

Office of Personnel Management
Retirement and Insurance Group



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Benefits Administration Letter

Number: 97-701

Date: January 14, 1997

SUBJECT: Revised Substitute Forms Policy

PURPOSE This letter communicates our revised policy to allow the use of substitute forms for retirement and insurance. The letter also specifies the approval process and any special requirements for specific forms.

BACKGROUND The Retirement and Insurance Service (RIS) is aware that agencies and private sector vendors are working on the development of PC-based benefits administration processing systems. These systems include PC-generated forms that are nearly identical to our "official" forms. The forms--and related software--have the potential to greatly reduce the benefits administration and processing workloads in agencies.

The General Services Administration (GSA) has governmentwide responsibility for standard forms. GSA policy allows the use of substitute forms and other agencies do accept computer generated substitute forms.

POLICY STATEMENT RIS will accept substitute forms that meet the general requirements established by GSA (41 CFR Part 201-9 (copy attached) and FIRMR Bulletin B-3, 12g *Electronic Generation of Standard and Optional Forms*, as amended) and any specific requirements specified in this letter. Substitute forms must be approved by RIS following the procedures in this letter prior to their use.

Requirements In general, automated forms should be generated with black ink on white paper that is 8.5" wide and 11" long.

Requirements (cont.) The electronic reproduction must be complete, containing all instructions and questions which appear on the current official form. The wording and punctuation of all items, instructions, and identifying information must match exactly. No data element may be added to or deleted from the form . The sequence and format for each item on the form must be reproduced to the highest degree possible. Each item must print on the page in approximately the same location. The approved form must include the vendor/agency name and the RIS approval expiration date at the bottom of each page.

INSTRUCTIONS Agencies using substitute forms must insure that all the instructional materials included with the forms are provided to the person completing the form.

Copies Standard forms that have carbons may be photocopied to create the needed copies. The original form must have an original signature. Copies may have a photocopy of the signature.

SUBSTITUTE FORM APPROVAL PROCEDURE RIS must approve substitute forms. Agencies or vendors who develop forms packages must submit a complete printed set of the forms and a fully functional copy of the program to us for approval prior to actual use of the forms. We will issue approvals for 1-year periods in order to insure that the forms remain current. We will maintain a list of approvals. If a form is revised during the year, we will notify the substitute form developer of the revision and the deadline for revision of the program.

Requests for approval should be delivered or mailed to:

Retirement and Insurance Service
Agency Services Division
Room 4351
1900 E. St, NW
Washington DC 20415

Agencies who have developed, or plan to develop automated forms that are populated from internal automated systems, and/or can store input to a data base, should contact RIS for information on direct data transmission via disk, tape, telephone or the internet. Agencies may submit their plans to the address

shown above or call 202-606-0788.

Information about automated forms and automation initiatives underway in agencies can be found on the *OPM Mainstreet* Bulletin Board System (BBS). The BBS can be accessed by modem at 202-606-4800. The *Agency Automation Initiatives* forum is selection <D> on the forum menu.

LIST OF FORMS
AND SPECIAL
REQUIREMENTS

The attached tables list the forms and any special requirements. The forms listed may be used in CSRS and FERS retirement application packages or for any other purpose for which they were designed.



Mary M. Sugar, Chief
Agency Services Division
Retirement and Insurance Service

Attachment

Table 1. CSRS Applications	Special Requirements
SF 2800	Application For Death Benefits (CSRS). None.
SF 2800A	Agency Certification of Death In Service. None.
SF 2801	Application For Immediate Retirement - CSRS. If printed 2-sided, must be head-to-foot. May be printed 1-sided.
SF 2801-1	Information and Instructions for completing Application For Immediate Retirement - CSRS. If printed 2-sided, must be head-to-foot. May be printed 1-sided.
SF 2801-2	Spouse's Consent to Survivor Election. Must be printed 1-sided.
SF 2801-3	Election of Former Spouse Survivor Annuitant. Must be printed 1-sided.
SF 2801, Schedule A,B,C	Must be printed 1-sided.
SF 2801, Schedule D	If printed 2-sided, must be head-to-foot. May be printed 1-sided.
SF 2802	Application for Refund of Retirement Deductions. Must be printed on the same sheet as 2802B.
SF 2802B	Current/Former Spouse's Notification. Must be printed on the same sheet as 2802.
SF 2803	Application To Make Deposit Or Redeposit. None.
SF 2804	Application to Make Voluntary Contributions None
SF 2805	Request For Recovery Of Debt Due The United States Government. None.

Table 1 Continued.

