**Part-Time Employment Guidelines**

**Introduction**

Part-time employment 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, flextime and staggered work hours.

"Regular part-time employees" are defined as those who work at least half-time, but less than full-time. This means that a part-time employee is scheduled to work at least 18.75 hours per week in a 37.5 hours per week position, or at least 20 hours per week in a 40 hours per week position.

Employees 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 work rules, leave policies and employment benefits for managers, and in the collective bargaining agreements for each union.

**The Growth of Part-time Employment in the United States**

The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics stated that in 1998, 18% of the nation's workforce was part-time; Hewitt Associates' 1998 survey of 1020 companies showed that 66% of those companies offered part-time opportunities. Part-time employment, once limited to retail trade and service industries, has now extended into professional occupations.

Contributing to the growth in part-time employment are several demographic trends that have emerged in the past several years. These shifts in the labor force include:

* Increased number of women with children who are working.
* More people working longer who would like a gradual transition to retirement
* Increased level of entry requirements for skilled jobs, prompting more people to need additional education during their careers.

**History of Part-time Employment In Massachusetts State Government**

Legislation established part-time employment for Massachusetts state government in 1974. It 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 the legislation is included in this information packet.

The number of part-time employees in Massachusetts state government has held steady since the early 1980's at about 6% of the workforce. The national demographic trends contributing to an overall increase in part-time employment are also being felt in Massachusetts. Now, more than in previous decades, more working parents, employees who care for elderly or ill dependents, working students, and employees with disabilities, all of whom benefit from increased work schedule flexibility, are part of the state workforce. As a result, the demand for part-time employment opportunities is expected to rise.

**Part-time Employment Benefits and Policies**

In general, part-time employees are entitled to the same benefits as full-time employees; some are granted on a pro-rated basis. Salary and salary increases are pro-rated. Sick leave, vacation time and personal leave are pro-rated. Eligibility for group health and life insurance is the same as for full-time employees. Part-time managers and confidential employees are paid for those holidays which fall on days they normally work, while most collective bargaining employees get pro-rated holiday time regardless of their schedules. They are considered for promotion on an equal basis with full-time employees, and accrue seniority on a pro-rated basis.

Specific information about salary and employment benefits and the impact of conversion to part-time on civil service status is included in the Fact Sheet on Part-time Employment which is included in this information packet.

**Advantages of Part-time Employment**

Employees who work part-time generally find that working fewer hours enables them to more successfully integrate their work and home lives. Whether they need to take care of small children, coordinate medical care for sick or elderly dependents, pursue academic or skill training, or ease into retirement, working part-time helps employees manage these demands while still productively contributing to their jobs.

Managers, too, find that part-time employment can be a successful work scheduling strategy. By making part-time jobs available, employers can tap a large pool of experienced and competent workers who might otherwise remain unemployed.

Part-time employment offers other advantages to managers, labor literature indicates. In 1981 for example, a national survey of part-time employment included part-time workers in Massachusetts state government. Managers of part-time employees noted that part-time positions permitted them to hire people they otherwise would not have had access to, that these employees had special backgrounds and skills, and that they were especially productive. Other research done in the past in Massachusetts and other states showed that part-time workers were more productive hour for hour, and experienced less turnover, than their full-time counterparts.

**How to Convert to a Part-time Position**

If you are considering reducing your hours from full-time to part-time, you should consider the implications and develop a personal action plan. A list of issues to be considered, called "Planning for Part-time Employment: Issues to Consider" is included in this packet.

As a state employee, you have the right to request that your schedule be converted to part-time. As with other employment decisions, however, the final determination is made by the Appointing Authority in your agency (The Commissioner, Director or head of your 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 request for part-time granted. By identifying your ACES (Achievement and Competency Enhancement System) objectives or EPRS (Employee Performance Review System) job duties/performance standards and how they will be met when you convert to part-time, you demonstrate that you are still committed to accomplishing your work. Some of those objectives or responsibilities will need to be prioritized or modified to reflect reduced hours. If you and your supervisor determine that your job requires full-time coverage, one option to consider is turning your position into a job-share, in which two or more Individuals are responsible for accomplishing the work of one position. Information about job-sharing is available in an information packet similar to this one.

