**Job Sharing Guidelines**

**Introduction**

Job-sharing is a work scheduling strategy that is part of the Massachusetts Alternative Work Options Program. Alternative Work Options provide Massachusetts state employees with greater flexibility in their work schedules. The options included in the program are part-time, job sharing, staggered work hours and flextime.

Job-sharing enables two (or more) employees to share the responsibilities assigned to one specific position. The job-sharers may divide the responsibilities based on their individual expertise, preference or schedules. Together, the job-sharers comprise one full-time equivalent position; their total hours worked per week do not exceed 37.5 or 40 hours. Job-sharers are considered part-time employees if they are scheduled to work at least half-time (18.75 hours per week for a 37.5 hour job).

The Massachusetts Alternative Work Options Program has developed a companion Information Packet on part-time employment. Since job-sharing is a form of part-time employment, it is important to read the information in that packet.

Job-sharers who work less than half-time, by either working fewer than 18.75 hours per week or less than half a year, are considered "intermittent employees". Information about intermittent employment is contained in the Red Book, which defines workrules, leave policies and employment benefits for these positions.

**The Growth of Job-Sharing In the United States**

Job-sharing has become an increasingly popular scheduling alternative as employers begin to accommodate the changing American workforce. Among the growing labor force groups that are contributing to the demand for scheduling alternatives such as part-time and job-sharing are:

* Working mothers
* Older workers
* Adults caring for elderly dependents
* Dual-career individuals, many of whom are seeking to augment their income while staring up their own businesses

In a 1998 Hewitt Associates survey of 1020 employers, 40% of them offer job sharing to their employees. In a 1997 status report to the President on federal workplace Family Friendly initiatives, 63% of federal agencies offer job-sharing to their employees. In a survey conducted by HRD in 1999, 29 out of 52 states have job-sharing programs.

**Advantages of Job-Sharing**

Many of the advantages that are reported to result from part-time employment are echoed by employers who implement job-sharing programs. A comprehensive study of the State of Wisconsin&apos;s three-year Project JOIN (Job Options and Innovations) documented the following benefits for the state:

* Increased job performance
* Lower turnover rates and sick leave usage
* Increased application and employment of affirmative action candidates
* Increased job satisfaction among job-sharers
* Little change in cost/benefits data for two persons in one position compared to one person in a full-time position.

As with other Alternative Work Options, job-sharing expands the pool of competent and qualified individuals who need or wish to work reduced hours. A hiring manager at Stanford University Medical School noted that he hired a pair of job-sharers because "the two of them as a team had a stronger background than any single one of the candidates I talked to."

Studies have illustrated that certain unique characteristics of job-sharing make it a particularly appealing employment option from the employer&apos;s perspective. Benefits to the employers cited by other states' programs include reduced employee stress, phased retirement options, affirmative action opportunities, reduced training time and expense (job-sharers train each other), decreased dependence on temporary help (job-sharers ensure coverage is always provided), and decreased turnover and absenteeism. One company profiled by the Bureau of National Affairs in its 1986 special report noted that the annual absence rate for participants in the eleven year old job-sharing program dropped from 4.5% of scheduled work time to less than 0.4%. Productivity increases were reported by TRW-Vidar, Inc., a firm in Sunnyvale, Callifornia.

The advantages to employees who job-share include increased personal time, the ability to balance work and personal needs, and an increased commitment to the employer. The National Institute of Business Management reported that job-sharers tend to supervise each other, catching errors and often exchanging insights that lead to better job performance.

**History of Job-Sharing In Massachusetts State Government**

Legislation established part-time employment for Massachusetts state government in 1974. Job-sharing is a form of part-time employment, which was created as part of the flexible hours employment that was mandated by Chapter 7, Section 6F of the Massachusetts General Laws. A copy of this legislation is included in this information packet.

HRD determined, in a survey of 88 state agencies in 1999, that out of 3000 total part-time positions, 344 of them were job-shares. The national demographic trends contributing to an overall increase in part-time and job-shared employment are also being felt in Massachusetts. More than ever before, working parents, employees who care for elderly or ill dependents, working students, and disabled employees, all of whom benefit from increased work schedule flexibility, are a part of the state workforce. In HRD's 1999 survey, 12% of the agencies surveyed reported that job-share requests increased over the past five years.

**Employment Benefits and Policies for Job-Sharers**

In general, job-sharers who are part-time employees (those who work at least 18.75 or 20 hours a week) are entitled to the same benefits as full-time employees; some are granted on a pro-rated basis. The Fact Sheet on Part-time Employment should be consulted to determine the specific benefits and policies that apply to these employees.