CSRS Applications	Special Requirements
SF 2806-1	Notice Of Correction Of Individual Retirement Record. None.
SF 2808	Designation of Beneficiary - CSRS. None.
SF 2809	Health Benefits Registration Form None.
SF 2810	Notice Of Change In Health Benefits Enrollment. The instructions to Copy 1 (the Enrollee copy) must be on the reverse of Copy 1 or attached to it.
SF 2817	Life Insurance Election. Blue colored paper is preferred but not required. Must produce separately the front of Part 1 and Part 2 because they are not identical. The front of Part 3 may be photocopied. The instructions must be on the reverse of the part to which they apply, or attached to the part.
SF 2818	Continuation of Life Insurance Coverage. Blue colored paper is preferred but not required. Must print all 4 pages.
SF 2819	Notice Of Conversion Privilege. Blue colored paper is preferred but not required. Must print the form on the front and back of 1 page.
SF 2821	Agency Certification Of Insurance Status. Blue colored paper is preferred but not required. The instructions must be on the reverse of the part to which they apply, or attached to it.
SF 2823	Designation Of Beneficiary - FEGLI. Blue colored paper is preferred but not required. The instructions must be on the reverse of the part to which they apply, or attached to it.

Table 1 Continued.

CSRS Applications	Special Requirements
SF 3112	Documentation In Support of Disability Retirement Application. Sections of the form with no printing on the backs must be printed that way. The instructions must be on the reverse of the form to which they apply, or attached to it.
SF 3112-1	Information About Disability Retirement. None, but booklet must accompany SF 3112 used by CSRS Employees.
OPM Form 1510	Certification of Agency Offer of Position. None.
OPM Form 1515	Military Service Deposit Election. None.

Table 2. FERS Applications Special Requirements

NOTE: Buff colored paper is preferred, but not required, for all of the SF 3107 forms and schedules.

SF 2809)	
SF 2810)	
SF 2817)	
SF 2818 }==>	Same requirements as stipulated in Table 1.
SF 2819)	
SF 2821)	
SF 2823)	
SF 3107	Application For Immediate Retirement - FERS. None.
SF 3107-1	Certified Summary of Federal Service (FERS). None.
SF 3107-2	Spouse's Consent To Survivor Election - FERS. Must be printed 1-sided.
SF 3107, Schedule A,B,C	Must be printed 1-sided.
SF 3112	Documentation In Support of Disability Retirement Application. Sections of the form with no printing on the backs must be printed that way. The instructions must be on the reverse of the form to which they apply, or attached to it.
SF 3112-2	Information About Disability Retirement. None, but booklet must accompany SF 3112 used by FERS Employees.

Published in the Federal Register, Thursday, November 2, 1995, pages 55660 and 55661.

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

41 CFR Part 201-9

RIN 309-AF72

**Amendment to Revise FIRMR
Provisions Regarding the Standard and
Optional Forms Management Program**

AGENCY: Information Technology Service, GSA.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: This rule amends the Federal Information Resources Management Regulation (FIRMR) to simplify and clarify procedures related to the Standard and Optional Forms Management Program. Current procedures for this Program result in delays in the processing of forms requests, especially requests for exceptions to the use of Standard forms. This rule streamlines these processes and allows agencies to deal directly with the responsible parties regarding the issuance and printing of these forms. The specific changes in this rule include allowing agencies to obtain approval for an exception to the use of Standard forms directly from the promulgating agencies; and giving the promulgating agencies full responsibility for certifying their proposed forms comply with applicable laws and regulations, announcing the availability of new or revised Standard forms and providing GSA with an accurate camera ready copy of the forms.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This rule is effective December 4, 1995.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

R. Stewart Randall, GSA,
Office of Information Technology (IT)
Policy and Leadership, Center for IT
Policy and Regulations Management (KAR),
18th and F Streets, NW., Room 3224,
Washington, DC 20405,
telephone FTS/Commercial (202) 501-4469 (v) or
(202) 501-0469 (tdd).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: (1) Part 201-9.202 is amended to delegate additional authority and responsibility to agencies regarding the granting of exceptions to Standard

Forms. Currently, the FIRMR requires Federal agencies to submit a request for an exception to a Standard Form directly to GSA. GSA then reviews the exception request for conformance to good forms management practices. However, GSA also forwards the exception request directly to the promulgating agency for the agency's recommendation for approval or disapproval of the exception request. Since GSA and the promulgating agency typically agree on the disposition of an exception request, GSA believes it is more efficient to give promulgating agencies all authority for the exception request process. Accordingly, the requirement in section 201-9.202-1 paragraph (b)(2) for Federal agencies to obtain approval from GSA for exceptions to Standard forms is removed for the FIRMR. Instead, agencies will send their exception requests directly to the agency promulgating the Standard Form.

