

**DUAL
CAREER
ASSISTANCE
PROGRAM**



DUAL CAREER

INTRODUCTION

The National Park Service recognizes that a majority of its employees are members of dual income families. Acknowledging this fact and providing appropriate assistance to employees and/or spouses promotes higher employee morale and increased productivity.

DEFINITION

Access

The dual career assistance program is available to all dual income couples where at least one spouse works for the National Park Service. It is NOT limited to those couples where both partners work for the National Park Service.

Spouse

The policy on dual careers uses the word "spouse" as defined by the Department of the Interior to mean "husband or wife, as defined or recognized under State law for the purposes of marriage, including common law marriage in States where it is recognized. In addition, this issuance recognizes non-traditional relationships where an individual's close association with the employee is the equivalent of a spousal relationship."

POLICY

Support

To recruit and retain a high quality, diverse workforce, it is the policy of the National Park Service to provide assistance and support to dual career couples by assuring that units establish support structures and information networks to assist dual career employment. Employees and/or their spouses are assured that they will receive full and fair consideration for available vacancies for which they are eligible in units of the National Park System. Assistance and support will also be provided to those seeking non-NPS employment within commuting distance of NPS units.

Assistance

This policy does not propose that every employee will be accommodated in every instance. The responsibility

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for career planning still rests with individuals whether dual career couples or not. It does, however, provide a process for assisting employees with planning and achieving career movement.

Effort

Although the ultimate responsibility for securing employment rests with the individual, managers and supervisors are to make every possible effort to assist spouses in securing employment.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Parks, Field Offices, National Service Centers/WASO offices will

- Provide counseling to dual career couples about their career options;
- Explain the Dual Career Referral Program when making job offers to employees so they are aware of the assistance available;
- Grant as a minimum at least 180 calendar days Leave Without Pay (LWOP) to permanent employees who are leaving to accompany a spouse. Obtain a written resignation post-dated to the end of the LWOP. To encourage management support, the losing unit is allowed to create an "additional identical" (AI) position to fill immediately, regardless of resignation.
- Make personal contact with managers at other Service units about placement possibilities for spouses with status;
- Review vacancies to determine if they can be advertised simultaneously as possible NPS dual career opportunities;
- Encourage supervisors to utilize alternative work schedules, job sharing, and flexi-place as appropriate.
- Support existing or consider establishing day care facilities.
- Appoint a Worklife Coordinator, who may be assigned on either a full-time or a collateral duty basis.

WORKLIFE COORDINATOR

Responsibilities

The Coordinator explains and provides current information on dual career opportunities, other employ-

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ment options, child and elder care, schools and additional area information to transferring employees and potential applicants. The Coordinator can also assist supervisors and managers in fulfilling their obligations under the program. The Worklife Coordinator serves as a resource for area information, local job networking, agency information, and as a contact person for job applicants and spouses who have questions. The Coordinator maintains a current list of other Federal agencies and major employers within the commuting area with addresses, phone numbers and contacts. The Coordinator also maintains contact with other agencies and employers within the commuting area.

DUAL CAREER REFERRAL PROGRAM

Assistance

The National Park Service will assist spouses who have career or career conditional status with the Federal government by referring their applications for consideration to selecting officials before advertising or filling vacancies. The Dual Career Referral Program may be managed by either the unit's Personnel Office or by the Worklife Coordinator.

Eligibility

To be eligible, spouses must submit their application to the appropriate personnel offices. The spouse must identify the types of positions for which he/she wishes to be considered. If qualified, the spouse will be considered for positions at the same or lower grades held before in a permanent appointment. Consideration for vacancies under this program will begin with the receipt of the spouse's application and terminate with being offered and declining the identified position(s) and grade(s), or with accepting a permanent position. Eligibility for a position cannot be conferred if it is inconsistent with nepotism regulations.

Availability

This assistance is not limited to the time of a transfer. The National Park Service recognizes that employees may have to leave the Service for a variety of reasons, such as going back to school, taking care of family obligations, etc. The dual career referral program is available whenever an ex-Federal employee is interested in returning to Government service.

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Process

Each responsible unit will set up a process for maintaining the applications of spouses and for providing the appropriate applications to selecting officials before a vacancy is advertised or filled. Spouse applications are valid for up to one year. Continued eligibility will require annual updates by the spouse.

Procedures

Before announcing or filling a vacancy, a spouse's application will be referred if he/she is eligible, qualified and has expressed an interest in it. The selecting official is not obligated to select the spouse applicant, only to consider his/her application. If the selecting official does not select the spouse, the position may then be advertised or otherwise filled. If the position is advertised, the spouse may apply.

DUAL CAREER COUPLE RESPONSIBILITIES

Flexibility

Couples with the most flexibility are those with varied disciplines or more than one area of expertise. At whatever level a couple chooses to pursue dual careers, they must come to an understanding as to what sacrifices they are willing to make for each other and what kinds of jobs they will accept and where.

Success

The success of dual career couples is dependent on: each individual being able to stand on his/her own merit; the career goals set by each individual; working cooperatively with one another to achieve the best of two worlds for both partners; and working cooperatively with NPS management.

Consideration

In establishing career goals, every dual career couple should:

- Maintain open communication with each other, family, supervisors and personnelists about career plans;
- Maintain a flexible attitude and consider all available placement options within and outside the Service before making decisions;
- Take advantage of the Dual Career Referral Program and have applications on file with the appropriate offices.

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- Make alternative career plans that encompass such options as both partners pursuing careers on an equal basis, one career taking priority over another and alternating career priorities depending on opportunities;
- Decide which locations are more suited to dual career needs and whether an offer of employment will be accepted if there are limited options for the other spouse; and
- Regularly review and revise career goals, desired geographic locations, maximum commuting distance, and personal, family and financial obligations.

PLACEMENT OPTIONS

Supervisors and dual career couples are expected to look at all options available for placement including, but not limited to, the following:

- Detail to another Park/Region;
- Lateral reassignment to another position for which qualified;
- Temporary (seasonal) assignments;
- Permanent intermittent status;
- Change to a lower grade;
- Job-sharing, flexi-schedule, and flexi-place assignments;
- Transfers to other federal agencies in the area;
- Networking with professional organizations (e.g. ANPR, ANPME, FOP, NAI, etc.)
- Resignation;
- Employment outside the federal government (e.g., with state/local governments, private industry, etc.)
- One spouse pursuing an outside career which meshes well with the NPS lifestyle (i.e., author, photographer, teacher, medical professional, etc.)

Further Resources

Additional information on these options may be found in the National Park Service *Worklife Issues Handbook* and Dual Career Policy issuance, or may be obtained from local personnel offices and park Worklife Coordinators.

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