

**Agency Retirement Counselor Responsibilities**

The agency headquarters Retirement Counselor is responsible for establishing and coordinating department/agency retirement policy and efficient retirement processing procedures, and assuring policy compliance among the various operating offices.

These activities involve functioning as liaison within the department/agency between payroll and personnel offices and, in large departments, between the central policy-making branch and operating personnel offices. In carrying out external liaison activities with other agencies, primarily OPM, the Retirement Counselor will be an active member of the Interagency Advisory Group of Retirement Counselors attending meetings and participating in subcommittees.

The combination of extensive knowledge of Federal retirement systems and of department/agency operations uniquely qualifies the Retirement Counselor to formulate and provide input to retirement policy at the department/agency level and to respond as the department/agency spokesperson when asked for input on retirement matters.

The Retirement Counselor is also responsible for assuring that employees are able to make informed decisions regarding their retirement benefits. This may best be accomplished via a comprehensive retirement counseling program including on-demand counseling by trained, knowledgeable personnelists, and regularly scheduled pre-retirement seminars. If such a program is already in existence, the Retirement Counselor will be involved in evaluating its effectiveness and instituting enhancements where necessary. If no program exists, it may be necessary to develop a retirement counseling policy and implement a program.

In carrying out these responsibilities, a Retirement Counselor is typically engaged in the following activities:

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**1. Management**

Oversees and provides direction to the department/agency retirement counseling program.

Serves as central point for the dissemination of policy and procedural guidance to appropriate headquarters and field operating personnel offices.

Serves as the authoritative resource in department/agency for technical information regarding retirement matters.

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**Agency Retirement Counselor Responsibilities (Cont.)**

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| <b>8. Resources</b>   | OPM-developed criteria for measuring acceptable performance in operating programs.<br><br>Basic pre-retirement counseling program standards and criteria to be used when expanding a program.  |
| <b>9. Duties Not Normally Performed by a Retirement Counselor</b> | Does not function as an expeditor of retirement cases at OPM except in extraordinary situations.<br><br>Does not provide one-on-one retirement counseling to employees. However, Retirement Counselors at very small agencies may also be responsible for providing counseling services. |
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**Agency Retirement Counselor Responsibilities (Cont.)**

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| <b>1. Management (Cont.)</b>                    | <p>Serves as departmental/agency liaison with OPM and other agencies on retirement matters.</p> <p>Manages a communication network within the department/agency of retirement counselors and processors, and coordinates the flow of information between them and external agencies (OPM, SSA, IRS, Thrift Board).</p> <p>Coordinates retirement processing and policy issues among internal offices such as payroll, classification, staffing, etc.</p> <p>Regularly exchanges information with OPM regarding retirement-related issues, including legislative and regulatory activity, and court cases.</p> <hr/> |
| <b>2. Resources</b>                             | <p>Up-to-date copies of OPM publications, including technical and processing manuals.</p> <p>Access to knowledgeable sources at OPM.</p> <p>Regular IAG meetings.</p> <p>Special training.</p> <hr/>  |
| <b>3. Policy Development and Interpretation</b> | <p>Formulates departmental/agency policy and provides overall direction and guidance on retirement matters.</p> <p>Reviews and comments on proposed legislation and regulations affecting government-wide benefits programs.</p> <p>Interprets policy, regulations, and legislation, and develops department/agency operating procedures.</p> <hr/>   |

**Agency Retirement Counselor Responsibilities (Cont.)**

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| <b>4. Resources</b>              | <p>Timely receipt of proposed, interim, and final regulations from OPM.</p> <p>Advance consultation with OPM when possible about upcoming changes that may significantly impact department/agency operations.</p> <hr/>  |
| <b>5. Training and Education</b> | <p>Provides training to headquarters and field retirement counselors and processors through in-house or external sources.</p> <p>Provides for the delivery of pre-retirement seminars and counseling to employees through in-house or external sources.</p> <p>Publicizes changes in retirement benefits, open season deadlines, etc., through in-house publications such as employee memos and newsletters.</p> <hr/>                             |
| <b>6. Resources</b>              | <p>Up-to-date information about interagency training resources.</p> <p>Information exchange about courses and materials available from external sources.</p> <p>Timely receipt of information suitable for publication.</p> <hr/>  |
| <b>7. Evaluation</b>             | <p>Conducts evaluations of operating personnel office responsibilities, such as coverage decisions, retirement coding, and quality and timeliness of agency submissions of retirement documents to OPM, and takes appropriate steps to improve performance where needed.</p> <p>Evaluates the effectiveness of department/agency-wide pre-retirement counseling programs and takes appropriate steps to improve their quality as needed.</p> <hr/> |