



Florida Department of Revenue

---

# **Workforce Transition**

## **Workforce Reduction Employee Notification Process**

### **Supervisor Training Guide**

Florida Department of Revenue  
October 2011

# INTRODUCTION

---

Informing an employee that he or she will no longer have a job with the State is a difficult task and must be handled in a professional and caring manner. If done well, people will feel that they have been treated with dignity and their self-esteem has been protected. Equally important, they will leave the organization feeling as positive as possible and focused on their future challenge of gaining re-employment.

To accomplish these objectives, Revenue's senior leadership developed a strategy and plan for workforce transition. They considered three primary areas: the business needs, the human needs and the state personnel rules. Now that this plan is in place, the focus should be on how the plan is implemented with consideration for the human factor. Treating adversely affected employees professionally and with compassion is of the utmost importance. Additionally, treating all employees with sensitivity ensures morale, commitment, productivity, and retention are not adversely affected in the long-term.

This guide has been established to assist directors, managers, and supervisors with the information and resources to prepare for and conduct employee separation notifications for adversely affected employees, and effectively manage the environment for remaining employees.

The guide will focus on the following objectives:

## Notification Meeting Objectives for the State:

- Minimize negative impact on employees leaving and staying
- Conduct concise, yet compassionate, separation meetings

## Notification Meeting Objectives for the Employee:

- Hears and understands the message as it is intended
- Retains dignity throughout the process
- Knows what to do next

# CONDUCTING THE NOTIFICATION MEETING

## Delivering the Message

The entire meeting should take no more than 10-15 minutes.

- Keep the message brief (2-5 minutes).
- Explain the business decision or situation and the reason for the elimination of the employee's position.
- Provide the employment end date.
- Make sure the employee understands there are no alternatives and the decision is not negotiable.
- Express regret and avoid small talk and personal conversations.

Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask the person to sit down</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Say how are you?, good to see you, etc.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use your prepared message - get to the point</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to make light of the situation or use humor</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be very clear about the action taken. Do not hesitate or add your own words</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apologize, make excuses, or say you disagree with the message</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affirm the current situation (why), what is happening (layoff), and when it will happen</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have conversations (business or personal), or make small talk</li> </ul>

## Provide Next Steps

Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarify the official final work date</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a long meeting</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the information package (materials) with the employee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make promises you cannot keep</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate transition services available through Revenue</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review all logistics for leaving the State, including equipment and materials that belong to the State: laptops, keys, badges. Use the supervisor checklist provided</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain expectations and duties during transition period. Always provide choices where possible.</li> </ul>	

You can state that you appreciate and understand the employee's feelings and that you and the agency are very sorry these actions had to be taken. *Empathy and understanding go a long way.* If you speak softly and with genuine concern, most employees will appreciate your sincere approach. After your opening statement, expect employees to have an array of reactions and emotions, some more difficult to handle than others. They will probably question the reasoning behind the workforce reduction/layoff, so you will need to be prepared with responses and answers. The remainder of this document will assist you with these difficult communications.

# MANAGING EMPLOYEE REACTIONS & EMOTIONS

## Anticipate typical and possible reactions

Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be sure to listen attentively to the employee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Try to justify the business decision, management's actions or your involvement. Don't defend either the State or the employee or argue with the employee</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wait for the employee's response before proceeding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss other employees, whether they are part of the layoff or not</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If needed, restate the message</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use platitudes or superfluous remarks</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not add your interpretation or comments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimize or devalue the situation, or offer false expectations</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide structure for the process and the employee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Side with the employee</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide general information about employees who have been adversely affected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide specific information about which other employees have been adversely affected</li> </ul>

## PROBABLE EMPLOYEE REACTIONS

Every employee will respond in some way; however, there are four typical reactions when employees are informed of a job loss: **Constructive/Realistic, Anger, Shock, and Denial/Control.**

### Response: Constructive/Realistic

Employee	Supervisor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows limited emotional display</li> <li>Shows disappointment</li> <li>Expresses realistic acceptance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver the message</li> <li>Answer questions related to the employee only</li> <li>Provide necessary information and clarity regarding next steps</li> </ul>

### Response: Anger

Employee	Supervisor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Challenges the supervisor</li> <li>Verbally abuses the supervisor</li> <li>Expresses negative comments about the state and the situation</li> <li>Escalates to aggression</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remain calm</li> <li>Do not argue, become defensive or threaten</li> <li>Allow the employee the opportunity to vent</li> <li>Let the employee know you heard them</li> <li>Provide time for the employee to regain composure</li> <li>Listen for rational questions, such as, "What are my next steps, or what are my options?" as a sign that they have their anger under control</li> <li>End the meeting and coordinate assisting the employee with the next phase, meeting, or to exit the building</li> </ul>

## Response: Shock

Employee	Supervisor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No outward reaction</li><li>• Blank expression or stare</li><li>• Silent, no response to the message</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide the employee the time and opportunity to internalize the message</li><li>• Allow the employee the opportunity to express emotion</li><li>• Provide structure and support through next steps: explanation of benefits, Career Center support, etc.</li><li>• Unusual reactions should be reported to Human Resources at 850-617-8370.</li><li>• Use silence to allow the employee to process the information and situation</li></ul>

## Response: Denial/Control

Employee	Supervisor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Unemotional, flat, or too controlled</li><li>• Expresses relief</li><li>• In control, but denying the situation or reality</li><li>• Extremely distressed and distraught when reality sets in</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure understanding of the message, if in doubt, repeat or restate the information</li><li>• Have the employee restate what they heard</li><li>• State that the layoff is not negotiable</li><li>• Manage the employee's anxiety by reviewing next steps</li><li>• Contact Human Resources if unusual reactions</li><li>• Do not try to assist the employee in processing their emotions. Offer the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or other assistance if applicable</li></ul>

## MANAGER'S PREPARATION

---

- ❑ Obtain details — a business reason, effective termination date — from Human Resources or appropriate agency source.
- ❑ Reserve a private space in which to conduct the separation notification meeting.
- ❑ Anticipate employee reactions and plan your responses. Determine ahead of time any potential needs or personal situations that adversely affected employees may be experiencing that will make this news additionally traumatic, i.e. divorce, serious medical condition, recent death in the family, etc.
- ❑ Develop or review procedures for dealing with medical emergencies. Keep emergency phone numbers ready.

- ❑ Consider those who have carpoled or use public transportation; make sure alternatives have been considered for getting these employees home if necessary.
- ❑ Obtain Information Package and information from Human Resources and review it. Familiarize yourself with the transition services available to assist the employees. These will be in the information packet for adversely affected employees and the Workforce Transition website at [https://learn.state.fl.us/cpdhub/WF\\_Transition/](https://learn.state.fl.us/cpdhub/WF_Transition/). The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available to adversely affected employees up to 90 days after the employee leaves the payroll. (EAP services are also available to remaining employees and supervisors to assist through the transition.)
- ❑ Ensure the separation checklist is completed.

## **MANAGER'S FINAL PREPARATION**

---

Know this is a time of stress and preparing and implementing layoffs can be very difficult on managers and supervisors. It is recommended to take some time to take care of you.

- Know that it is natural and human to be concerned and nervous.
- Be aware of your emotions; this helps you stay calm. Take steps to reassure and calm yourself so you can deal effectively with employees.
- Come to terms with the business decision in order to deliver the message effectively and consistently.
- Remember that career transition support is being provided to the separating employees.
- Recognize when you need support and seek appropriate counsel.