

CHAPTER 712 - EMPLOYEE ORGANIZATIONS AND ACTIVITIES SUBCHAPTER 1 - EMPLOYEE GROUPS

1-1. GENERAL

*Employees, under the criteria in 1-2 below, may form employee groups within the USDA to promote the social, health, welfare, employment or recreational interests of Department employees. Membership is open to all those who share an interest in the group's purpose. Employee groups meeting the criteria do not require official recognition or approval.

1-2. CRITERIA FOR FORMATION

- a. They must not practice or advocate discrimination based upon race, creed, color, sex, national origin, age, handicap, marital status or political affiliation.
- b. They must not have a sectarian or partisan political purpose nor may they have as a major purpose the advocacy of legislation.
- c. They must be composed predominantly of Department employees.
- d. Their by-laws or constitution must provide for at least an annual auditing of the group's finances.

1-3. DEPARTMENT SERVICES

Employee groups meeting the criteria may, under regulations and procedures established by the Office of Operations and Finance, use Department services such as meeting places, distribution of printed material through the mail and messenger service and use of bulletin boards.

Employee organizations recognized or regulated by the following FPM and DPM Chapters are excluded from the coverage of this Chapter:

(1) Chapter 251 - Associations of Supervisors and Managers.

(2) Chapter 252 - Professional Organizations.

1-4. EXCLUSIONS

(3) Chapter 711 - Labor Organizations.

1-5. OFFICIAL TIME

Employees are not entitled to official time or administrative leave to participate in meetings or functions of employee groups. Employees attending meetings or functions held during duty hours must make arrangements for approved annual leave or leave without pay with their supervisors. *

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SUBCHAPTER 2 - DEPARTMENT AND AGENCY EMPLOYEE WELFARE AND RECREATION ASSOCIATIONS

2-1. GENERAL

*Department and Agency employee welfare and recreation associations are formed to promote the social interests of Department employees. These associations are open to all employees within the organization and work to promote better acquaintance among the employees. Associations meeting the criteria of 2-2 below do not require official recognition or approval.

2-2. CRITERIA FOR FORMATION

- a. They must not practice or advocate discrimination based upon race, creed, color, sex, national origin, age, handicap, marital status or political affiliation.
- b. The associations' finances must be audited and published at least annually.

2-3. DEPARTMENT SERVICES

- a. Associations meeting the criteria may use the Department services under the conditions established under Subchapter 1-3.
- b. Associations may use the name of the Department or Agency in its name if it is made clear that the association is not an official organization of the Department.

2-4. OFFICIAL TIME

- a. Official time is authorized for employees when attending association meetings or functions officially approved by the Department or Agency. Such functions could include association-sponsored awards ceremonies or other Department or Agency-wide functions.
- b. Official time must be approved by the employee's supervisor.*

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SUBCHAPTER 3 - USDA CLUBS

3-1. PURPOSE

The USDA Clubs have a definite official purpose in the program of the Department of Agriculture. They will aid the employees of the Department to improve their services to the public.

3-2. POLICY

It is the policy of the Department to give every encouragement to the activities of the USDA Clubs.

3-3. OPERATING PROCEDURE

a. Club Meeting and Tours

Employees broaden their understanding of the program of the Department as a whole through monthly club meetings at which local officials discuss new phases of their work. Regional and Washington officials meet with clubs frequently to cover some of the broader aspects of national programs. Occasional tours are conducted through laboratories, offices, and meat-packing plants to give employees an opportunity to observe some of the Department's work. Farmers are invited to tell of ways in which they feel the Department might better aid them in solving some of their problems.

b. Public Service

Club participation has developed an employee consciousness of the need to become familiar with the varied services of the Department in order to become better public servants. Employees whose work brings them into daily personal contact with the public have taken the leadership in providing those whose contact is less direct or less frequent with the knowledge and desire to represent the Department properly when dealing with the public. A large number of clubs have issued directories of local USDA Club activities to facilitate the proper handling of public inquiries.

c. Publicity Aids

Some clubs have conducted public-speaking courses for employees who are called upon to discuss their work before local civic groups. Others

have developed skits involving activities of several agencies to depict the work being carried on by the Department. Quiz programs have been arranged to further acquaint employees with the work of agencies headquartered in the club area.

d. Committees on In-Service Training

Most clubs have appointed training and education committees which stimulate interest of employees in the Department's in-service training programs available through the agencies.

e. Committees on Employee Welfare

Employee welfare committees bring to the individual employee those facilities which contribute to his/her health and happiness on the job. Group health and hospitalization, cooperative buying, rental services, and varied recreational facilities are made available according to local needs.

t. Recognition Programs

USDA Clubs may in cooperation with the local agency or agencies concerned, arrange programs for the conferring of honor awards or other recognition, when appropriate.

3-4. USE OF OFFICIAL TIME

The use of limited official time for club meetings is justified, since the USDA Clubs are recognized as an integral part of management's program to improve the efficiency of Department employees. Official time must be approved by the employee's supervisor. All employees are urged to participate in club meetings as part of their official work.

3-5. SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Sponsorship of occasional social activities is an important part of club programs and helps to further overall objectives. Such functions, of course, are held outside official working hours.