



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Deputy Secretary  
Washington, D.C. 20250

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## ***COVID-19 Work Schedule Flexibilities***

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to delivering the USDA mission during this challenging time. Because of the hard work of USDA's employees, the food supply continues to be safe and available for the American people, children have access to nutritious meals despite school closures, and many other critical functions continue, from providing home loans to ensuring employee payroll operations continue. USDA has provided a number of flexibilities for employee work schedules and leave during the COVID-19 pandemic and COVID-19 related school closures and is providing further flexibilities outlined below to assist employees while ensuring mission continuity. Please note these flexibilities are pre-existing and are already in place for manager use, this document serves as a summary of available options.

### **PART 1 - SIX DAY MAXIFLEX SCHEDULES:**

We recognize that school closures and other challenges caused by COVID-19 can make it difficult for some employees to complete their regularly scheduled workweek. To help alleviate this, USDA agencies *may* allow employees to work up to a 6-day-a-week Maxiflex schedule that permits an employee to work Monday through Saturday, through the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic and COVID-19 related school closures. If the employee meets the basic work requirement of 80 hours in a biweekly pay period, an employee *may* be allowed to vary the number of hours worked on a given workday and/or the number of hours each week within the limits established for the agency.

*Note: Agencies are precluded from allowing Sunday work unless it is mission essential because employees who work Sunday voluntarily are entitled to Sunday pay.*

[OPM Alternate Work Schedule Handbook](#)

### **PART 2 – CORE HOURS:**

Agencies *may* suspend or alter existing core hours. If an agency continues core hours, they should occur between 6:00am and 6:00pm unless a variation is approved by the Office of Human Resources Management. If an employee elects to work before 6:00 a.m. or after 6:00 p.m. as part of a flexible schedule, they are not eligible for night pay/differential.

### **PART 3 - PART TIME SCHEDULE:**

Agencies *may* allow employees to work less than the traditional 40-hour workweek. However, employees should be mindful of the resulting reduction in pay, increased share of health insurance premiums, and the change in leave earnings. Generally, permanent part-time employees who work between 16 and 32 hours each week (or between 32 and 64 hours a pay period) on a prearranged schedule are eligible, on a prorated basis, for the same benefits as full-time employees: leave, retirement, and health and life insurance coverage.

[OPM Part Time Employment](#)

#### **PART 4 – LEAVE USAGE:**

Employees *may* request to use leave if they are unable to work or need personal time off. Employees *may* request to use sick leave, annual leave, advanced annual and/or sick leave, Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leave, leave without pay (LWOP), donated leave, and other paid time off such as compensatory time off and credit hours, if applicable.

Sick leave *may* be used if the employee is unable to perform their duties due to physical or mental illness or is receiving medical examination or treatment. A full-time employee *may* also use up to 104 hours of sick leave to care for a family member who is ill, or up to 12 weeks of sick leave to care for a family member with a serious health condition.

#### **PART 5 - DISCRETIONARY LEAVE WITHOUT PAY (LWOP):**

LWOP is a temporary non-pay status, and such absence from duty *may* be granted at the employee's request. In most cases, LWOP is granted in situations where the employee has insufficient annual or sick leave, credit hours, or compensatory time available to cover an approved absence. An employee does not have to exhaust annual leave before requesting LWOP. It is important to remember that the length of time an employee is on LWOP status can affect the timing of such things as Within Grade Increases (WGIs), service computation dates, and accrual of leave.

[OPM Fact Sheet: Effect of Extended Leave Without Pay](#)

#### **PART 6 – FAMILIES FIRST CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE ACT (FFCRA):**

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA or Act) requires certain employers to provide employees with paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons related to COVID-19 beginning April 1, 2020. The Department of Labor has indicated that Federal employees are eligible for the paid sick leave portion of the law. However, the expanded family and medical leave provisions do not apply to Federal employees. USDA will implement the provisions of the Act after receiving guidance from the Office of Personnel Management.

If you have any questions about this memorandum, please contact Mary Pletcher ([mary.pletcher@usda.gov](mailto:mary.pletcher@usda.gov)) with the Office of Human Resources Management.