(2) Agencies typically request to establish standard forms because of a statutory or programmatic requirement. In the past, GSA conducted research to verify a requested form was consistent with the agency's authority and would meet the agency's requirements. GSA now will accept agencies' certification that their new or revised forms requirements are legally required and technically adequate. This change eliminates GSA duplicating work already performed by, the agency. Agencies will also be required to announce the availability of their new or revised forms in the Federal Register and provide GSA an accurate camera ready copy of the new or revised form. GSA will no longer verify the accuracy of the camera ready copy. Agencies are given full authority and responsibility to ensure the accuracy of their copies; just as they are with other aspects of establishing new or revised forms. These changes are reflected in § 201-9.202-1 paragraphs (b)(4) and (b)(6). GSA will continue to publish a list of all Standard and Optional forms in its Inventory of Standard and Optional Forms and facsimiles of all forms in its Standard and Optional Forms Facsimile Handbook.

(3) Several format and editorial changes are also being made to § 201-9.202-1 to reflect the new operating environment of the forms program. Also, this amendment reflects a change in the responsibility for the Standard and Optional Forms Management Program from the Center for IT Policy and Regulations Management (KAR) to the Forms Management Branch (CARM) due to the transfer of program responsibility within GSA. FIRMR Bulletin B-3 has also been revised to reflect the above changes.

(4) GSA has determined that this rule is not a significant rule for the purposes of Executive Order 12866 of September 30, 1993, because it is not likely to result in any of the impacts noted in Executive Order 12866, affect the rights of specified individuals, or raise issues arising from the policies of the Administration. GSA has based all administrative decisions underlying this rule on adequate information concerning the need for the consequences of this rule; has determined that **the potential benefits** to society from this rule outweigh the potential costs; has maximized the net benefits; and has chosen the alternative approach involving the least net cost of society.

List of Subjects in 41 CFR Part 201-9

Archives and records, Computer technology, Telecommunications, Government procurement, Property management, Records management, and Federal information processing resources activities.

For the reasons set forth in the preamble, GSA proposes to amend 41 CFR part 201-9 as follows:

**PART 201-9--CREATING,
MAINTENANCE, AND USE OF RECORDS**

1. The authority citation for part 201-9 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 40 U.S.C. 486(c) and 751(f).

2. Section 201-9.202-1 is revised to read as follows:

§ 201-9.202-1 Standard and Optional Forms Management Program.

(a) *General.* (1) The Standard and Optional Forms Management Program was established to achieve Governmentwide economies and efficiencies through the development, maintenance and use of common forms.

(2) FIRMR Bulletin B-3 contains additional guidance on the Standard and Optional Forms Management Program.

(b) *Procedures.* Each Federal agency shall--

(1) Designate an agency-level Standard and Optional Forms Liaison Representative and Alternate, and notify GSA in writing of such designees' names, titles, mailing addresses, and telephone numbers within 30 days of the designation or redesignation at the address in paragraph (b)(4) of this section;

(2) Promulgate Governmentwide Standard Forms pursuant to the agency's statutory or regulatory authority and issue in the Federal Register Governmentwide procedures on the mandatory use, revision, or cancellation of these forms;

(3) Sponsor Governmentwide Optional Forms when needed in two or more agencies and announce the Governmentwide availability, revision, or cancellation of these forms;

(4) Request GSA approval for each new, revised or canceled Standard and Optional Form, 60 days prior to planned implementation, and certify that the forms comply with all applicable laws and regulations. Send approval requests to: General Services

Administration, Forms Management Branch (CARM), Washington, DC 20405;

- (5) Provide GSA with a camera ready copy of the Standard and Optional Forms the agency promulgates or sponsors prior to implementation, at the address shown in paragraph (b)(4) of this section;
- (6) Obtain promulgator's or sponsor's approval for all exceptions to Standard and Optional Forms prior to implementation;
- (7) Annually review all Standard and Optional Forms which the agency promulgates or sponsors, including exceptions, for improvement, consolidation, or cancellation;
- (8) When requested by GSA and OMB, submit a summary of the Standard and Optional Forms used for collection of information covered by 5 CFR part 1320;
- (9) Request approval to overprint Standard and Optional Forms by contacting GSA (CARM); and
- (10) Coordinate all matters concerning health care related Standard Forms through the Interagency Committee on Medical Records (ICMR). For additional information on the ICMR, contact GSA (CARM).

Dated: October 24, 1995.

Roger W. Johnson,
Administrator of General Services.
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