INTERAGENCY CONNECTION

215 Dean A. McGee, Suite 153, Oklahoma City, OK 73102 http://www.oklahoma.feb.gov/ (405) 231-4167

Chair's Corner

As summer is ending, the heat is still with us. While it's been an unusual season, I have to express my appreciation to the National Weather Service Offices in Norman and in Tulsa for keeping us informed of forecasted weather and warning us of events before they occur!

In August, the US Postal Service will host a Government Mail Day event to assist federal agencies with mail solutions and options in an effort to reduce cost utilizing some of the latest products and services. Each agency would have received an email from the FEB office on the "Government Mail Day event" scheduled for Thursday, August 13, 2015 (8:00am-3:00pm).

Workshops include: • Shipping Solutions, • Mail Piece Design, • Mail Center Security, • Intelligent Mail, and • GSA – Mail Policy

If you have not yet registered, contact Sonya Dulan at 405-815-2302.

Also this month, our FEB will be hosting two separate FEMA Continuity of Operations (COOP) training courses (L-548, COOP Program Manager Course and the L-550, COOP Planner's Course). Together, the two courses will span a full week of training for those of you who have new COOP staff or have employees wishing a refresher. Since there is no cost for these courses, this is a budget minded method of professional development for staff in a specialized area of responsibility. Registration courses are included in this newsletter for your convenience.

Our FEB has coordinated a Shared Neutrals Academy (four-day mediation training event) to be held this month. In order to receive the discounted training fee, participants must participate in the FEB Shared Neutrals Program on an as needed basis for one year. With a robust cadre of mediators sharing the mediation opportunities, no one mediator is unduly burdened.

Also, by now, you will have received the email from the FEB Office requesting you to identify your intent to participate in a tabletop our FEB is planning for March 2016. FEMA Region VI has been so kind to assist us in developing a freeform tabletop. If you have not responded, please consider participation in this important event (no charge), to which you can bring key staff members to interact with other federal leaders to share best practices and consider how your organization would respond to the scenario presented. If you are interested in attending, please contact LeAnn Jenkins at leann.jenkins@gsa.gov or 405-231-4167 to identify the agency, point of contact, and approximately how many individuals from your organization you plan to participate.

Julie A. Gosdin

Julie Gosdin, Chairperson

Special Retirement Supplement 2015

Taken from Federal Times article dated Jun 2015

With bills being introduced on the Hill to eliminate the special retirement supplement (SRS) for future Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) retirees, I thought it would be a good idea to explain what the special retirement supplement is, why it is, and how the amount is figured.

What is the SRS and why is it provided?

The SRS approximates the Social Security benefit you earned while a FERS employee. It's designed to bridge the gap between the time you retire and age 62, when you'll be eligible for a Social Security benefit.

FERS stands on three legs: a defined annuity benefit, the special retirement supplement and the Thrift Savings Plan. Take away any one of those legs and the system collapses. If the SRS were eliminated, most FERS employees couldn't afford to retire before age 62.

The SRS ends at age 62, whether or not you apply for a Social Security benefit.

What is it based on?

The SRS is based solely on your years of FERS service. It doesn't include any other Social Security covered employment, such as work in the private sector. Nor does it include any period(s) of active duty service in the armed forces, even if you made a deposit to the retirement system to get credit for that time in determining your eligibility to retire and to have it used in your annuity computation. That's because the SRS is paid out of the Office of Personnel Management's Civil Service Retirement and Disability Fund, not the Social Security Administration's Old-Age and Survivors Insurance Trust Fund.

Who is eligible?

To receive the SRS, you must be under age 62, eligible for an immediate annuity, and retire at your minimum retirement age (MRA) with at least 30 years of service; at age 60 with at least 20 years of service; under one of the special provisions for law enforcement officers, firefighters, air traffic controllers or military reserve technicians; or at your MRA under one of the early retirement or buyout provisions, whether the retirement is voluntary or involuntary.

If you meet the eligibility criteria for the SRS, it is automatically added to your FERS annuity.

The following categories of FERS retirees aren't eligible for the SRS: disability retirees; anyone retiring under the MRA+10 provision; anyone who is only eligible for a deferred annuity; or anyone retiring at age 62 or later.