**How to Develop a Job-Share In Massachusetts State Government**

As a state employee, you have the right to request that your position be converted to a job-share. As with other employment decisions, however, the final determination is made by the appointing authority in your agency (Commissioner, Director, or head of the agency.) Typically, you will need the approval of your immediate supervisor first; however, you can present your proposal to managers above your supervisor if that person denies your request.

In general, employees who present carefully developed plans describing how their work will be accomplished are more likely to have their requests for job-sharing granted. By identifying Achievement Competency and Enhancement System (ACES) objectives or EPRS (Employee Performance Review System) job duties and how they will be met when your job is shared, you demonstrate that you are committed to accomplishing your work. You also stand a far better chance of having your job-share approved if you can identify a job-sharing partner, preferably one who is familiar with your work and your agency. Managers are urged to post positions to be filled as potential job-shares to expand the applicant pool.

Since participating in a job-share means that you will be reducing your hours from full-time to part-time, you should consider the implications. A list of issues to be considered, entitled "Planning for Part-time Employment: Issues to Consider", is included in this packet.

There are some very concrete details that need to be worked out to create a successful job-share. A "Job Sharing Development Work Sheet" has been included in this lnformation Packet to help you.

**How Does Job-Sharing Work?**

A successful job-share requires careful analysis of the responsibilities of the job. How do the qualifications, expertise and availability, as well as preferences of the job-share partners match up with those tasks? For example, a manager&apos;s job may involve both public contact and office work (report-writing, administrative detail, etc.). If one job-sharer is particularly out-going and one prefers the writing and paperwork, the division of duties is fairly clear.

Job-sharing can also be an effective alternative in positions that involve more repetitive, similar tasks. In a California insurance firm, for example, a manager was concerned about the stressful nature of a receptionist position, because of the very high volume of incoming calls. The manager hired two part-time employees to share the job, one from 7:00 am. to noon and the other from noon to 5:00 p.m. Job-sharing was a success; the manager found that both employees were more effective in the job, because neither of them got as burned out as the full-time receptionist had.

Scheduling is also an important aspect of job-sharing. There are many options for splitting a 37.5 hour job, for example:

* Half-days, five days a week, with or without one hour of overlap each day.
* Two-and-a-half days each week .
* Four days, complete schedule overlap (average of slightly less than five hours each day).
* Three part-time days per week, with one or more shared days each week.

These are just a few of the job-sharing schedules that are possible. Any combination of time that adds up to the equivalent of one full-time position is acceptable; the best arrangement is the one that meets the needs of the job-sharers and the job.

According to the Bureau of National Affairs, what separates job-sharing from regular part-time work is "the conscious attempt to merge the efforts of two or more workers into one job. Ideally, the employees in a job-sharing team are interchangeable." Other descriptions of successful job-sharing programs echo this criterion, emphasizing the importance of each job-share partner feeling a complete responsibility for the position, regardless of which one is present. This same sense of responsibility can be applied in job-sharing situations in which each partner is responsible for fairly discrete functions.

**What Types of Jobs can be shared?**

The jobs most frequently shared, according to research, are secretarial, clerical and production, simply because dividing more routine tasks is easier to accomplish. Management jobs have been traditionally viewed as requiring the full attention of one individual, due to the varied nature of the job responsibilities as well as the nature of supervision exercised.

Recently, however, more and more management jobs are being shared. Through careful coordination, including leaving dictated tapes for each other, leaving copies of all correspondence in a shared "Read Me" file or through electronic means such as e-mail, and joint performance evaluation of subordinates, management jobs can be successfully shared over a long period of time.

Job-sharing among Massachusetts state managers has been successfully implemented in state agencies. One pair of job-sharers filled, as a team, four different management positions in different agencies over a period of eight years. Their experience was described by one of their previous supervisors, a Cabinet Secretary, as a "spectacular success".

There are some jobs that may not be suitable for sharing. These include positions that require heavy contact with clients, vendors or the general public. Although such contact could be a problem for two different people to maintain, it can be managed effectively if the job-share is structured to accommodate the communication demands.

**Guidelines for Job-Sharing**

Managers who wish to set up a job-share should:

* Carefully choose the job-share partners, since a good match of personalities as well as skills is critical to the success of the job-share. According to a study conducted at the lnstitute of Governmental Research at the University of Washington, employers should look for employees who can work independently, are able to set priorities, have good communication skills, and are willing to be flexible about being consulted during their off time.
* Prepare a detailed job description that identifies each job responsibility, when it occurs (for example on a daily basis or a quarterly basis) and who will be responsible for it.
* Establish a schedule for the job-share that accommodates the needs of the position and is workable for each of the job-sharing partners. It is strongly recommended that at least a few hours of overlap time be scheduled each week so that job-sharers can fill each other in on their work.
* Consider physical settings which encourage communication. Some job-sharers find it helpful to share an office, or even a desk.
* Set up communication procedures that specify how the job-sharing partners will convey necessary information to each other, as well as how other people can communicate information to the position (regardless of who is in at any given time).

