multiples for Option B. You may have life insurance (you were auto enrolled in Basic) and do not want it.

Overpaying for health insurance: You may have a Self and Family plan when Self Only or Self Plus One is all you need. (Be careful, some Self Plus One plans are more expensive than Self and Family Plans).

TSP deductions: You may not be receiving maximum agency match at 5%. Perhaps you intended to increase from the auto enrollment (3%) but never made the change.

Tax withholding: Too much or too little taxes are deducted from your pay.

Tips:

Review your LES line by line on a regular basis, especially after changes in pay or benefits, such as a pay increase. Be sure you are receiving the correct salary and benefits.

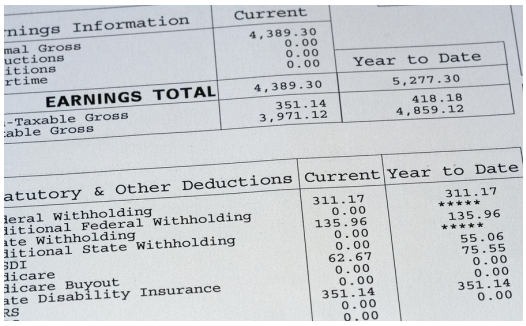
Double check health and life insurance coverage/costs to be sure you are paying the correct amount.

Monitor your TSP deductions so as not to miss out on agency matching funds.

Review your benefits when you have a qualifying life event (QLE). Perhaps you can add new life or health insurance coverage or decrease coverage to save money.

Adjust your State and Federal Withholdings to fine-tune your tax deductions.

For more information on the specifics sections of the LES visit this DFAS link:
https://www.dfas.mil/civilianemployees/understandingyourcivilianpay/LES.html
GRB Platform
https://grbplatform.hr.dla.mil/
myPay
https://mypay.dfas.mil



nings Information	Current	Year to Date
mal Gross	4,389.30	
uctions	0.00	
itions	0.00	
rtime	0.00	
EARNINGS TOTAL	4,389.30	5,277.30
-Taxable Gross	351.14	418.18
able Gross	3,971.12	4,859.12

atutory & Other Deductions	Current	Year to Date
deral Withholding	311.17	311.17
ditional Federal Withholding	0.00	*****
ate Withholding	135.96	135.96
ditional State Withholding	0.00	*****
SDI	0.00	55.06
dicare	62.67	75.55
dicare Buyout	0.00	0.00
ate Disability Insurance	0.00	0.00
RS	351.14	351.14
	0.00	0.00

ICUC Support in Critical Situations

In previous articles, the functions that the Injury Compensation and Unemployment Compensation (ICUC) Branch performs were discussed. We regularly publicize that the ICUC Branch provides technical advice, support, and guidance to specialists working in the workers' compensation field.

One kind of support that ICUC provides that is not mentioned often, includes support when Federal civilian employees are hurt or killed as a result of an incident of workplace violence such as a shooting or bombing.

ICUC personnel take action as soon as we learn of the incident. An Injury Compensation Advisor immediately attempts to make contact with personnel at the Human Resource Office to begin the flow of information to DCPAS leadership.

ICUC Headquarter personnel then begin providing information to and communicating with the Department of Labor (DOL) National Office to alert them of the incident and provide them with estimates of casualties. This allows DOL to assign appropriate resources to adjudicate the claims and pay benefits as quickly as possible, to employees and their families in their time of need.

Additionally, DOL can take other measures such as assigning a small number of Claims Examiners to adjudicate the resulting claims so that multiple claims filed as result of the incident will be adjudicated consistently. This is done in order to minimize the stress on injured employees and their families.

Throughout this entire process, the Injury Compensation Advisor in ICUC is working with agency personnel to get claims filed with DOL as well as working with DOL Claims Examiners to answer any questions they have and to help provide any necessary information pertaining to the claim. Long after the incident falls out of the headlines, ICUC personnel are still working with agencies and DOL to make sure employees and their families receive the benefits to which they are entitled.

Long Term Care—FLTCIP 3.0 (continued)

FLTCIP 3.0 new features include:

- Emphasizing home and community care service.
- Premium stabilization feature (PSF), which is designed to reduce the need of future premium increases. Under this feature, the premium stabilization amount is calculated as a percentage of premium paid and it is used to offset the future premiums under specific conditions or to provide the refund of a premium death benefits.
- International coverage up to 100% of the maximum lifetime benefit.
- Choice of a 3% automatic compound inflation option or future purchase option.
- Choice of a 2-year, 3-year, or 5-year benefit period.

For more information, please refer BAL 19-901 or visit the FLTCIP's website at LTCFEDS.com.

Process Change for Handling Reemployed Annuitants

"OPM has instructed all agencies to stop using regular mail and fax to communicate information regarding reemployed annuitants."

On September 18, 2019, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) issued Benefits Administration Letter (BAL) 19-207. The purpose of the letter is to provide updates concerning the recent process changes for administering benefits to Reemployed Annuitants.

The BAL serves largely to announce OPM's streamlined process for handling reemployment actions. The notification of reemployments will now be consolidated in a new form, and corresponding email address.

In addition, there is a new form that notifies OPM of separations from dual compensation appointments, or separations from a period that did not involve the equivalent of one full year of service. This new process is effective October 1, 2019.

Currently, agencies notify OPM when employing an annuitant using Job Aid #5, located in the CSRS/FERS Handbook chapter 100. Agencies also complete the OPM 1482 for administration of Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI), and either fax the forms, or send them via regular mail to Boyers, Pennsylvania.

