

S1630_1 Exhibit 3

Readers, Personal Assistants and Staff Sign Language Interpreters

BACKGROUND

These procedures cover use of a centralized full-time equivalent (FTE) pool maintained and administered by the Social Security Administration (SSA) in the Office of Personnel, Center for Accommodations and Disability Services (OPE/CADS). This pool serves as a means of providing readers for qualified employees who are blind or who have extremely low vision, personal assistants for qualified employees with severe mobility impairments, and sign language interpreters for sites with a large number of employees who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.

A. Description of SSA FTE Pool

OPE/CADS manages the SSA-wide allocation of personnel resources that SSA distributes to offices and components to support reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities. Commonly known as the FTE Pool, this resource pool provides:

1. Readers for qualified employees who are blind or who have extremely low vision;
2. Personal assistants for qualified employees with severe mobility impairments; and
3. Sign-language interpreters for sites with a large number of qualified employees who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.

FTE Pool assistants do not count against the office or component's staffing limit. A request for an FTE Pool resource may be initiated when a qualified employee with a disability is initially hired, or any time thereafter.

B. Hiring Authority

Assistants the agency hires to fill positions supported by the FTE Pool are noncompetitively appointed into the excepted service under the Schedule A authority (5 C.F.R. 213.3102 (II) ("II" is double "L")). If the agency hires persons with disabilities as assistants, they may also be hired under the (II) rather than the (u) authority.

C. Time-Limited Appointments

FTE Pool appointments are time-limited (i.e., the appointment cannot exceed two (2) years from the effective date of the Federal Personnel Payroll System (FPPS) action), and selectees are hired into the excepted service. If the FTE Pool assistant's performance is acceptable to

both management and the employee with a disability, the agency may extend the appointment for the assistant; however, the agency cannot convert the assistant's appointment to career-conditional or permanent. Since an assistant is in the excepted service, he or she may not apply for job vacancies posted through internal merit promotion procedures where the area of consideration is only open to SSA employees who are in the competitive service unless the assistant has competitive status having attained career tenure during prior Federal employment in the competitive service.

Regulations at 5 C.F.R. § 315.711 states that readers, personal assistants, or interpreters whose services are no longer needed for reasons beyond management's control, and who have completed at least one year of government service under a non-temporary appointment, may be converted noncompetitively to a career or career-conditional appointment. To make such a conversion, the office or component must have an FTE available.

D. Role of Assistants Hired Under the FTE Pool

1. The primary purpose of the FTE Pool assistant is to help the employee with a disability perform job duties. The type of assistance provided will differ based on the nature of the disability, the employee's job, office expectations, etc. SSA expects the assistant to also aid the qualified employee with a disability with general tasks (e.g., navigating within the office, carrying a lunch tray, meeting transportation, etc.). An assistant is not expected to provide the employee with personal attendant responsibilities (See Section E below for further clarification.) Meeting transportation is limited to guiding the employee with a disability to and from the appropriate mode of transportation.
2. An office may use an assistant to perform general office support tasks when the assistant is not assisting the employee with a disability. However, these assignments should not be time sensitive or given priority over assisting the employee with a disability. In addition, it is important to make sure that the tasks given to the assistant do not exceed the grade of the assistant. Supervisors should not give assistants any functions to perform not covered in their position description or that could be considered transactional in nature. Any work produced by the PIN of the assistant may be audited at any time.
3. FTE Pools assistants are encouraged to work the same tour of duty as the employee with a disability in order to assist the employee whenever needed.
4. Whenever possible, the assistant should schedule leave to conform to the employee's leave schedule.
5. Employees who work from home can have the service of an FTE Pool Assistant for reading and other clerical and support functions, which the assistant can provide via phone or email. Assistants cannot report to the employee's home as an alternate duty station but must work from their official duty station at all times.

6. FTE Pool Employees are not authorized to telework. Please see Exhibit 3 located in the [Telework Chapter of the Personnel Policy Manual \(PPM S650_1\)](#).
7. If a qualified employee with a disability needs assistance during travel, he or she may qualify for a travel assistant. The FTE Pool assistant need not be the travel assistant. However, if the FTE Pool assistant does act as the travel assistant, SSA will continue to pay the salary for work performed during the tour-of-duty and the requesting component will pay the travel expenses and per diem for the assistant.

E. Types of FTE Pool Assistants

1. Reader Assistants

The degree of technical reading required may vary according to the type and volume of the reading material, the employee's occupation, and the employee's ability to use assistive devices. The reader assistant is not necessarily limited to exclusively reading printed materials to the employee. He or she may be required to assist the employee with clerical support and other assistance (e.g., filing, photocopying, faxing, and the completion of forms, etc.).

2. Sign Language Interpreters

The degree of technical interpretation required may vary according to the type and volume of the material, the employee's occupation, and the employee's ability to use assistive devices. The sign language interpreter is not necessarily limited to exclusively interpreting materials to the employee. He or she may be required to assist the employee with clerical support and other assistance (e.g., filing, photocopying, faxing, and the completion of forms, etc.).