For further information about Job-Sharing or other Alternative Work Options programs, contact:

Human Resources Division, Policy Unit

One Ashburton Place, Room 301

Boston, Massachusetts 02108 Telephone: 617-878-9710

**Job- Sharing Development Worksheet**

Presenting a plan to job-share a position requires careful consideration of many important issues. You and your job-sharing partner should sit down together and discuss how you will manage all aspects of the position. You need to consider how everything will work when all goes well, as well as when problems arise. Try to think of all possible scenarios: what will happen in a snowstorm, if one of you has to be out for an extended period of time due to illness, if your current supervisor leaves or if the nature of the position changes.

The following discussion may help you as you develop your job-share plan. It has been divided into five broad issue categories.

**JOB TASKS**

1. Dividing job tasks: Be as specific as possible, and identify how frequently each task occurs (e.g. daily, weekly, quarterly). Once initial designations have been made as to who's covering what, continually clarify with each other what each of you is working on. When the tasks and sub-tasks become complex, it's important to keep identifying responsibilities. Posting current responsibilities on a wall-chart, where they can be easily seen and modified as necessary, has worked well for some job-sharers.

2. Distinct vs. shared responsibilities: In designating who will cover each task, you should think about whether you want each partner to have separate and distinct responsibilities, or whether both partners will share responsibilities. Some job-sharers are more comfortable having total responsibility for certain tasks. Others find that sharing everything works well for them, and prefer that no one task be solely managed by one partner. Remember, though, each job-sharer has accountability for the entire position whenever he/she is in the office.

3. Building in strengths and preferences: Every individual has particular strengths and preferences for certain job tasks. Try to work with your job-share partner to maximize these preferences for both of you. Of course, you'll also have to accept an equal share of disliked tasks!

4. Meeting coverage: In some positions, an important issue to address is who will cover important meetings when they are scheduled. Since some meeting times cannot be flexible, agree beforehand how schedule conflicts will be handled. You should also try to build in some flexibility, so if you have to change a day to cover an important meeting you can.

**COMMUNICATION**

1. Communication between job-sharers: How will you and your partner convey important information to each other, both during your overlap time and when one of you is not at work? Many creative techniques have been developed by job sharers. Some dictate notes or leave e-mails for each other. Others keep "hot" files with issues that need to be handled right away. Keeping detailed logs is another way job-sharers keep each other informed.

2. Communication among the job-sharers and others: In the course of a day, you probably receive a considerable number of messages. Co-workers, employees in other offices, and in some positions, people from outside state government, need to speak with you about work-related issues. What happens when two people fill the same position? How do others leave messages or convey important information? Should they speak with one job-sharer continuously, or can they speak to either partner interchangeably? You will need to anticipate this problem and develop a way of handling it that makes sense for the job-sharers and the position.

For example, if the position involves heavy phone contact, callers should be able to speak with either job-sharer and be confident that the information is processed appropriately. They should not have to repeat the gist of their call if they happen to catch the other person. That means means job-sharers need to have a complete and accurate phone log.

Similarly, co-workers and employees in other offices should feel confident that if they bring up an issue to one partner, both partners will subsequently act on the information or honor the request. Again, good communication between the job-sharers ensure that there will be effective communication between the position as a whole and all other involved parties.

**SCHEDULING:**

1. Schedule sufficient overlap time: When you establish the job-share schedule, carefully consider how much overlap time is necessary. While a job-share can technically be structured without any overlap, most job-sharers have found that the more time they can work together, the better their organization and communication. A minimum of half a day overlap is strongly suggested.

2. Be somewhat flexible about time off: Within the constraints of your non-work commitments, try to be flexible about covering another day if a scheduling conflict comes up. Your willingness to be consulted by your partner over the phone on your non-work days will contribute greatly to the success of the job-share. Those thirty-second phone calls about where you put the file can make the difference between smooth operations and a crisis.

3. Coverage for sick and vacation time: Job-sharers have an advantage over full-time employees who hold one position in that they can make arrangements in advance to cover for each other on vacations or if an illness occurs. This coverage aspect can be a strong selling point to supervisors when proposing a job-share. Of course, covering for each other for every sick day is not always possible, but certain foreseeable absences can be accommodated by the job-share partner.

4. Letting co-workers know about your schedule: The people who work with you need to know who will be in when. Make sure that your current schedules are clearly posted in your own work area, as well as in an appropriate common area (where the sign-in sheet is, at the receptionist&apos;s desk, etc.). It&apos;s particularly important that the person or people who cover the telephones have an accurate schedule, so they can convey correct information to callers. Those who answer the phones should also be instructed as to whether general calls can be fielded by either job-sharer.

