

# NIH Transition Plan Executive Summary

**PURPOSE.** The restructuring initiatives included in the President's Management Agenda and the One-HHS goals have the potential to affect a substantial number of NIH staff members and the programs they support. The *NIH Transition Plan* addresses how NIH will manage the impact of these changes on the NIH workforce. The plan is a statement of the NIH commitment to help employees affected by A-76 or restructuring find new employment opportunities. In accomplishing these objectives, NIH will:

- Institute controls on hiring to leave the organization in the best possible situation to absorb the impacts of restructuring, including placement of affected employees.
  - Facilitate placement of affected employees within the NIH, DHHS, other Federal agencies or outplacement to the private sector, to the extent possible.
  - Provide assistance and supportive services to employees impacted by these initiatives, including job development, career counseling and retraining.
  - Use Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA) for positions identified as potentially affected by competitive sourcing or restructuring.
  - Use Voluntary Separation Incentive Payments ("buyouts") for those affected employees who choose to voluntarily separate by retirement or by resignation.
- Note: Authorization has been requested, but must be approved by DHHS and OPM.

**COVERAGE.** Applies to employees potentially impacted by administrative restructuring and/or competitive sourcing, except those in temporary or term appointments. Once an employee experiences a loss of job duties as a result of these initiatives, they are considered to be an "affected employee" for purposes of this plan.

**HIRING CONTROLS.** A hiring freeze will be instituted in areas that have been identified for study. Managers are encouraged to consider other options for accomplishing the work, including temporary or term appointments, commercial contracts, professional services contracts, intra-agency service agreements, etc. Internal transfers are authorized, but will require the approval of both the losing and gaining organization.

**INTERNAL PLACEMENT.** NIH will make available to affected employees opportunities for placement into other positions through in-placement programs. In all instances, Merit Systems Principles shall apply. In-placement programs will include provisions for:

- a. **PRIORITY PLACEMENT.** Special selection priority will be offered to affected employees who apply for agency vacancies and are qualified. The employee must have a current performance rating of at least fully successful or its equivalent. The Office of Human Resources (OHR) will administer the priority placement process.

- b. REASSIGNMENTS. Employees may be reassigned by management to another position at the same grade. Selections from among affected employees will be made based on suitability for the position, giving consideration to the employees' knowledge, skills, abilities and experience. Reassignments can be made without regard to RIF standing, veterans' preference, length of service, or performance ratings.
- c. MODIFY OR WAIVE QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS. The minimum experience requirements of the OPM Qualification Standard may be modified or waived to facilitate these in-placement options if the employee has the capacity, adaptability, and special skills needed to satisfactorily perform the duties and responsibilities of the position.
- d. VOLUNTARY CHANGE TO LOWER GRADE. The NIH may offer saved grade and pay to employees accepting a voluntary change to lower grade under certain conditions, as authorized under 5 CFR 536.
- e. DETAILS. Employees can be detailed to other NIH positions for a period of up to 120 days, renewable in 120-day increments. Employees can also be detailed to other agencies on a reimbursable basis, unless statutory authority specifically permits non-reimbursable details. NOTE: A detail to a higher-graded position may not extend beyond 120 days unless competitive procedures are used.
- f. UNCLASSIFIED DUTIES. Affected employees who have not been detailed to or placed in another position will be temporarily detailed to unclassified duties pending reassignment. Details to unclassified duties will be in 120-day increments and may be renewed until such time as the employee is placed.

CAREER ASSISTANCE SERVICES. The NIH will establish a Transition Center to assist affected employees via a comprehensive career transition program. Basic services include those designed to help employees find and successfully compete for jobs, including resume writing, job search guidance, group workshops/counseling, and referral to supportive services. Intensive services are designed to support the individual needs of employees when placement is less likely, including comprehensive career transition workshops; educational and/or career counseling; assessment of aptitudes, interests and/or educational development; job development; and outplacement services.

RETRAINING. If a decision is made to contract out or restructure a particular function, affected employees become eligible for retraining support. Support may include time during the work day to pursue training and/or financial resources to cover tuition and other associated costs of training. NIH reserves the right to limit funding or use cost-sharing for training or education that is of long duration or high cost. Options include:

- a. Training for Other Positions at NIH. The NIH will support training of affected employees for reassignment to shortage positions.
- b. Training for Positions in Other Agencies. The NIH will support training of affected employees to help place them in other agencies when it is determined that the training is in the Government's interest. Generally, training for external opportunities will be provided to affected employees after it is determined that internal placement efforts are unlikely to produce suitable placement options.

STATUS: Until placed, affected employees will continue to report to their Institute/Center and will be expected to perform tasks as directed by their supervisor. Performance plans and annual evaluations will be conducted in accordance with NIH Policy Manual Chapter 2300-430-1, NIH Performance Appraisal Program Plan.

HOURS OF WORK: Employees may be given time during their daily tour of duty to use the Transition Center services or to conduct job searches. Supervisory approval is to be obtained by employees prior to time spent during normal working hours.

Questions should be referred to Shirley Labella, Office of Strategic Management Planning (OSMP), at (301) 496-3090. For complete details, a copy of the *NIH Transition Plan* and a list of Frequently Asked Questions are available at the OSMP website, <http://osmp.od.nih.gov>.