

SUBSCRIBE



In-The-Know Monthly eNewsletter

The Official Personnel Folder

By: Vanessa Craddock, Federal Benefits Specialist
October, 2016

What is the most important thing you want from retirement? If you're like most people, your answer is "enough money to live well." The most likely indicator that your Federal pension will help you meet this goal will be the length of Federal service. The source of documentation that records your Federal service and is available for review is called your official personnel folder (OPF).

OPM issues government wide guidance on documenting each individual's Federal employment. OPM and your agency Human Resources (HR) offices use these documents to make decisions about your rights and benefits throughout your Federal career. The guidance handbooks from OPM provide instructions to HR officers on preparing personnel actions and properly keeping the OPF.

The official personal folder is stored at your current employing agency and includes a number of important records. Former employees will find their OPF stored at the National Personnel Records Center, 1411 Boulder Boulevard, Valmeyer IL 62295.

The documents that are filed in the OPF will:

1. Show your valid Federal appointments
2. Verify your military service credit for leave purposes, for reduction-in-force purposes and for retirement purposes
3. Establish your employment history: your grades, occupations, pay (ex: SF 50's or notifications of personnel actions)
4. Record your choices under the Federal benefits programs, such as the health insurance, life insurance, designation of beneficiary forms, etc.

At the end of Federal service when you retire, OPM uses the information from your OPF to determine total government service. That information is then provided to OPM on a certified summary form prepared by your personnel office that is either SF 2801-1 (CSRS) or SF 3107-1 (FERS).

For years these important documents in the OPF were paper, but in recent years the Federal government has moved to implement an electronic version. This electronic version is called the eOPF or electronic official personnel folder. The purpose is to provide employees with easier, faster access to their personnel documents.

The eOPF system is an automated solution to manage the documenting process and allows employees to have access to their personnel forms and information through the internet. Benefits to having your OPF converted to an electronic format include:

1. Viewing/printing documents from your eOPF at any time using the internet. You won't have to request your file and wait for it to become available in your HR office.
2. Monitoring your own records which ensures greater accuracy and integrity.
3. Allowing you to elect to receive email notifications each time a document is added to your eOPF.
4. Providing a system more secure than paper, that has a longer shelf-life and enables back-up and recovery capability.
5. Paying lower costs associated with storage, maintenance, and retrieval of records.

Documents in the eOPF are the same as those in the paper OPF, and there is a "master list" of what should be there. They are classified as either long term or temporary documents.

Long term documents are kept for the life of the folder. These are filed in chronological order by date on the right side of the folder (if paper) and on the permanent side if electronic. Examples of these documents would be: resumes, SCD computation dates, veteran's preference, standard forms: 171, 172, 2809, 2810, 2817, 2812, 3102, 50's (to name a few).

Temporary or short term documents are kept on the left side of the folder (or temporary side of the eOPF). The temporary side would have documents showing realignments, recruitment bonuses, relocation bonuses, award actions (to name a few).

The officials allowed to access your OPF are: your servicing HR specialists, eOPF systems administrators and systems support personnel. An audit trail records when and why an eOPF has been reviewed.

Your responsibility at retirement is to sign off on the final summary forms, SF 2801-1 or SF 3107-1 and review for accuracy. Your OPF is therefore very important. Be sure to monitor it!

Ms. Craddock is retired from OPM; her last position was as Senior Federal Benefits Specialist. She designed, developed and instructed a variety of courses: CSRS and FERS Employee Benefits, technical training for health benefits and life insurance, disability retirement and worker's compensation. She also provided briefings for Benefits Officers' Conferences on Disability Retirement. She has been a presenter for NITP since 2000.