

As effective as the PPP has been during periods of downsizing and restructuring, it has also served other worthwhile purposes. Enrollment has been



Homestead AFB (August 1992)

afforded to employees and family members dislocated by natural disasters and geopolitical crises. Examples include the

devastation of Homestead Air Force Base by Hurricane Andrew in 1992 and the evacuation of military dependents from Saudi Arabia in 1996 after terrorists bombed the Khobar Towers housing complex in Dhahran.

Since the Department must continually evolve to better support the warfighter, the PPP remains as important as ever. This program is a time-tested tool for protecting our investment in human capital.

WHY DO WE NEED A PPP?

Many people view the PPP solely as an employee benefit program. However, it has also been of great value to the Department by helping to:

- *Retain skilled employees & minimize retraining costs;*
- *Maintain morale and productivity at installations affected by Departmental transformation;*
- *Reduce costs associated with involuntary separations (e.g., severance pay, unemployment compensation);*
- *Comply with statutory requirements to provide priority hiring consideration for displaced employees; and*
- *Implement force restructuring actions efficiently and humanely*

PPP MILESTONES

- Endorsed by every Secretary of Defense since 1964
- Recognized by General Accounting Office (GAO) as the most effective outplacement program in the Federal government (1984)
- Cost effectiveness of program acknowledged by Congressional Office of Technology Assessment (1992)
- Finalist for Innovations in American Government Award sponsored by the Ford Foundation and Harvard University (1995)
- Placements exceeded 1,000 per month during overlapping 1993 & 1995 BRAC rounds
- Cited by GAO as “particularly effective” in meeting the needs of both employees and the military departments in conjunction with closure of maintenance depots (1996)
- Identified as a Federal government “best practice” in Vice President Gore’s National Performance Review (1997)
- Placement total surpassed 250,000 in March 2009, an average of more than 5,500 annually

Department of Defense Priority Placement Program (PPP)

A Success Story



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INTRODUCTION

The Department of Defense (DoD) Priority Placement Program (PPP) is the premier civilian career transition assistance program in the Federal government. When employees are scheduled for displacement due to downsizing or organizational restructuring, they receive hiring preference for DoD job vacancies through the PPP.

PROGRAM HISTORY



Secretary McNamara

Between 1961 and 1965, before the U.S. became deeply involved in Viet Nam, the Kennedy and Johnson administrations initiated a series of military base closures. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara announced in 1963 that all civilian employees

facing layoffs as a result of the closures would be offered jobs at other DoD installations. In making this commitment, he laid the foundation of the PPP.

To effectively implement the Secretary's job guarantee, the Department developed the PPP and an automated Central Referral System (CRS). The CRS was designed to match the skills of displaced civilian employees with DoD job vacancies. An operational test of the PPP and CRS was launched in June 1964 in the six-state Chicago Civil Service Region. The first eligible employees registered in July 1964, and the first placement occurred on August 4, when a firefighter from the Rossford Army Depot near Toledo, Ohio, was placed at Clinton County Air Force Base in Wilmington, Ohio.



Stock handler Buss Beaty (2nd from left) and lift operator Alonzo Lattimore (2nd from right) were the first PPP registrants (July 1964)

The PPP and CRS became fully operational for DoD activities across the U.S. on March 1, 1965. At that time, human resources offices (HROs) were required to clear job vacancies through the CRS, and if well-qualified PPP registrants were referred, the activities were obligated to make job offers. When the first report of results was issued in September 1965, closing bases had registered 15,176 employees in the PPP and 4,516 registrants had been placed.

Although the job guarantee was dropped in 1969 due to the volume of registrations, PPP placements continued at a steady pace. The total surpassed 70,000 in 1978 and 100,000 in 1984. By that time, program coverage had been expanded to include employees who successfully complete overseas tours of duty and employees serving under grade retention as a result of demotion through no fault of their own.

Soon after President Ronald Reagan signed a 1986 law granting employment preference to military spouses, the Department opened the PPP to spouses relocating with their sponsors to new duty stations. By 2008, more than 52,000

spouses had obtained DoD jobs through the PPP, which has clearly become a significant quality of life benefit for military families.

Following approval of the first Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) recommendations in 1988, the Department again relied on the PPP as its primary means of minimizing involuntary separations. Over the next 13 years, which encompassed a total of four BRAC rounds and the elimination of more than 400,000 civilian jobs, less than 10 percent of affected employees were involuntarily separated. Even though other innovative transition tools were employed,



this remarkable achievement would not have been possible without an effective PPP.

For the first 27 years of the program, bi-weekly "stopper lists" were mailed to DoD activities, and HROs checked their vacancies against the lists for potential matches. When an electronic bulletin board system was implemented in 1991, mailed stoppers were discontinued. In 1993, the CRS evolved into the Automated Stopper and Referral System (ASARS), which migrated to a web-based platform 2 years later. Since that time, HROs have been using the online ASARS to register employees and clear vacancies.