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CARE's WorkLife Solutions Monthly Wire Job Sharing Considerations and Guidelines

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This month's Wire is taken from one of the many articles found on our website. The article, "Job Sharing Considerations and Guidelines," fits right in with our April Webinar topic, "Developing Job Skills," which is attached. To access this article, log-on to www.caresworklivesolutions.com, click on the World Icon and enter your unique company password. (If you do not have a company password, contact CARE's WorkLife Solutions to request a temporary password.) Next, click on the Site Search tab on the right, enter "Job," and you will find this article as well as others relevant to that topic. You will also find Audios, Glossary Terms, Resources, a Motivational Assessment, Skill-Builders, Legal Forms and more.

Job Sharing Considerations and Guidelines

Whether you are a manager or an employee, it's helpful to think about the basic considerations of job sharing before implementing such an arrangement. Do you have the right people, skills and space or flexibility?

Characteristics of Successful Job Sharers

The experience reported by employers of job sharing teams suggests that job sharers must be good communicators, be willing to consult and cooperate as members of a team rather than as competitors, be flexible, and have a strong commitment to the job and to making the job sharing arrangement work. They must have complementary skills, knowledge, and abilities and compatible work styles.

Communicating

For job sharing to be truly successful, everyone with whom the job sharers have contact must be able to assume that any information given to one team member will reach the other. In other words, supervisors, co-workers, and clients expect to communicate with both job sharers via the person on duty at the time. The job sharers must have a workable communication system which serves the purpose without detracting from their ability to get the work done.

Position Descriptions

When two job sharers at the same grade level are jointly responsible for all the duties and responsibilities of the full-time position, there is no need to restructure the position. Each team member should have a copy of the original position description to which a statement has been attached to show that the incumbent is a job sharer jointly responsible for carrying out all the duties and responsibilities of the position.

When the job sharers will be individually responsible for portions of the job, or when the job sharers are at different grade levels, separate position descriptions are required to reflect the actual duties and responsibilities of each employee. Each job sharer must have a position description that accurately reflects his or her duties and responsibilities.

Dividing and Sharing Responsibilities

The decision on whether job sharers should be jointly responsible for the entire position or only for separate functions depends on the job and the abilities of the job sharing team. To determine the arrangement for a particular job, the supervisor should examine the position description and decide which tasks will be shared. In other words, some tasks may be handled by the team member on duty while other tasks may be handled by a specific individual based on his or her skills and experience. In some cases, tasks will be divided between the sharers, but overall responsibility for the position may be shared.

At one end of the spectrum is a clean division of duties between two people who have little or no interaction with each other. At the other end, two people are jointly responsible for each and every responsibility and function. Most job sharing arrangements will probably fall somewhere in between with the job sharers individually responsible for certain aspects of the job and jointly responsible for others. A good management practice is to have the supervisor and the job sharers sign a job sharing agreement.

Scheduling Work Hours

Specific work schedules depend on the nature of the job and the needs of the company and the job sharing team. Theoretically, almost any reasonable arrangement is possible if it meets the needs of the supervisor and the job sharers. Scheduling should take advantage of the fact that two or more people rather than one are filling the job; these possibilities include overlapping time, split shifts, or working in different locations at the same time.

Shared Space and Equipment

In some companies, the availability of space and equipment will be tight. Job sharers who use the same desk, telephone, computer, etc., will need to agree on the basics so they do not lose time searching for or rearranging items. Companies may choose to permit job sharing employees to telecommute to allow employees to fulfill their job responsibilities when space at their facility is limited.

Performance Evaluations

Each member of a job sharing team must have his or her own performance standards. These will be identical if the job sharers are jointly responsible for the entire position. Each job sharer must be evaluated separately although the evaluation will often be based on work to which both have contributed. To make the supervisor's job easier, it would be wise to build in a mechanism for determining the relative contributions of each job sharer.

Ending or Changing a Job Sharing Arrangement

Usually, the decision to approve or to terminate an arrangement is at management's discretion. To avoid misunderstandings, this point should be made clear before the job sharers begin work. In addition, it should be decided in advance what will be done if one partner is unable to maintain the agreed-upon schedule, goes on extended leave, resigns or takes another job. It is wise to clearly state at the beginning whether the remaining partner will be expected to work full-time until another job sharer is found. If it is necessary to end a particular job sharing arrangement, the company may reassign one or both of the job sharers to other part-time positions or to other full-time positions.