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Source: Don Cheney

### **What Happened to Pre-Retirement Counseling?**

Did you notice that the Voluntary Early Retirement (VER) paperwork does not include a phone number to call with retirement questions? The USPS VER website says PLEASE: DON'T CALL HRSSC and omits their phone number. HRSSC's phone number is not listed anywhere in the mailed out VER packets. HRSSC's phone number is not posted on bulletin boards in my office. Is it posted in yours?

HRSSC supposedly took over individual pre-retirement counseling from local personnel offices beginning in 2005. About 800 personnel jobs were eliminated nationwide. Wait times for people who do find the phone number are as long as two hours. When they get through, they are told to wait until HRSSC contacts them or to search online for the information. Requests for annuity estimates like the FERS Special Retirement Supplement are ignored. The FERS annuity supplement is a substantial amount for someone between their Minimum Retirement Age (MRA) and age 62.

Retirement counseling for a so-called "voluntary" early retirement is now AFTER a person applies for retirement on SF 3107 (FERS) or SF 2801 (CSRS). This contradicts OPM's instructions to agencies in the CSRS and FERS Handbook for Personnel and Payroll Offices, available on OPM's website. In past VERs a person filed a Statement of Interest by a deadline, received retirement counseling and then applied on the forms provided if still interested. The deadline to withdraw in previous VERs was four days before the effective retirement date, well AFTER a person received retirement counseling and had time to think about their decision. To deny a person's request to withdraw their early retirement application in these circumstances is COERCIVE and unlike previous VERs in the USPS.

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