How is the SRS calculated?

The calculation begins with your total earnings from which Social Security taxes were deducted. It doesn't include any earnings not covered by Social Security or any that exceeded the Social Security contribution rate limit for a given year. In 2015, the maximum amount of earnings from which those taxes can be taken is $118,500.

Your SRS will be computed using the same formula that the Social Security Administration uses to determine what your Social Security benefit will be when you reach age 62. The product is then multiplied by a fraction, which approximates the portion of your Social Security benefit that was earned while you were a FERS employee.

There's a simple formula you can use to estimate what your SRS would be. Take your estimated Social Security benefit at age 62, divide it by 40, and multiply the product by the number of years you've been a FERS employee, rounded to the nearest whole number. For example, if your estimated annual Social Security benefit at age 62 is $18,000 and you have 20 years of FERS service, your SRS would be $9,000 ($18,000/40x20) or $750 per month.

Article written by Reg Jones, was the head of retirement and insurance policy at the Office of Personnel Management.

Spotlighting Information in Public Service
Did you Know?

SOMEDAY IS CLOSER THAN YOU THINK

By Mike Griffin
District Manager, Social Security Administration, Oklahoma City

For many people, Someday is an elusive day on the far-off horizon—always close enough to see, but too distant to touch.

Perhaps Someday you plan to go skydiving. Or enter a hot dog-eating contest. Maybe Someday you plan to ride a mechanical bull. Or travel around the world. Or visit all of America's national parks.

Someday, you may want to retire. If you are mid-career, Someday, you may need to start planning for retirement. Even if you are just now starting your career, Someday, you're going to want to see what your future benefits will be and check your earnings for accuracy.

Well, get ready, because Someday has arrived. Open a My Social Security account at www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount, and you'll see what we mean.

Millions of people have already opened an account, taking advantage of the benefits of my Social Security. Why are so many Americans opening accounts? Because my Social Security is fast, easy, and secure. It's a convenient way to check your earnings record, get up-to-date, personalized estimates of retirement, disability, and survivors benefits, and access your Social Security Statement. With a my Social Security account, you can plan for your retirement and get help figuring out how to save for your future. If you already receive benefits, you can manage them online by starting or stopping your direct deposit, changing your address, and getting an instant proof-of-benefits letter.

Someone opens a new account just about every six seconds. Considering there is only one skydive every 16 seconds, opening a my Social Security is even more popular!

That elusive Someday that you thought might never come is here now. You'll find it at www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount.

5 STEPS TO BEING FRONT-ROW POSITIVE
(IN A BALCONY NEGATIVE WORLD)

1. <u>Recognize that being positive or negative is your choice</u>. Choose to focus on what's good about the situation, choose to learn from mistakes, choose to find the humor in your circumstances. Turn off the news. Turn the conversation around from complaining to focusing on solutions. Gossip? Well, you know what to do. And, what not to do.

2. <u>Shift your perspective</u>. If you look at a situation and you feel helpless or hopeless or sad or discouraged, stop and try looking through a different lens. A middle seat on a plane could be cause for a little annoyance. But, if you got the last seat on a flight that gets you home to your family four hours earlier, it's cause for celebration. I remind myself that the problems I have would be prayers answered for someone less fortunate. Slow internet? Some people would pray for access to internet even at half the speed I have now.

3. <u>Start documenting</u>. Keep track of your progress, of your wins, of your blessings, of your joy. Try it as a habit to write down positive things around you. Date your entries, and make a goal to add to your list at least 3 things every day. After awhile, you automatically start to see things in a more positive light. You'll actually start to see things and think "Oh that would be great to add to my list!" The nice thing about this list, is soon you will have so much evidence of positive around you that even if something negative happens, you won't react so much by horriblizing it. I know, horrbilizing is not an actual word…but it should be. It's a verb that describes how some people get bad news, and then heap it on to other problems and talk about the whole heap make each individual thing even more horrible sounding!

4. <u>Write a letter</u>. Not just any letter, but a letter of gratitude, thanks, appreciation, acknowledgment or 'just because' to a person you think is special. The art of personalized handwritten notes is a dying one. But, it doesn't have to be. Take the time to write an appreciate someone in your world. It feels so good to do this and they will not expect it. Not only did you brighten up their day, it works both ways. Knowing you've made someone's will also make you feel better about your own self.