In addition, agencies send an email to the HBPremium@opm.gov mailbox to notify OPM's health benefits office if FEHB (Federal Employees Health Benefits) coverage needs to be suspended. Agencies are then required to update OPM during the period of reemployment with any actions that could potentially affect the annuity.

To facilitate better communication during the reemployed annuitant process, OPM has created a new email box: ReemployedAnnuitant@opm.gov. This email box was established for sending reemployed annuitant processing information to OPM. OPM has instructed all agencies to stop using regular mail and fax to communicate information regarding reemployed annuitants.

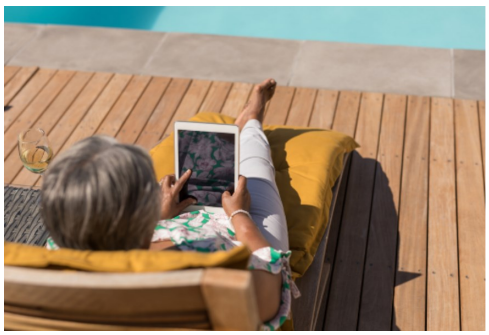
ReemployedAnnuitant@opm.gov has been set up to allow agencies to:

- Report reemployment of a CSRS or FERS annuitant;
- Report a change in the appointment status of an annuitant that affects the annuity;
- Submit agency report of separation of a reemployed annuitant who was under a dual compensation waiver or who did not earn title to a supplemental annuity and needs reinstatement of FEHB and/or FEGLI coverage;
- Request annuity updates due to a legislative Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) increase.

When sending a notice to OPM through ReemployedAnnuitant@opm.gov, the agency is required to enter one of the following Subject Lines for the email:

- "Notice of Reemployment of a Non-Disability Annuitant" or
- "Notice of Reemployment of a Disability Annuitant"

(continue on page 9)



The General Schedule (GS) vs. Federal Wage System (FWS)

The General Schedule (GS) covers occupations falling in the professional, administrative, technical, clerical or other (PATCO) career fields.

The Federal Wage System (FWS) covers most trade, craft, and labor occupations. Pay for GS and FWS employees differs because separate laws and regulations authorize different surveys, methodologies, geographic , and occupational coverage.

GS locality payments, authorized under the Fedal Employees Pay Comparability Act (FEPCA) of 1990, are based on a comparison of Federal and non-Federal (including State and local governments) pay.

Each January, the law provides for GS employees to receive a general across-the-board increase based on the 12-month increase (if any) in the Employment Cost Index (ECI) (less 0.5 percentage points), plus an increase, if warranted, based on the local cost of labor for white-collar occupations in each of the 52 GS locality pay areas.

In contrast, the FWS, established by Public Law 92-392, operates under carefully regulated procedures developed by OPM in cooperation with other Federal agencies and labor organizations. Under the FWS, blue-collar employees are paid under a prevailing rate system that reflects private industry pay practices for comparable levels of work in a local labor area.

The chart below briefly summarizes the notable differences between the GS and FWS pay systems.

General Schedule (GS)	**Federal Wage System (FWS)**
Covers most white-collar employees	Covers most blue-collar employees
Locality payments established under FEPCA of 1990	Regulated procedures developed cooperatively by OPM with other Federal agencies and labor organizations
52 locality areas plus Rest of U.S. (RUS)	130 Appropriated Fund and 118 Nonappropriated Fund wage areas
General across-the-board increase granted in January (15 month lag on pay information)	Staggered effective dates throughout the year based on survey order dates (45 day lag on pay information)
Increase based on the ECI plus an increase based on local cost of labor for white-collar occupations	Increases determined by prevailing rates in a wage area
53 total pay schedules	1,650 total pay schedules

Process Change for Handling Reemployed Annuitants (continued)

In order to route the information correctly it is important to distinguish whether the annuitant retired on a disability or a non-disability retirement.

OPM also combined "Job Aid #5" (CSRS FERS Handbook Chapter 100) and the OPM 1482 to reflect all necessary information. Information pertaining to FEGLI and FEHB will now be sent via one form entitled: "Notification to OPM of Reemployment of Annuitant" (Attachment to BAL 19-109)

OPM is also mandating that the Standard Form 50 accompany the form as well. OPM will review the "attachment" document in order to obtain an official RI number for the form going forward.

Upon Separation from a Dual Comp Waiver Appointment, or Separation Prior to One Full Year of Employment, agency completes the "Notification to OPM of Separation of a Reemployed Annuitant- No Benefits Payable"

(Attachment to BAL 19-107) upon termination of reemployment if the annuitant was under a dual compensation waiver or if a reemployed annuitant did not have enough service to earn a supplemental benefit. This form, along with the separation SF 50, must be sent via the ReemployedAnnuitant@opm.gov email.

If you would like more information on this or any of the 2019 Benefits Administration Letters, please email us at dodhra.mc-alex.dcpas.mbx.benefits-contacts@mail.mil. The Office of Personnel Management posts all Benefits Administration Letters at: www.opm.gov/retire/pubs/bals/

Fun facts about year 2020:

a leap year

an election year

the 1st year of the 2020s decade

Fun Facts about Year 2020

Year 2020 is a leap year starting on Wednesday of the Gregorian calendar. It is also the 2020th year of the Common Era (CE) and *Anno Domini* (AD) designations, the 20th year of the 3rd millennium, the 20th year of the 21st century, and the 1st year of the 2020s decade. Finally, It is also an election year.

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https://twitter.com/LOB3Colleagues

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 9-13	April 13-17	May 5-8
March 30—April 3	July 13-17	September 21-25
June 1-5	September 14-18	
September 7-11		