

SUBJECT: Procedures for VERA and/or VSIP Actions (Full Serviced CPFs Only)

Sent: Wednesday, 18 June 2003

The purpose of this E-mail is two-fold -- (1) remind members of your staff of the procedures to follow regarding anticipated Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA) and/or Voluntary Separation Incentive Pay (VSIP) actions, and (2) request your staff provide the Benefits and Entitlements Service Team (BEST) as much lead time as possible for the large numbers of VERA and/or VSIP actions. Traditionally, CPFs have worked very closely with the Benefits and Entitlement Service Team (BEST) when they offer VERA and/or VSIPs.

It's our understanding one of the first steps is for the CPF to send out a survey notice/memorandum to the employees that are being considered for VERA and/or VSIP. When this notice is sent to employees inquiring on their interest in VERA and/or VSIP, the notice should include a statement that they should contact a BEST counselor for complete, thorough retirement counseling and how to obtain a retirement estimate.

Most employees can obtain retirement estimates from either the BEST automated web (Employee Benefits Information System) or phone system. Click the links below for instructions on how to access the BEST automated web and or phone system. Employees can obtain as many retirement estimates from either automated system as they like. Firefighters, air traffic controllers, law enforcement officers, or retired military combining military and civilian service may obtain estimates via the BEST web (EBIS) system.

[How to Access the Web Automated System \(EBIS\)](#)

[How to Access the BEST Automated Telephone System \(and Reach a Counselor\)](#)

There are employees who will need to talk to a Benefits Counselor and request an estimate be prepared. The following employees will need to obtain a counselor prepared estimate: Employees with part-time service, employees with nonappropriated fund service, rehired Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) employees who took a contribution refund which will not be repaid, rehired Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) employees who took a contribution refund, employees with post 56 military service who have not made a deposit, and employees with temporary service for which a deposit will not be paid, including FERS employees with post-31 Dec 88 temporary service, and employees considering a deferred retirement. It is important to note that employees requiring a counselor prepared estimate receive only one estimate every three years. There are exceptions where we will prepare a supplemental estimate; for example, if we prepared an optional retirement estimate and now the employee is being offered VERA. If an employee has service requiring a manual retirement estimate be prepared, the normal turn-around time has been 30 calendar days. Due to the surge retirement-related workload, we are sharing with employees the turnaround time could be 30-45 days. However, if the employee indicates to the Benefits Counselor they are in receipt of a VERA and/or VSIP survey and they have a short window of opportunity to reply, our general turnaround time to work these estimates is 5-7 workdays.

Once the local CPF has completed the survey, received responses from employees, and determined which employees they are considering for VERA and/or VSIP, the CPF sends BEST a list of employees who will accept VERA and/or VSIP and the effective date of the anticipated retirement.

At this point, BEST's job will be to verify the retirement eligibility for these employees, provide the specific type of retirement they are eligible for, and screen the OPFs for prior severance pay. (Reminder -- the DPC/CPF Procedures Guide reminds CPFs not to use the Civilian Servicing Unit (CSU) application retirement data elements (Vol Ret Est and Early Ret Est) to determine when an employee is eligible to retire under optional, early, or discontinued service retirement.) The amount of time it will take BEST to verify retirement eligibility and screen OPFs for prior severance pay will depend on the number of employees involved and the requested turn-around time. Under normal circumstances, for small numbers (up to 10), those are turned around within a couple of days. If we're talking 50-100 employees, it may take 7-10 days. Taking into consideration the sheer numbers of CPFs working VERA and/or VSIP actions, as much lead time as you can provide BEST will be most helpful. It goes without saying that we will make every attempt to meet your needs and timelines.

BEST will need a copy of your VERA and/or VSIP authority. Also, for those employees who accept the VERA and/or VSIP, please ensure a copy of the VERA and/or VSIP acceptance/approval document, along with the VSIP Payment Agreement signed by the employee (if applicable), is faxed to BEST at DSN 665-2936 or commercial (210) 565-2936. Most importantly, before forwarding the electronic Request for Personnel Action (RPA) SF 52 to BEST (in-box DPCMB-ABE), please make certain the RPA is coded correctly with the VERA approval number/date and/or VSIP NOA and dollar amount.

The employee should mail their retirement application directly to BEST at HQ AFPC/DPCMB, 550 C Street West Ste 57, Randolph AFB TX 78150-4759. Employees will immediately be notified by letter that BEST received their retirement packages. Upon completion of our portion of the retirement processing, we will forward the retirement package to the servicing Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) payroll office. Once the retirement is effective, the employee will receive a congratulatory letter from BEST advising their retirement package has been forwarded to DFAS and will be provided the employee copy of the retirement SF 50 (Notification of Personnel Action). DFAS will complete their portion and forward the retirement package to OPM, where the final processing will take place.

As I'm sure you can imagine, BEST anticipates a continued surge workload associated with retirement counseling, preparation of retirement estimates, and actual retirement processing. With your help, BEST can plan for anticipated surge workloads and meet the requirements of all our serviced CPFs.

The POC for CPF representatives working VERA and/or VSIP eligibility is Ms Barbara Ellis and alternate is Ms Jill Binns. They can be reached via the CPF Line toll-free number. As always, we request you do not provide the CPF Line toll-free telephone number to employees. We appreciate your support as we continue to work VERA and/or VSIP issues with you.

**Chief, Special Operations Division
AFPC/DPCM**