5. <u>Volunteer</u>. No matter what your circumstances are and where you live; there are people close to your neighborhood who are suffering. Take time to offer assistance. You can donate money, but sometimes your time can be more valuable. It's easier than you think and the rewards are immense. My husband and I serve the homeless at Catholic Charities every Saturday we aren't traveling. No matter what may be negative in my personal world - for one hour, I feel so good smiling, welcoming and serving people who are in need. They are very appreciative of my help and it re-energizes my spirit for the week.

Turn these five steps into habits and you'll soon be living life in the front-row! And trust me, VIP, front-row seats have a significantly better view when you have a positive world around you. Creating a positive world can start with you!

Written by motivational speaker and front-row leadership expert, Marilyn Sherman: http://us4.campaign-archive1.com/?u=f71895f5a1bbd7957093ae325&id=85884032cd&e=159c26750c

Value the TSP's investment costs

As a Thrift Savings Plan investor, you have access to retirement investment funds that are about as inexpensive as you'll find anywhere. In 2014, the total cost charged to participant's accounts ranged from 0.029 percent to 0.049 percent of account assets, depending upon the fund. Even at the high end, 0.049 percent—or a little under 5 cents for every $100 invested—is extremely low.. You can invest $1 million in the TSP, in a well-diversified portfolio, for $490 per year or less. I don't think you can do that anywhere else.

So, the TSP's expenses are the lowest. It's a big deal because relatively low costs translate into relatively high expected investment returns. And higher investment returns mean more money in your account later on, when you'll need it to pay your bills. And more money to pay your bills means a higher standard of living for you, even now.

Investment expenses reduce returns. When you invest, you invest in markets, and those markets will produce a return without any special effort on your part as an investor. All you have to do is participate and you'll receive the market's return, less whatever you spend to participate. And that's where investment costs raise their ugly heads.

The difference between the TSP's cost and the cost to own the average retail mutual fund is about 1 percent. Say you put together a properly diversified portfolio, composed of the TSP's funds. If we round the TSP's cost up to an even 0.05 percent, or 5 cents per $1,000 invested, you will capture 99.95 percent of the market portfolio's return. If the market portfolio produces a 10-percent return for the year, you will earn 9.995 percent.

On the other hand, if you build a similar portfolio in an individual retirement account (IRA) account, using those mutual funds that cost closer to 1 percent per year for the privilege of ownership, only 9 percent of that 10 percent market return will make it into your account. The rest—10 percent of your return—will wind up in middlemen's pockets.

You may think that 9 percent out of 10 is not so bad. Well, think again. Earning 9 percent, instead of 10 percent, per year over 40 years will cost you about a third of your portfolio's value. And that reduction in value will require a corresponding reduction in the income that you can depend on from that portfolio over those 40 years. Of course, your loss is someone else's gain—which is generally true for investing. That's why, if you've accumulated a large TSP balance, you will face a steady stream of salespeople urging you to move your money from the TSP into an IRA. Fall for that pitch and you'll be lucky if it only costs you an additional 1 percent in expenses. In addition to fund expenses, that IRA can also bleed off sales commissions, service fees, advisory fees, costs and account-level administrative expenses. It's entirely possible that you could wind up paying 2 or even 3 percent more than what you're paying as a TSP participant.

The snake-oil sellers will tell you that it's worth paying more to get out of the stodgy old TSP and into an account where you can make some real money. Baloney!

Don't believe the talk. For any level of investment risk, the TSP will produce a higher expected return than any higher cost alternative. Period.

Combined with the availability of the G Fund, the TSP's low costs make it an unbeatable place to save and manage your money for retirement income. If you want to get the most out of your TSP account, you'll need to leave the most you can in it, for as long as you can.

This article taken from Federal Times, June 2015 edition written by Mike Miles, a Certified Financial Planner licensee and principal adviser for Variplan, LLC.