**Part-time Employment: Successful at All Levels**

Massachusetts state employees at many levels have successfully worked part-time. Below are brief descriptions of successful part-timers and how they modified their work. Some of them are fictional, but they are based on actual employees' experiences.

* A manager of a research unit in the central office of a large human service agency reduced his hours to thirty hours a week when his mother became unable to care for herself due to Alzheimer's disease. His duties were revised to include staffing two of the Commissioner's task forces, and taking primary responsibility for statistical reports that were produced on a quarterly basis. He delegated responsibility for researching responses to client complaints to his staff, because he could not guarantee a timely response if the complaint came in on a day he was not scheduled to work.
* A field reviewer for a regulatory agency reduced her hours to half-time after the birth of her first child. Working with her supervisor, she modified the scope of her responsibility. Instead of being the only reviewer for a particular geographic area, she became the expert for a particular type of compliance issue that arose frequently. Whenever such an issue arose in the field, it was referred to her. She was able to schedule her work in advance and had arranged back-up coverage for any emergencies. Her previous geographic responsibilities were spread over three other reviewers who had time freed up as a result of being relieved of responsibility for the particular type of issue that the part-timer now handled.
* A receptionist at a small local office of a state agency was hoping to retire soon and wanted to reduce her hours as a way to ease into retirement. She worked with the two other support staff at the office to analyze all of the tasks they were responsible for and to re-design each of the three jobs, with their supervisor and appointing authority’s approval. Based on the re-design, the receptionist was able to reduce her hours to three-fifths time. An unexpected benefit was that through the job redesign, each support staff was able to assign herself the tasks she most preferred.

**Planning For Part-Time Employment: Issues to Consider**

Converting from full-time to part-time employment is a major decision. Before you approach your supervisor or other manager with your request, it may help you to think through the implications of your decision. Every individual has his or her own personal work style and lifestyle, both of which need to be considered when thinking about the impact of moving to part-time employment.

Listed below are some questions that may help you sort out your thoughts about working part- time. They may prompt you to think of other questions that you need to answer for yourself. This list of issues was generated by a group of Massachusetts state managers who work part-time, all of whom have experienced these dilemmas first-hand. It is suggested that you read the Fact Sheet on Part-time Employment first before reviewing these questions.

**Am I financially prepared for the impact of reducing my hours? Is the extra time worth the loss of salary and benefits to me?**

This is a basic question which must be answered before you convert to part-time. Can you afford the salary reduction? A clear assessment of expenses can help you make this determination. Remember, all of your leaves and salary increases are proportional to the amount of time you work. This means if you reduce your hours to half-time, you will earn only 1.5 personal days annually instead of three, and you will earn half as much sick and vacation time. Similarly, you will receive 50% of the salary increase you would have received as a full-time employee. If you are close to retirement, reducing your hours may potentially reduce your eventual retirement benefit because you will be earning less creditable service.

Some people who have reduced their hours due to a desire to spend more time with their families (parents of young children as well as adult children of ill or fragile parents) feel that a financial value cannot be assigned to the extra time they obtain from working reduced hours. However, housing and food bills continue to come in even though you work less (although some transportation and clothing costs may be reduced). Careful budgeting and financial management are important components of successful part-time employment. Ultimately, if the financial impact of part-time work is too great, you may want to consider a flextime, staggered work hours or compressed workweek schedule instead, if your agency offers these options.

**Can I do my job part-time?**

This question requires you to take a whole new perspective on your job. By reviewing your MPRS objectives or EPRS job duties, you can prioritize the tasks that you need to accomplish. How can they be scaled down? Will the work that you don&apos;t accomplish in your reduced hours need to be done by someone else? How do you propose that the work be re-distributed? Can the job be re-designed in such a way that some of the tasks are eliminated? These are difficult questions and you might want to discuss them with co-workers who can contribute valuable insights into developing some alternative plans. Your part-time schedule will have a direct impact on their work.

Research on successful part-time employment has indicated that, with enough planning and support, almost any job can be done part-time. However, there are certain characteristics which when taken together can make a job harder to do part-time. Jobs that require work which is difficult to plan or schedule in advance, those which encompass the need to respond to emergencies that take more than a day to resolve, those with legally mandated time limitations and those which are structured in such a way that working independently is difficult, are jobs for which part-time employment may not be suited.

