



VA Retirement Specialist Phased Retirement Conference Call
May 12, 2016
2 PM – 3:30 PM Eastern Time
Live Meeting
CALL MINUTES

AGENDA

1. Introduction
2. Phased Retirement Presentation

Phased Retirement

The Phased Retirement policy should be published shortly.

The PAID and HR Smart teams are still working on updates to the system so applications cannot be submitted until the HR system teams have completed all required system changes.

Questions and Answers from the call

1. If the employee has to be a full time employee BUT the position they are retiring from does not permit the employee to work part time. How would this person be able to take part in the phased retirement?

A. If the position cannot be accommodated on a part time basis then the person would not be able to take part in phased retirement. From a staffing perspective these cases are going to have to be worked on a case by case basis.

2. What is the website mentioned regarding more mentoring information?

A. <http://vaww.va.gov/OHRM/Benefits/Retirement/phased.asp>

3. When you state AS/HRA - to whom are the packages submitted?

A. The packages are submitted through the respective Administration to the Assistant Secretary of Human Resources and Administration.



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4. If they came back full time are they are reemployed annuitant?

A. No, they would not be considered a reemployed annuitant.

5. About how long will the approval process take?

A. Currently, we don't have a time frame on how long the process will take; we will have a better idea once we begin to accept applications for phased retirement.

6. Can the agency deny the request to come back to full time employment?

A. Yes, a request to come back to full time employment requires the approval from the AS/HRA, and the process outlined in the policy allows denial within the Administration at the Director level and above.

7. Is the HRO able to delegate this responsibility?

A. No, currently there is no authority to delegate the approval or disapproval process of phased retirement.

8. Employee on phased retirement works part time, new hire works full time, the agency is paying for full time and part time for same FTE?

A. The phased retirement program does not address staffing or allow agencies to increase staffing based on participation in phased retirement. Any staffing concerns will have to be worked out on a case by case basis at your local station. Keep in mind that not every situation under phased retirement means that a position has to be back filled. So – if you have an individual participating in phased retirement, they would be part time and only leaving a part time position open for another hire, if allowed by your local facility. Remember, phased retirement can be used to transfer knowledge across services and Administrations so it is not necessarily just a tool for succession planning within a service and back filling positions.



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9. So while they are in Phased they their normal full price of FEHB and FEGLI but only gets paid PT for 40 hours?

A. Yes, for FEHB and FEGLI purposes employees are considered full time employees, and pay the same rate as a full time employee. Please see OPM BAL 14-208 and 14-209. The individual would also be receiving half of their annuity while in phased retirement status.

10. So for FERS employees when transitioning from phased to regular retirement, is commencing date the date after separation from phased retirement or the first of the next month, like regular FERS retirements are?

A. Phased retirement and the commencement of a phased retirement annuity is effective:
(1) On the first day of the first pay period after the HR Officer is notified of the AS/HRA approval of the phased retirement request;

Or

(2) On the first day of a later pay period but no longer than 30 days after the AS/HRA approval signature date.

11. What will the timeframe be for AS/HRA approval/disapprovals?

A. The AS/HRA has 30 days to approve or disapprove a request for phased retirement from the date they receive the package from the administration.

12. The annuity for a phased retiree is paid by OPM correct? I may have missed it at the beginning but how is OPM notified since we are not submitting a 2801/3107 until they are electing "full" retirement?

A. Yes, the annuity is paid by OPM, an SF 2801 and SF 3107 are submitted to OPM via the same process of submitting regular retirement applications. Meaning the package must be sent to DFAS first. The application process is covered in 4 pamphlets which are included at the end of the Q & A section.



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13. Can the monthly progress reports be sent online or does it need to be mailed?

A. Yes, the monthly mentoring reports can be e-mailed directly to our group at Benefitsretirement058@va.gov

14. Are we supposed to start offering these now?

A. No, we cannot begin accepting applications for phased retirement until all HR systems have been updated and the policy has been published. We are still on target for a mid 2016 implementation.

15. The phased retirement packages would still be sent to DFAS before going to OPM as they do for regular retirement correct?

A. Yes, that is correct. See the answer to question #13.

16. Will there be a delay or an interim period for the retirement payment portion or does OPM expedite phased?

A. Annuities have to accrue for 30 days before they are payable, so likely the first payment wouldn't be received until the first of the following month. OPM would pay the accrued for the partial month and the first full month, with the first annuity check. So there will be a slight delay in receiving the first phased annuity payment.

There is no interim period in phased retirement like there is for regular retirement.

17. So if the employee goes into full retirement in the middle of the month, will OPM be initiating a full retirement payment in the middle of the month or will it be the first of the following month like it works now?

The commencement date of the annuity is the day after the employee enters into phased retirement. Annuities have to accrue for 30 days before they are payable, so likely the first payment wouldn't be received until the first of the following month and OPM would pay the accrued for the partial month and the first full month.