FEMA-certified "Train the Trainer" COOP Training Courses

FEMA

Through a partnership between FEMA and the Oklahoma FEB, we will be hosting the L-548 course in Oklahoma City to leverage resources and multiply results. Upon successful completion of the course, the attendee receives FEMA certification.

- The Continuity of Operations (COOP) Manager's Training Course is to provide COOP training for Program Managers at the Federal, State, Tribal, and Local levels of government. This training includes a train-the-trainer module to equip the managers to train the course to others.

Upon completion of this course, participants should be able to do the following: Define COOP; Explain the business benefits of COOP; identify the elements of a viable COOP capability; identify the processes, resources, and tasks necessary to implement and manage a successful COOP Program.

There is no cost for the training; however, the employee's agency is responsible for all travel costs associated with this training.

Course title:	L548 – COOP Program Manager's Course
Location:	FAA Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center Visitor Center, Oklahoma City, OK 73179
Date:	August 24-25, 2015 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Time:	*8:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.*

Name:	*Student ID:
Agency Address:	
Certificate mailing address:	
Phone:	Email:

***Obtain a FEMA Student Identification (SID) number:**

Step 1: To register, go to https://cdp.dhs.gov/femasid

Step 2: Click on the "Need a FEMA SID" box on the right side of the screen.

Step 3: Follow the instructions and provide the necessary information to create your account.

Step 4: You will receive an email with your SID number. You should save this number in a secure location.

Step 5: Utilize your SID in Block 3 of the Form 119-25-1 (a signed copy MUST accompany this form)

A signed copy of FEMA Form 119-25-1 must also accompany this form (available on our website at www.oklahoma.feb.gov/Forms/FEMA119-25-1.pdf)

Employee Date

Please return this registration form to the FEB Office ***no later than July 31, 2015*** in order to ensure sufficient materials.

Mail to: Oklahoma Federal Executive Board 215 Dean A. McGee, Ste 153 Oklahoma City, OK 73102	Fax to: 405-231-4165	Email: Leann.jenkins@gsa.gov Or Lisa.Smith-Longman@gsa.gov

FEMA-certified "Train the Trainer" COOP Training Courses

FEMA

Through a partnership between FEMA and the Oklahoma FEB, we will be hosting the L-550 course in Oklahoma City to leverage resources and multiply results. Upon successful completion of the course, the attendee receives FEMA certification.

- The Continuity of Operations (COOP) Planner's Training Course is to provide COOP training for Program Managers at the Federal, State, Local, and Tribal levels of government. This training includes a train-the-trainer module to equip the managers to train the course to others.

This course provides instructions for developing or updating a Continuity Plan according to Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Continuity Guidance.

There is no cost for the training; however, the employee's agency is responsible for all travel costs associated with this training.

Course title:	L550 – COOP Planner's Training Course
Location:	FAA Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center Visitor Center, Oklahoma City, OK 73179
Date:	August 26-28, 2014 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Time:	*8:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.*

Prerequisites for taking this class: Successful completion of COOP Managers Train-the-Trainer Course (E/L/G or IS548); and a COOP Plan (a final or draft plan will be required for activities during the course). Each student should bring a copy of their current plan or draft plan.

Name:	*Student ID:
Agency Address:	
Certificate mailing address:	
Phone:	Email:

***Obtain a FEMA Student Identification (SID) number:**

Step 1: To register, go to https://cdp.dhs.gov/femasid
Step 2: Click on the "Need a FEMA SID" box on the right side of the screen.
Step 3: Follow the instructions and provide the necessary information to create your account.
Step 4: You will receive an email with your SID number. You should save this number in a secure location.
Step 5: Utilize your SID in Block 3 of the Form 119-25-1 (a signed copy MUST accompany this form)

A signed copy of FEMA Form 119-25-1 must also accompany this form (available on our website at www.oklahoma.feb.gov/Forms/FEMA119-25-1.pdf)

Employee Date

Please return this registration form to the FEB Office ***no later than July 31, 2015*** in order to ensure sufficient materials.

