The Extension Program Assistant*: Policy, Roles and Responsibilities

K-State Research and Extension

Program assistants play a vital role in K-State Research and Extension's expansion and implementation of educational programming for Kansas citizens. Program assistants are para-professionals who may be employed by county extension councils, district governing bodies, or by campus departments. They are generally employed for a specific time frame and for the completion of well-defined program objectives. The employing entity provides salary, benefits, and travel expenses associated with the responsibilities of the position.

At the county, district or multi-county level, program assistant positions are to be developed by the extension council executive board or district governing body in partnership with the area extension director. At the campus level, the program assistant position is developed by a K-State Research and Extension faculty member in partnership with the appropriate department head.

Following is specific information related to the employment of program assistants by counties or districts. Policies and procedures for the employment of program assistants by campus departments are available from that department.

1) The county extension council executive board or district governing body and the area extension director will meet together to define the responsibilities of the program assistant position. An *Approval to Employ an Extension Program Assistant* (Form EXOP3-5) will be signed by both parties.

2) The program assistant reports to an extension agent for their responsibilities and performance. The executive board or governing body and area director should be kept informed of the progress toward assigned responsibilities. A performance review is to be conducted at the end of the first three months of employment and at least annually thereafter.

3) The program assistant's responsibilities are to be specifically focused with well-defined objectives and a targeted audience. In contrast, an extension agent gives leadership to a comprehensive educational program directed to a wide variety of the citizens of the county/district.

4) Program assistants who work more than 1000 hours annually are eligible for the Kansas Employees Public Retirement System and the State of Kansas Health Insurance program if the local council/district provides these benefits.

5) Program assistant positions are non-exempt from the Fair Labor Standards Act and thus the assistant will be paid an hourly wage and overtime or compensatory time for any hours worked over 40 in a workweek.

6) It is recommended that the minimum educational requirement for a program assistant position be a high school diploma or associate degree.

7) Professional development for the program assistant is to be offered by and/or through the supervising agent.

8) Program assistants may, at the discretion of the county director and other agents, co-sign correspondence but the agent to which the assistant reports, must also sign the correspondence.

* Contact the Family Nutrition Program staff for details regarding FNP program assistant position.