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Roles and Responsibilities for FWPMs/SEPMs

The Law

OPM intended the Federal Women's Program Managers (FWPMs) and Special Emphasis Program Managers (SEPMs) to serve as the principal staff adviser to management about their employees, problems and the focal point for program direction. OPM later broadened the manager's role to include active participation in recruiting, counseling, and training activities.

The Problem

Agency officials and program managers have very different views about the appropriate role the FWPM and SEPM should play. In general, agency management and EEO directors believe the FWPM/SEPM role is to advise management about the concerns of under-represented groups; to help prepare affirmative action plans; and to insure that recruiting, counseling and training activities take into consideration their employees' needs. However, FWPM/SEPMs generally see their role as doers (i.e., recruiters, counselors, trainers and advisers). Differences over the appropriate role are due, in part, to the fact that guidance has been issued piecemeal over a number of years.

The Solution

Although the FWPM and SEPM roles and responsibilities could and should vary according to the special needs and problems of the particular agency, these employees still need a clear understanding of what is expected of them. OPM should publish government-wide guidelines on the specific roles and responsibilities which should apply to all FWPMs and SEPMs. Our proposed language:

Each agency needs to specifically clarify the FWPM/SEPM role. Both agency management officials and FWPMs/SEPMs should know and agree on what is expected of each other and how managers' activities fit into agencies' overall affirmative action plans. The FWPM/SEPM role should not remain static but should be flexible to meet new needs and problems. At a minimum, FWPM/SEPM responsibilities should include:

- Advising management about matters affecting the employment and advancement of women and minorities and disabled employees;
- Receiving adequate EEO and personnel training courses and attending subject matter meetings as a routine part of their responsibilities;

- Recruiting new employees and attending career days and job fairs or, at a minimum, working with Human Resources staffs that are responsible for recruitment and/or job fairs;
- Educating fellow employees regarding the difference between the EEO complaint and grievance process within their agency with respect to sexual harassment and discrimination issues and complaints, and about career development opportunities;
- Planning, sponsoring and conducting various employee activities;
- Assisting the EEO Office in compiling statistics about the agency work force, and then reviewing these statistics for problem areas;
- Preparing written reports to management on goal-oriented activities such as upward mobility programs, workshops, and seminars; and
- Planning, organizing and sponsoring various women and ethnic celebrations and special observances such as Women's History Month, Women's Equality Day, Black History Month, National Hispanic Heritage Month, and Asian Pacific American Heritage Month to name just a few. These events include such activities as arranging for guest speakers, presenting training workshops and organization luncheons.