Mail to: Oklahoma Federal Executive Board 215 Dean A. McGee, Ste 153 Oklahoma City, OK 73102	Fax to: 405-231-4165	Email: Leann.jenkins@gsa.gov Or Lisa.Smith-Longman@gsa.gov

Improve your constructive criticism

Delivering constructive criticism is an important part of your job as a manager

Delivering constructive criticism is an important part of your job as a manager. It's not always easy or fun, but if you want employees to improve, follow this advice for getting through to them effectively:

• Control your emotions. Poor performance or mistakes may spark feelings of anger and betrayal. Don't let them take over. Get your feelings under control before dealing with the problem, and deliver your feedback in a professional way.
• Don't let problems fester. Address blunders right away. Delaying a response implies that good performance isn't important. Prompt feedback reinforces expectations.
• Walk a moment in their shoes. Instead of assuming the employee doesn't care about good performance, or is actively trying to sabotage you, think through other possible reasons. Could the problem have been triggered by poor communication, a too-heavy workload, or simple inexperience? Attack those causes before looking for someone to blame.
• Express confidence. Employees often prove more receptive to criticism if you emphasize your belief that they can improve. Start the corrective conversation off with a positive assessment of their skills whenever possible, then move on to your criticism. Let them know you expect their best efforts.

—Adapted from *6 Habits of Highly Effective Bosses*, by Stephen Kohn and Vincent O'Connell (Career Press)

Taken from http://www.managebetter.biz/Main/Articles/27991.aspx

Prepare employees for disruptive workplace change

Successful change depends on employee support

Successful change depends on employee support. Most employees will back even large-scale changes if they understand their necessity for the organization and accept the personal cost to themselves. Before asking your employees to get behind organizational change, analyze the impact of the disruption for them in four areas:

• **Authority.** Employees—even those with apparently little formal authority—value prestige, control over their work, and the power to get things done. If their autonomy will be threatened by the change, talk over alternative ways to accomplish tasks and their opportunities to rebuild their authority.
• **Influence.** Employees are proud and protective of the contacts they build over the years and the access to information those networks provide. If their networks will be threatened by the change, talk over ways to patch the holes in their web of connections.
• **Compensation.** Employees keep a close eye on anything that affects their earning power. If the change will curtail their access to raises, bonuses, incentives, or privileges, talk over other opportunities and benefits.
• **Mastery.** Employees enjoy applying the skills they've mastered, both for the sense of accomplishment and the results. If the change will push them beyond their current skill level and comfort zone, talk over the orientation, training, and coaching that will be available to help them adjust.

—Adapted from *Leader to Leader* magazine

Taken from http://www.managebetter.biz/Main/Articles/28128.aspx

UPCOMING EVENTS
August 2015

Aug 4, 2015 — **Agency Visits: OKC**

Aug 7, 2015 — **Improving your EQ (training)**
All Day
NCED, Norman
POC: FEB Office, 405-231-4167

Aug 11, 2015 — **Leadership FEB Forum**
All Day
VA agencies, Muskogee
POC: FEB, 405-231-4167

Aug 12, 2015 — **Agency Visits: OKC**

Aug 13, 2015 — **Government Mail Day**
8:00am-3:00pm
631 E. Hill Street, Oklahoma City
POC: Sonya Dulan at 405-815-2302

Aug 17-20, 2015 — **Shared Neutrals Academy**
All Day
301 NW 6th Street, OKC
POC: FEB Office, 405-231-4167

Aug 24-25, 2015 — **L-548 COOP Program Manager Course**
All Day
FAA Visitors Center, OKC
POC: FEB Office, 405-231-4167

Aug 26-28, 2015 — **L-550 COOP Planner's Course**
All Day
FAA Visitors Center, OKC
POC: FEB Office, 405-231-4167

Aug 27, 2015 — ~~**Emergency Prep & COOP**~~
Regular Meeting Cancelled
OCCHD, 2600 NE 63rd St, OKC
POC: FEB Office, 405-231-4167

INSPIRATION CORNER

The leader is a team building who empowers individuals in the organization and passionately "lives the vision," thereby serving as a mentor and example for those whose efforts are necessary to make the vision become reality.
–Burt Nanus

Leaders must have the courage to follow their vision, to believe the invisible, to work for something that's still only a possibility, while others often wring their hands in despair.
–Diane Dreher

Learn to be cheerful and you will come near being happy. Life's race can best be run with a light heart and a buoyant countenance. Cheerfulness will open a door when other keys fail.
–B.C. Forbes