As you become more adjusted to your new work schedule you will gradually establish new patterns of organizing your work and your time to maximize the benefit of the time you&apos;re there. Many part-time employees report that by focusing on their work and cutting down on the socializing and other non-work activities, they are able to accomplish nearly as much in their reduced hours as they could when they were full-time.

**Will I be able to adapt my individual work style to part-time?**

Some employees report that while their supervisors and co-workers are fully satisfied with the level of work they contribute as part-timers, they themselves tend to feel they have to put in a super-human effort to justify their reduced schedules. Part-timers often experience an inability to let go of some of their former tasks, even though they no longer have time to do them. As a result, they tend to take work home or come in when they're not scheduled.

Depending on the level of your position, it way be necessary for you to be somewhat flexible in changing your schedule, or to put in some work time at home. Remember, though, you are no longer a full-time employee. Good communication and flexibility between employees and supervisors are especially important in a part-time employment situation.

**What is the best way for me to schedule my time?**

Once you decide to reduce your hours, you need to establish a weekly schedule. You nay be constrained by other schedules (for example, availability of child care), or your supervisor may want you to be at work at certain times. If you are able to establish your own schedule, you should consider the type of work you do when deciding which hours and/or days you will be at work. For example, if you work independently, your decisions about when you&apos;re in and out won't affect too many others (although you should be sure that whomever is responsible for answering phones in your office or worksite has a current copy of your schedule so correct information can be given to callers).

If your work requires that you meet the public, you will probably want to schedule your work time to coincide with peak usage times. If you supervise other people, you may want to be available for part of every day, rather than be in for whole days for part of the week and then not come in on other days. Discuss your schedule with your supervisor and coworkers, to see what works best. You can also change your tour of duty if you decide that another schedule would work better.

**How will converting to part-time affect my relationships with my co-workers?**

Although part-time employment is increasing, it is still considered out of the mainstream. Therefore, your co-workers might express some frustration that you are not as available as you used to be. People sometimes imply that you are less committed to your job, or that you are somehow getting off easier than they are because you&apos;re working fewer hours. In time, your actions, attitude and level of productivity will demonstrate your commitment.

It is important that you try to be as flexible as possible with your time within your part-time schedule. Scheduling meetings can be a problem if there are full days when you&apos;re not in the office. Suggest several alternatives when you are available rather than simply stating that "l&apos;m not going to be in that day".

Good working relationships always depend on effective communication. Working part-time highlights the need for you to make sure that you establish clear channels of communicating wlth your co-workers. Many part-timers find that writing notes becomes very important, since they don&apos;t have as much time for face-to-face communication, or they are not in the office when the person they need to speak with is.

**What will be the impact of working part-time on my career development?**

Your decision to work part-time may or may not have a significant impact on your long-term career. More and more employers view a period of part-time employment on someone's resume as an accepted component of a career path. As long as you maintain any professional affiliations, keep current with your field, and demonstrate an on-going commitment to whatever job you hold on whatever schedule, you should be able to continue progress in your own career development.

**How long will I need or want to work part-time?**

While this is a personal decision, it is important that you consider it when you first decide to consider part-time employment. Is this a temporary situation while your children are under a certain age or while your parent recovers from an illness? Do you see it lasting two years? Five years? Six months?

Deciding on how long you plan on working part-time will also help you as you plan your career development. If you are at the end of your career, you may decide that you will keep on working part-time until you retire. If you are in the earlier stages of your career, it will be helpful to estimate when you plan on returning to full-time employment so you can consider other career moves.

**What other issues do I need to consider?**

There are many "ripple effects" from the decision to work part-time. Some of the dilemmas that may confront you are very personal and can only be answered individually. Among the issues dealt with by some of the state managers who developed this list were:

* How does my perception of myself in my job change as a result of reducing my hours?
* Does working part-time reflect a change in my level of commitment to my job in my eyes? in others' eyes?
* How will I respond to other people&apos;s reactions to my part-time employment?
* How will my reduced hours affect my social interactions with my coworkers?
* How will my relationship with my family change when I reduce my hours?