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18. Would this process be considered as an alternative to the lengthy time process of a regular FERS/CSRS retirement?

A. No, this is strictly for someone that wants to take part in phased retirement and transition into regular retirement.

19. Would, in our case, the station send that form to OPM or would VACO Worklife be submitting the paperwork to OPM since they have final approval?

A. The final approval will be issued to your station, from the AS/HRA. Then, once you receive the approval, your station would submit the phased retirement application to DFAS just like you do for regular retirement applications.

20. Is there an existing template that anyone is willing to share to show phased retirement employee is mentoring?

A. We have included a sample mentoring chart in the official policy. Once the policy is published you would refer to appendix B.

21. Would the employee who is approved for phased retirement still have the same appeal rights and grievance rights a full time employee would have?

A. Yes, phased retirement employees have the same grievance rights as all other employees. No new rights were established under the policy.

22. Will Training in the Phased Retirement be provided to HR by your team or is the Retirement Specialist expected to provide training?

A. We will conduct the initial briefings to your employees and would provide additional support as necessary.



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23. So the application is sent to DFAS first and they will forward it to OPM. correct?

A. Yes, that is correct. After you receive the approval from the AS/HRA, the application will be submitted to DFAS just like other retirement applications.

24. Will there be a checklist to follow for phased retirement applications?

A. OPM has developed the application processing pamphlets which we have included with these minutes. HR office will need to submit the SF 3116 with the regular retirement application packet to DFAS.

25. What role does the retirement specialist plays in processing phased retirement?

A. The role would be the same as with regular retirement applications. Retirement specialists should counsel employees on their phased retirement options, the application process, and providing retirement estimates.

26. Will a personnel action need to be done upon approval of phased retirement? If so is there another action to be done when they go into full retirement?

A. Yes, there are actions that needed to be coded when the employee goes into phased retirement and full retirement. The systems team is currently processing the system changes to accommodate for the new NOA codes. The guidance on processing the personnel actions is located in [BAL 14-110](#).

27. Any idea when the briefings for supervisors will begin?

A. They will begin shortly after we have finished briefing the rest of the HR community, we anticipate in the next three weeks.



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28. What is the main benefit for an employee since the maximum time he can do is only one year in phased retirement?

A. The program allows an employee to work a part time schedule, as opposed to working a full time schedule; it allows the employee to slowly transition into full retirement. And there is the added benefit of passing on the historical knowledge to the agency. Each employee will have to weigh the benefits based on their individual situation.

29. Do you know how well prepared OPM is for processing Phased Retirement Applications. Will the part time annuity start on the day the phased retirement is effective or will the annuity begin with OPM on the 1st of the following month?

A. OPM has a special team setup at OPM to process all Phased Retirement Applications. Annuities have to accrue for 30 days before they are payable, so likely the first payment wouldn't be received until the first of the following month and OPM would pay the accrued for the partial month and the first full month.

30. Does OPM pay full phased amount or is there an "interim" pay period of a lesser amount?

A. OPM pays the full phased retirement amount; there is no interim payment for phased retirement.

31. Will the pay during phased retirement be monthly or biweekly?

A. The employee is a regular part time employee as far as pay goes. So the employee would be paid on a biweekly basis just like any other employee.

32. Do the FEHB premiums come out of annuity payment or out of phased pay?

A. FEHB and FEGLI premiums are deducted from the pay the employee receives from the agency.



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33. Do you know if a Medical Center Director would determine types of positions that would be considered or will any employee be able to submit an application?

A. Any eligible employee under the policy can apply to participate in phased retirement. Facility Directors and/or Staff office Director do have the ability to deny an application that does not meet criteria for approval as outlined in the policy. Faculty Directors and Staff Office Directors do not have the authority to further limit the types of positions that are eligible for participation in phased retirement outside of the exclusions in VA Handbook 5009.

34. How would the phased retirement impact Social Security Benefits?

A. There is no impact on Social Security Benefits. Employees who are excluded from Social Security coverage at the time they enter phased retirement continue to be excluded from Social Security coverage during phased retirement.

35. So does the employee come to see us to complete the application prior to asking for approval for phased retirement or do we have to wait until they have approval before filling out the phased retirement application?

A. It is advised that the actual application for phased retirement is completed once the approval has been obtained from AS/HRA.

36. You mentioned that someone could go back to full time if they are under phased retirement. What position would they go back to?

A. Yes, an employee can request to go back into full employment but this requires approval from the AS/HRA. The phased retirement regulations do not address what position they would return to so that would be addressed by the local facility if this occurs.



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37. Could an employee exercise their grievance rights if it is disapproved?

A. An employee can file a grievance at any time. No new grievance rights were established as a result of the phased retirement policy.