The very essence of leadership is a vision you articulate clearly and forcefully on every occasion. You can't blow an uncertain trumpet.
–Theodore Hesburgh

Your Federal Executive Board

"Federal Executive Boards (FEBs) are generally responsible for improving coordination among federal activities and programs in…areas outside of Washington, D.C…FEBs support and promote national initiatives of the President and the administration and respond to the local needs of the federal agencies and the community." (GAO-04-384)

We applaud the efforts of the Oklahoma FEB Executive Policy Council members who ensure information is provided to direct our activities and efforts:

- Jeffrey Allen, Executive Director, Air Force Sustainment Center
- David Andra, Meteorologist-in-Charge, National Weather Service Forecast Office, Norman
- Michelle Coppedge, Director, FAA Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center
- David Engel, Chief Administrative Judge, Social Security Administration, Tulsa
- John Fox, Warden, Federal Transfer Center
- Dottie Overal, Director, Small Business Administration
- Betty Tippeconnie, Superintendent, BIA-Concho Agency

This newsletter is published monthly as a cost-effective tool for communicating events and issues of importance to the federal community in Oklahoma. If you have news of interest, please fax to the FEB Office at (405) 231-4167 or email to LeAnnJenkins@gsa.gov no later than the 15th of each month.

Officers

Chair: **Julie Gosdin**
District Director
US Postal Service, Oklahoma City

Vice-Chair: **Joe Gallagher**
Deputy to Commanding General
Army Fires Center of Excellence
Fort Sill

Ex-Officio: **Adrian Andrews**
Special Agent in Charge,
US Secret Service, Oklahoma City

Staff

Director: LeAnn Jenkins
Assistant: Lisa Smith-Longman

Registration and Agreement for Employee Participation in the Oklahoma FEB Alternative Dispute Resolution Consortium "Shared Neutrals Program"

Employee involvement and availability is vital to this program's success in providing mediation services for federal agencies. Supervisory support of their involvement is critical to their success.

Please indicate (by your signature below) your support of the identified employees(s)' participation for at least one year, including 10 hours per year in the Oklahoma State Supreme Court system (qualifying the individual for State Certification). The employee's involvement may be terminated or extended at the end of their year of service.

The supervisor's signature certifies each nominee meets the following criteria:

1. Possesses strong receptive and expressive skills; is a good communicator.
2. Is able to suspend advice-giving.
3. Availability: must be willing and able to commit to the program for one year (on an as-needed basis), including 10 hours per year to work with the Oklahoma Supreme Court.
4. Has a tolerance for conflict.
5. Demonstrates confidence, possesses leadership qualities.

Maintenance of Program Integrity:

- **Mediators shall accept and carry out their assignments consistent with Shared Neutrals policies and procedures.**
- Mediators should not accept assignments from an agency unless the assignment is generated through the Oklahoma FEB's Shared Neutrals program or the program within their employing agency; mediators who knowingly do so, are not functioning as Shared Neutral mediators, nor representing the FEB program
- Mediators should be aware that mediating outside the Oklahoma Federal Executive Board Shared Neutrals program and/or their employing agency could result in a charge of abuse of official time and/or otherwise affect their rights and benefits as federal employees.

REGISTRATION

Name of Employee	Signature	Date
Name of Supervisor	Signature	Date
Agency	Employee's Work Ph #	E-mail Address

Workshop attendance is limited so everyone is encouraged to register as soon as possible. The FEB office should receive registration NLT July 24, 2015.
Dates of Training: August 17-20, 2015
Location: New Federal Building, 301 NW 6th Street, Basement Conference Room, Oklahoma City

Payment will be in the form of: [ ] Check [ ] Credit Card [ ] Govt Voucher

Mail this completed form to:	Oklahoma FEB, 215 Dean A McGee, Ste 153, Oklahoma City, OK 73102
OR fax to:	405-231-4165
Or email to:	LeAnn.Jenkins@gsa.gov or Lisa.Smith-Longman@gsa.gov

Cancellation Policy: Understanding the unforeseen circumstances may preclude an individual from attending; refunds will be permitted through Thursday, August 6, 2015. However, after that date, registration must be honored by the individual or agency involved. If you are unable to attend, substitute attendees are authorized and encouraged!

