

Why GAO Did This Study

To improve its ability to recruit and retain federal employees, agencies have implemented a wide range of work/life programs, such as flexible work schedules, child care, and employee assistance programs. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) plays a key role in guiding federal human capital initiatives, including the implementation of work/life programs. As requested, GAO determined the extent to which:

(1) OPM provides assistance and guidance to federal agencies for establishing and enhancing work/life programs; (2) OPM or the federal agencies track, evaluate, or modify work/life programs; and (3) OPM has identified leading practices in the private sector for the implementation of work/life programs and shared this information with federal agencies. To do this, GAO reviewed OPM policy and guidance; surveyed 40 federal officials—20 Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) and 20 work/life managers; and interviewed officials from seven private sector companies recognized for the quality of their work/life programs.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that OPM assist agencies in implementing their work/life programs by more systematically tracking and evaluating data on the implementation and evaluation of work/life programs and sharing this information with federal agencies. OPM agreed with GAO's recommendations and suggested technical changes which GAO has incorporated as appropriate.

View [GAO-11-137](#) or key components. For more information, contact Yvonne Jones at (202) 512-6806 or jonesy@gao.gov.

FEDERAL WORK/LIFE PROGRAMS

Agencies Generally Satisfied with OPM Assistance, but More Tracking and Information Needed

What GAO Found

OPM's Office of Work/Life/Wellness is available to federal agencies to provide assistance, guidance, and information as agencies develop and implement work/life programs. For example, OPM has established formal working groups, sponsored training for agency officials, promulgated regulations to implement work/life programs, and provided informal guidance to agencies that address issues related to these programs. Of the 33 agency officials who responded to GAO's survey, 24 indicated that OPM's assistance, guidance, and information sharing greatly helped or helped somewhat in implementing work/life programs. Another six agency officials indicated that OPM's assistance, guidance, and information sharing helped in some cases and hindered in others.

OPM tracks and collects information on a few work/life programs across the federal government, including health and wellness programs which it recently began tracking in response to a White House initiative. Some federal agencies independently provide OPM with evaluations on other work/life programs. However, when asked, OPM officials said that they did not track or maintain an inventory of these evaluations nor review these evaluations due to the lack of time and available resources. Tracking, analyzing, and sharing information among federal agencies on the effect of work/life programs on agency-intended goals could be helpful for individual agency decision making in a budget-constrained environment.

To follow up on the White House health and wellness initiative, OPM held several meetings and conferences with representatives from private sector companies to discuss their health and wellness programs and the effect of these programs on recruitment and retention. Although OPM has developed a health and wellness pilot program based on some of the information obtained from these meetings and conferences, OPM has not systematically shared with federal agencies other information about the private sector's health and wellness programs or other work/life programs. GAO also interviewed officials from seven private sector companies recognized for the quality of their work/life programs to identify leading practices in implementing private sector work/life programs. Private sector officials from four of the seven companies that GAO interviewed indicated that their programs have been effective in increasing employee job satisfaction, resulting in improved recruitment, retention, and workforce productivity. Systematically collecting and disseminating information on the implementation and evaluation of private sector work/life programs could help federal agencies compare their work/life programs with leading practices in the private sector.