

OPM Director Relaxes Long-Term Care Insurance Rule to Avoid Disruption of Employees' Holiday Vacations

Washington, D.C. - In the spirit of the Holiday Season, U.S. Office of Personnel Management Director Kay Coles James has said "bah, hum-bug" to a rule within the Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program that had the potential to interfere with employees' holiday vacation plans.

The rule, which James relaxed during the current Open Season, had required employees to be "actively at work" on Tuesday, December 31, 2002, if their coverage under the long-term care insurance program is scheduled to take effect on January 1, 2003.

As a result of James' action, employees must only be actively at work at some point during January for coverage to take effect on January 1, 2003.

In relaxing the rule, James took into consideration the holiday vacation plans of a significant number of federal employees.

"I could not justify interfering with the vacations of employees, many of whom travel during the holidays to visit with family and friends," said James. "Compliance with this rule would have been unrealistic and burdensome for many, many people."

Relaxation of the rule also applies for employees who were required to be actively at work on November 29, 2002, for insurance coverage that was effective December 1. Under the relaxed rule, employees must be at work at some point during December.

Long-Term Care Partners, LLC, the company that underwrites the Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program, has concurred with Director James' decision.

The Open Season for the Federal Employees Long Term Care Insurance Program ends December 31. During the open season, federal employees and retirees, active and retired members of the uniformed services, and certain relatives can apply for coverage. Through 2002, current employees and active members of the uniformed services can apply with abbreviated underwriting.

To apply online for the Federal Employees Long Term Care Insurance Program, individuals should access www.ltcfeds.com. To request an application by telephone, call 1-800-582-3337.

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OPM oversees the federal work force and provides the American public with up-to-date employment information. OPM also supports U.S. agencies with personnel services and policy leadership including staffing tools, guidance on labor - management relations and programs to improve work force performance.

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