Probationary Periods: A Missed Opportunity to Address Poor Performance

In its recently released report on poor performers in Government, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) recommended more effective use of the probationary period to identify and remove individuals who are unlikely to be good performers. GAO recommended that agencies consider doing more to ensure that supervisors have the opportunity to intercede before an individual completes a probationary period and that OPM and possibly Congress consider whether longer probationary periods might be appropriate for some positions.[1]

MSPB's extensive research over the past decade supports these recommendations. In a 2009 survey, we asked proposing and deciding officials for adverse actions whether the individual in question demonstrated during the probationary period that he or she was a good employee. Only 56% of those with knowledge of the individual during that period agreed the individual had shown good signs at that time. Thus, it appears that some of these adverse actions could have been avoided by better use of the probationary period.

We also conducted a survey of supervisors of probationary employees, discussed in our 2005 report, *The Probationary Period: A Critical Assessment Opportunity*. Of those supervisors who admitted that they would not select the person again if they could do it over, more than half planned to keep the individual beyond the end of the probationary period, less than one-third stated they did not expect to retain the person, and the rest were unsure.[2] This data was one more indicator that the probationary period was not being used to separate some candidates who failed to show they were the right choice for the job at hand.

GAO is correct that inadequate communications with supervisors of probationers may also be an issue.[3] In the survey for our 2008 report, *Federal Appointment Authorities: Cutting through the Confusion*, we asked supervisors of newly hired individuals whether anyone had discussed with them the purpose of the trial or probationary period for the individual they selected. Thirty-one percent of the supervisors said this had not occurred, with another 3% unsure whether the discussion had taken place.

GAO recommended that agencies make use of automated human resources systems to inform supervisors that they have a probationer nearing the end of the probationary period so that "an affirmative decision" or other action may be taken.[4] Our 2005 report recommended that supervisors be required to certify that the individual should become an employee.[5] This was based on survey data that showed 69% of supervisors would prefer it if the supervisor was required to actively certify that the individual's conduct and performance are fully acceptable before conversion can occur. In contrast, only 5% of supervisors of probationers preferred a system where conversion to employee status is automatic if the supervisor does not act to remove the employee (the current system). Twenty-six percent favored a system in which conversion would not occur if the supervisor indicates there is a problem with the individual.[6]

GAO reported that Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCOs) informed them that for some positions, such as trainee positions or those involving complex projects, a longer probationary period may be appropriate.[7] Our surveyed supervisors of probationers agreed. Sixty-five percent wanted bureaus/components to be able to determine the length of an employee's probationary period based upon the complexity of the job.[8]

MSPB's finalized research agenda for 2015 - 2018 includes a study of the incidence and consequences of poor performance in the civil service. While this study is only in the earliest planning stages, we hope we will soon be able to provide new data and insights to add to this important discussion. ❖

1. GAO, *Improved Supervision and Better Use of Probationary Periods Are Needed to Address Substandard Employee Performance*, GAO-15-191 (Mar 9, 2015), pp. 30-31.
2. MSPB, *The Probationary Period: A Critical Assessment Opportunity* (2005), pg, 7.
3. GAO pg. 11, 30.
4. GAO pg. 30.
5. MSPB pg. 15.
6. *Id.* pg. 14.
7. GAO pg. 13.
8. MSPB pg.18.

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
30	**31**		August 2015			**1**
2	**3**	**4** Agency Visits: OKC	**5**	**6**	**7** Improving your EQ-training	**8**
9	**10**	**11** Leadership FEB-Muskogee	**12** 10:00 ITC Agency Visit: OKC	**13** Govt Mail Day	**14**	**15**
16	**17** Shared Neutrals Academy: Mediation Training in OKC	**18**	**19**	**20**	**21**	**22**
23	**24** FEMA L-548 COOP trng	**25** Executive Policy Council	**26** Central Oklahoma LFCC FEMA L-550 COOP workshop	**27**	**28**	**29**

OKLAHOMA FEDERAL EXECUTIVE BOARD
215 DEAN A. MCGEE AVENUE, STE 153
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