**WORKSTYLE**

1. Acknowledge and accommodate individual styles: Everyone has a personal way of approaching work. Make sure that you and your job-share partner understand each other's style. How can the two of you accommodate those styles and get the job done? Be honest about your idiosyncrasies; get them out on the table early so they don't interfere with work later on. For example, if you and your partner share a desk, and you simply can&apos;t stand seeing little notes stuck all over the place, ask your partner to organize the workplace before leaving. Filing systems, keeping mental as opposed to written notes, prioritizing methods, and other individual workstyle issues need to be negotiated. Remember, your primary objective is to accomplish the work in the most efficient way possible.

2. Remain comfortable with your own workstyle: In the process of negotiating how the work will be accomplished, make sure that you can live with the compromises you make. Maybe you can accept writing a summary of every phone call, but you find it impossible to keep a detailed diary of daily activities. Discuss alternatives with your partner. Each of you needs to retain enough of your personal style to make the work feasible, while accommodating the other&apos;s preferences to the extent possible. It&apos;s a delicate balance and one that may take some time to work out.

**SUPERVISION**

1. Reporting relationships: How will you be accountable for your work: as a unit, or as individuals? Will each job-sharer be called on to achieve specific MPRS objectives or fulfill certain EPRS job duties, or will both be jointly responsible for all of them? Will each person have individual supervision meetings, or will both meet with the supervisor together? These relationships need to be established at the beginning of the job-share. Some job-sharers are most comfortable meeting both individually and as a team with the supervisor.

2. Job-sharers as supervisors: If you and your job-share partner jointly supervise other staff, it's important to be sensitive to the employees who report to you. It is difficult to have two bosses. When structuring job tasks, consider your supervisory responsibilities. Should one person take on the role of "primary supervisor" so that the subordinates are clear about the priorities and have a consistent reporting relationship? Should you each take on supervisory responsibility for certain employees? Should you each list the tasks required of subordinates and then jointly prioritize them? It may be helpful to post a running list of everything you asked an employee to work on, so that each of you is aware of the other's requests.

One team of management job-sharers in the private sector noted that strong employees tend to do well under joint supervision because they benefit from both partners&apos; expertise. Poor performers tend to play one manager against the other, a situation these job-sharers remedied by making sure they communicated supervisory expectations clearly between them. These job-sharers preferred to conduct performance reviews as a team to reinforce the concept that both of them were involved in each employee and appointing authority’s supervision.

You, your job-share partner, and your supervisor should consider the nature of supervision you exercise and develop the most appropriate plan that meets the needs of all involved: you, the subordinates and the position.

3. Evaluation: Whether or not the job-share is evaluated as a team depends on the assignment of MPRS objectives or EPRS job duties, either jointly or to one of the job-share partners. While job-sharers have worked out several different reporting and evaluation approaches, the most successful job shares seem to result when both partners accept full responsibility for the position, regardless of who is held accountable for individualized tasks.

**GENERAL LAWS OF MASSACHUSETTS**

Chapter 7, Section 6F: Coordinator of flexible hours employment within human resources division; plans or programs; report.

Section 6F There shall be a coordinator of flexible hours employment within the human resources division who shall work on the development, implementation and oversight of plans for the utilization, within all executive agencies, of persons who choose to be employed for a reduced number of hours per week and for the recruitment of such persons for civil service and non-civil service employment. All state agencies shall report to the coordinator the progress of implementation of any flexible hours plan in such agency. Such reports shall be filed on a semi-annual basis, beginning six months from the effective date of such program. Such reports shall include:

(1) The number of regular part-time employees currently employed and the percentage of the full-time workforce represented by this number;

(2) The agency policy for full-time employees who wish to convert to part-time status;

(3) Agency plans to increase the number and scope and grade range of part-time employees during the next reporting period;

(4) Extent of flextime programs in the agency.

The coordinator shall recommend to said department such action, including the submission of legislation and the making of rules, as shall be necessary from time to time in order to implement a plan or plans for flexible hours employment and in order to secure for flexible hours employees the normal advantages of their positions, including without limitation vacation time, sick leave, maternity leave, bonuses, advancement, seniority, length of service credit, benefits and participation in benefit plans or programs. The coordinator shall make an annual report to the personnel administrator containing information as to the activities of the program during the preceding year. Such report shall be a public record, and copies of it shall be furnished to the governor and to the state library.

(Chapter 500, Acts of 1974; amended by 1981, 767,S.6, approved, with emergency preamble, January 4, 1982.)

For further information about or assistance in developing a job-share, contact:

Human Resources Division Policy Unit

One Ashburton Place, Room 301

Boston, Massachusetts 02108 Telephone: 617-878-9710