38. At the end of the 6 months, should the facility notify the employee or will that come from OPM?

A. The facility has the responsibility of tracking the time limit of the phased retiree and notifying the employee. OPM will not be tracking time limit agreements at VA. Worklife and Benefits will be monitoring phased retirements initially to ensure that VA is in compliance with the various regulations.

39. What is your advice on juggling the FTE to make room for phased retirees who we would automatically allow to come back to full time?

A. Phased retirees cannot automatically return to full time employment, the phased retirement time limit agreement specifically states that the employee agrees to fully retire at the end of the phased retirement period. If a phased retiree is approved to return to work full time, then you will have to work closely with your staffing team to determine how to accommodate the employee.

40. Is there any idea what percentage of employees will be approved for this program?

A. We do not have any idea at the moment on the percentage of applications that will be approved. Approvals are not based on percentages; they are based on meeting the criteria of the program.

41. Will the employee be able to complete the military deposit at phase retirement?

A. Employees have to complete military service deposits prior to entering into phased retirement. [This is covered in the SF 3116.](#)



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42. Will employees have to pay civilian service deposits prior to entering phased retirement?

A. Yes, Employees must pay deposits and redeposits for civilian service prior to the commencement date of the phased employment/phased retirement status.

43. Does the phased site indicate what "package" is sent to DFAS? Is there a checklist like you have now for regular retirements?

A. The pamphlets included with these call minutes outline the instructions regarding the packet. The submission process follows the same process for regular retirement applications which are sent to DFAS.

The SF 3116 accompanies the initial retirement packet to DFAS to establish the phased retirement annuity.

44. Did you say a death in service under phased only provide survivor benefits as a part time employee. Will they also get partial retirement Survivor benefits?

A. If the individual dies prior to full retirement, survivor benefits will be those applicable for an employee who died in service

No survivor benefits can be based upon a Phased Retirement annuity, so they will not get a partial survivor benefit.

The period of Phased Retirement will be treated as a period of part time service in the computation of the survivor annuity. However, the Basic Employee Death Benefit will be based upon the full time salary of the position.



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45. Is there a need for each station to develop a station-level policy?

A. No, there is only one policy that covers all VA employees, VA Directive and Handbook 5009. Stations do not have the authority to develop or implement any further phased retirement policies.

46. Is the processing guide in BAL form?

A. The internal approval process guide is an internal document not in a BAL format.

The information covering the OPM application instructions is outlined in the attached 4 pamphlets.

47. Is the retirement paperwork going to look different?

A. The phased retirement application packet will still consist of the SF 3107/SF 2801 but will be accompanied by the SF 3116.

48. Does OPM expedite a phased retirement application?

OPM does not necessarily expedite phased retirement applications; there is a special team at OPM that processes the case.

Annuities have to accrue for 30 days before they are payable, so likely the first payment wouldn't be received until the first of the following month OPM would pay the accrued for the partial month and the first full month, with the first annuity check.

49. When will HRIS be publishing guidance on coding in PAID and HR Smart?

A. We believe that they will provide coding guidance as soon as the systems are updated.



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50. Does an employee apply for full retirement in addition to the phased retirement?

What if an employee does not do an application for full retirement and the time limit agreement ends on the phased retirement. Do we just separate them? We can't do that right?

A. Yes, the employee must apply for full retirement in addition to the phased retirement application.

At the time the employee enters into phased retirement, VA will submit the initial retirement application with the 3116 through DFAS to OPM. When OPM receives the package, they will know that it is phased retirement and adjudicate the annuity appropriately.

Then, when the time limit is completed, or the employee chooses to retire earlier than the expiration of the time limit, then another retirement application will have to be sent through DFAS to OPM so that OPM can adjudicate the full annuity.

An employee must sign the time limit agreement when they enter phased retirement, the time limit agreement specifically states that at the end of the agreement, the employee agrees to voluntarily retire and will be separated by VA. OPM will have deemed the employee fully retired once they are separated from the agency if they are not rehired within 3 days break in service. So yes, VA will automatically separate the employee at the end of the phased retirement time period.

Please see the attached pamphlets regarding the documentation required to apply for phased retirement and full retirement. The agency is responsible for submitting the required forms to DFAS who will send the packet on to OPM with the Individual Retirement Record (IRR). FEHB and FEGLI documents should accompany the full annuity application.



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OPM Retirement Application Process Pamphlets

SF 2825: Application instructions for Phased Retirement (CSRS)



sf2825.pdf

SF 2826: Application instructions for Full Retirement from Phased Retirement (CSRS)



sf2826.pdf

SF 3117: Application instructions for Phased Retirement (FERS)



sf3117.pdf

SF 3118: Application instructions for Full Retirement from Phased Retirement (FERS)



sf3118.pdf

If you have additional questions or feedback please send an e-mail to:

Benefitsretirement058@va.gov



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