3. Personal Assistants

CADS provides Personal Assistants for employees with severe mobility impairments to help with filing, moving, lifting work files and generally helping with tasks that an EWD is physically unable to perform. Personal assistants are not personal attendants (i.e., hired to help the employee with personal hygiene, toileting, feeding, transferring, providing any after-hour care, etc.).

F. Interview, Selection, and Hiring Process

1. When requesting a position under the FTE Pool, the manager should review the position descriptions (PDs) for reader, personal assistant, or sign language interpreter positions. Managers may obtain copies of the PDs by calling the regional Human Resources Centers (HRC), the regional Servicing Personnel Offices (SPO), or CADS. The Office of Personnel, Center for Personnel Policy and Staffing (OPE/CPPS) at headquarters, HRCs and/or SPOs recommend and ultimately decide the appropriate grade levels for assistants in accordance with the position

descriptions, complexity of work, the number of employees with disabilities that will be assisted, and the level of education of the prospective assistant. The initiating office should work closely with CADS, CPPS, HRC, and/or SPO when requesting an assistant position.

2. Because the qualified employee with a disability and the assistant must be “well-suited” to working together, the qualified employee with a disability should be involved in the interview process.
3. Management should make certain the FTE Pool assistant candidate is aware of, and understands, the limitations of the appointment. The candidate must sign Form SSA-499, Statement of Agreement for Time-Limited Appointment FTE Pool Assistant, located in Onboarding Manager.
4. If the selected candidate is not a U.S. citizen, management should check with the component Staffing Specialist regarding whether the candidate meets one of the possible exceptions to U.S. citizenship requirements, prior to making the employment offer.
5. The office or component is responsible for initiating all personnel actions involving FTE Pool assistants and submitting them to CADS for final budget concurrence. Managers and staff must follow the procedures in FTE Pool Personnel and FPPS instructions whenever an action for an FTE Pool assistant is processed, whether it is for a new hire, an extension of term, or a promotion.
6. Components must follow all SSA suitability and security procedures promulgated by OPE’s Center for Suitability and Personal Security (CSPS) before the new FTE Pool assistant is hired or brought into the agency as a contractor and reports for duty. This includes all Readers, Personal Assistants, and Sign-Language Interpreters. This process includes:
 - Completing an OF-306, Declaration for Federal Employment, which contains questions relating to suitability;
 - Fingerprinting for an Federal Bureau of Investigation fingerprint check;
 - Completion of the Fair Credit Reporting Act Authorization (FCRA);
 - Completion of the on-line e-QIP, Electronic Questionnaire for Investigations Processing;
 - Selective Service registration query (if applicable); and
 - Education verification.

FTE Pool assistants also need to complete the Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPDD 12) as well as undergo a background investigation by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, National Background Investigations Bureau unless they meet the requirements for reciprocity from a prior background investigation, which may begin after the employee or contractor begins working.

NOTE:

Although CADS does not pay for personal attendants, all components must follow the suitability and security procedures similar to all other employees and contractors as specified in Section F.6. above before allowing a personal attendant access to SSA facilities. Please contact CSPS for assistance.

G. General Administration and Supervision

1. Time & Attendance

The office or component is responsible for maintaining the FTE Pool assistants' personnel and time and attendance records.

Assistants are afforded flextime and leave; however, it is encouraged that the qualified employee with a disability and assistant strive to keep the same schedule.

2. Advancing of Sick Leave

The agency hires FTE assistants in time-limited appointments. Please follow the appropriate union agreement or Personnel Policy Manual if considering advancing sick leave.

3. Pay and Benefits

SSA pays only the salary for the approved tour and benefits for the FTE Pool assistant. All other expenses related to the assistant such as travel, training, overtime, awards, and over-tour hours are the responsibility of the employing home component or office. FTE Pool assistants may earn credit hours at the discretion of management.

4. Supervisor

The supervisor of the employee with a disability is also the supervisor of the FTE Pool assistant.

5. PACS

Supervisors must complete a non-manager Performance Plan for the assistant. The standard expectations are available within the PACS web-based application and supervisors should enter the expectations into the plans by clicking on the "Retrieve" button on the "Initial Discussion" tab during plan creation. Supervisors should not issue a New Hire/Trainee performance plan to FTE Pool assistants.

6. Termination from Position

If the FTE Pool assistant is not satisfactorily performing the functions of the position, or is not acceptable to the qualified employee with a disability or to management, management may terminate the FTE Pool assistant, with appropriate documentation, from the position.

If management terminates the FTE Pool assistant for any reason, they must be given a written two-week notice.

The office or component must contact CADS for guidance when a qualified employee with a disability using an FTE Pool assistant no longer requires the accommodation, receives a reassignment to another component, retires, or resigns.

7. Requests for Replacing an Assistant

The Immediate Supervisor or designated official must notify CADS immediately of the need to replace an FTE Pool assistant.

All requests must be emailed to ^DCHR OPE FTE Pool Admin.

CADS encourages Reasonable Accommodations Coordinators and managers to allow at least one month notice to expedite the replacement process. Managers should not take any action other than locating and interviewing potential candidates until receiving final approval from CADS.

H. Attachments

[Form SSA-499, Statement of Agreement for Time-Limited Appointment](#)

[Form OF-306, Declaration for Federal Employment](#)