CALS/NCCES STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE
NCCES County Office Work Schedule Flexibility

Authority: Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

History:
Last Update: December 18, 2008
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Related Policies:
Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), U.S. Department of Labor.

Additional References: Department of Labor (DOL) and DOL - Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)

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Purpose and Background:
Under the provisions of the current Memorandum of Understanding, each Cooperative Extension County Office follows the office hours and holiday schedules of their respective County. The standard workweek for full-time County Operations Support Staff (COSS) and EPA employees subject to the Fair Labor Standards Act is 40 hours, with an 8-hour daily work schedule and a one-hour meal break. Additionally, the official Cooperative Extension workweek used to calculate the number of hours worked per week is from 12:00 a.m. Saturday to 11:59 p.m. Friday.

Flexible work schedules for positions subject to the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), generally the NCCE secretarial positions and the program assistant/associate positions, have always been possible with the support and approval of the County and District Extension Directors, and with the support of local government, per NCSU policies, rules and regulations for positions subject to the FLSA. These positions have a set number of work hours per work week, and any time worked over those are subject to the overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).

Flexible work schedules are not available for positions exempt from the FLSA which include agents, specialists, and other faculty because they do not have defined hours of work nor are they subject to the FLSA. These positions, however, are eligible for what is termed “professional
scheduling,” which is a consideration for limited time off with their supervisor’s approval. Please see the “NCCE Professional Scheduling Standard Operating Procedure” at (website).

Requests from county government for a long-term flexible work schedule for an entire Extension office pose a challenge because it treats all positions like those that are subject to the FLSA. Since we have many employees who are not subject to the timekeeping provisions of the FLSA, The following describes a process that County Extension Directors must follow when considering movement of an entire Extension Office to a nontraditional work week.

**Flexible Work Week Request Process**

County Cooperative Extension offices in counties that require or mandate new reduced work week schedules for their county departments are to follow the local government hours and requirements per our Memorandum of Understanding. A copy of an official document or a letter from the chair of the county commissioners or the county manager stating this change in the official work week hours is mandatory must be included with the plan defined below.

County Cooperative Extension Offices in counties that are considering a voluntary flexible work schedule for their county departments may seek Extension Administration approval to participate.

In either of the two cases above, it is important that the local Cooperative Extension Office submit a plan to Extension Administration that explains and justifies the change, communicates how the needs of local citizens will continue to be met effectively and at the same or improved service level; and show that the plan and action is supported by local government and their advisory committee.

All requests for flexible work schedules for Extension Offices must be submitted by the County Extension Director to the Director of County Operations via a signed, approved copy being sent through their respective District Extension Director no less than one month prior to the proposed implementation. Shorter time periods can be approved with the Director of County Operation’s support under special circumstances.

The request must contain the following components: Situational Statement, Justification, Plan of Action. The Plan of Action must be as comprehensive as possible and must include drafts of communications to clients notifying them of the change in time and commitment to same level of service and availability; the proposed work week schedule time; how long the new schedule will be in place; how the County Director will manage holiday work weeks, sick/annual leave days, and other implications of unexpected absences due to illness; the expectations of timeframes in which all phone calls, emails, and other communications are returned, etc., and any other pertinent information.
The Director of County Operations is the final level of approval and retains the discretion to withdraw approval of Flexible Work Schedules.