**Conclusion**

Part-time employment is a personal and individualized approach to balancing the news of your work and personal Iife. It is an important decision that has some far-reaching implications for many people: yourself, your family, your co-workers, and the people you meet in your job. Careful planning can help you make a smoother transition and enjoy a more successful part-time work experience.

**Additional Information and Supplemental Materials Available from HRD**

For further information about Part-time Employment or other Alternative Work Options programs, contact:

Human Resources Division

One Ashburton Place, Room 301

Boston, Massachusetts 02108

Telephone: 617-878-9710

**The following materials are available to supplement this Information Packet:**

**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.)

**Fact Sheet On Part-Time Employment**

"Regular part-time employees" are defined as those who work at least half-time, but less than full-time. This means that a part-time employee is scheduled to work at least 18.75 hours per week in a 37.5 hours per week position, or at least 20 hours per week in a 40 hours per week position. The following fact sheet describes what salary, leaves and other benefits regular part-time employees may receive.

Employees 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". Red Book and Gray Book provisions should be consulted to determine what salary, leave and other benefits intermittent employees receive.

**Salary**

Part-time employees earn a proportion of the full-time salary that is allocated for the position they hold. For example, an employee who works half-time earns 50% of the full-time salary for that position, and an employee who works four-fifths time earns 80% of the full-time salary for that position.

**Step Rate Salary Increases**

Part-time employees are eligible for a performance-based step rate increase after 52 weeks of regular part-time service.

**Bonuses**

Part-time employees may be eligible for bonuses based on managers' merit pay or collective bargaining contract provisions; the applicable document should be consulted to determine if the bonus is pro-rated or not.

**Leaves**

Vacation, Personal and Sick Leave: a part-time employee accrues vacation, personal and sick leave credits on a proportional basis, meaning that an employee who works half-time earns half as much vacation, personal and sick leave as a full-time employee with the same length of service. For vacation status purposes, which determines when an employee is eligible for additional vacation accrual after a designated period of creditable service, one year of part- time service is equal to one year of creditable service.

FMLA, Bereavement, Voting, Court, Military and Unpaid Educational Leaves: these are the same for part-time employees as they are for full-time employees

(Note: for more information about leaves and other policies that are described as the same as for full-time employees, consult the Red Book, the applicable collective bargaining contract, or your human resources office).

**Holidays**

Part-time managers and confidential employees receive a day off with pay if the holiday falls on a day that they are normally scheduled to work.

Most part-time collective bargaining employees receive pro-rated holiday pay, or pro-rated compensatory time for working a holiday. The applicable collective bargaining agreement should be consulted to determine how holiday credit may be applied to the employee's weekly schedule.

**Group lnsurance Coverage**

Part-time employees are eligible for the same group life and health insurance, at the same rates as those for full-time employees. They may also purchase optional insurance coverage, including dental/vision, at the same rates as those for full-time employees. Part-time employees are eligible to participate in the long-term disability plan available to Commonwealth employees.

**Civil Service Status**

Converting to part-time employment from full-time employment does not affect Civil Service status. For example, a permanent full-time employee is still considered permanent when that employee converts to part-time.

Part-time employees with permanent status are eligible to take promotional examinations, as long as they meet other eligibility requirements.

Part-time employees, regardless of Civil Service status, are eligible to bid for promotion in accordance with collective bargaining agreements or the internal promotional policy that is in effect for all other employees of the agency.

**Seniority**

For purposes of layoffs and qualifying promotional examinations, part-time employees accrue seniority on a pro-rated basis, in the proportion that their service bears to full-time service. For example, a half-time employee accrues six months of seniority after one year.

**Retirement**

For retirement purposes, creditable service is measured in terms of full-time years. For example, an employee who works half-time earns a half-year of creditable service for retirement purposes for a full year (52 weeks) of half-time employment.

**Tuition Remission**

Part-time employees are not eligible for tuition remission.

**Deferred Compensation Program**

Part-time employees are eligible to participate in the Commonwealth's Deferred Compensation Program.

**Unemployment lnsurance**

Part-time employees are covered by unemployment insurance just as full-time employees are.