

Local Unit Professional Scheduling Policy

Definition: Professional scheduling is defined as the privilege and responsibility of controlling one's work schedule to best achieve the responsibilities of the position and meet the needs of constituents, while achieving a balance of professional and personal time that is productive and healthy for the organization and the individual.

Situation: K-State Extension agents develop and extend knowledge from the university campus to the people of Kansas. Often the nature of the educational event or research activity and/or the availability of constituents necessitate faculty to work during lunch hours, evenings and weekends and outside a normal office environment. Flexibility in work time is essential for successful extension programming. K-State Extension supports agents in their role as family members and active participants in their communities and recognizes that these kinds of responsibilities may take them away from the workplace during routine office hours. In today's electronic age of smart phones and tablet computers, agents are rarely completely separated from their work. Consequently, agents cannot always consistently separate their work demands from their personal life. Rather, agents must often blend the two, and it is the responsibility of the agent to manage their work/life integration.

Principles for Implementation of Professional Scheduling:

1. K-State Extension agents are accountable for fulfilling the responsibilities of their positions. As professionals, they are entrusted with the flexibility of planning their work schedules subject to the policies below while also meeting the minimum expectations of their position.
2. Controlling one's schedule to best meet the needs of clients, while achieving a balance in work and personal time, is not only healthy for the individual, it is healthy for K-State Extension.
3. Due to the nature of their responsibilities as educators, extension agents are exempt from the Fair Labor Standards Act. Therefore, they do not get paid overtime or compensatory time for weeks exceeding 40 working hours. Unlike compensatory time, professional scheduling is not designed to compensate hour for hour for time worked over 40 hours in a workweek. Professional scheduling is not the same as "flex time" since agents do not have defined work hours.
4. Hourly staff who work for the local unit, such as office professionals and program assistants, are non-exempt employees, are eligible for compensatory time, and are expected to work up to 40 hours per week during established office hours. Office support staff play an important role in the organization by making sure the office is open and someone is available to greet the public during normal office hours when an agent may not be available.
5. There is an expectation that agents will spend at least 40 hours per week in the fulfillment of their responsibilities. As professionals, agents will at times be required to invest more than 40 hours per week to maintain and expand their educational and/or research programs. If an agent is consistently working more than 40 hours per week, it is their responsibility to prioritize and delegate tasks to achieve greater work/life satisfaction.
6. Professional scheduling is a privilege that may be suspended if it is abused or used with no regard to the needs of the organization.

7. Agent performance is a top priority. Professional scheduling is intended to support and strengthen performance. Professional scheduling is not an issue tied to performance appraisal unless abuse results in unsatisfactory or poor program performance or improper personal conduct that disrupts the office environment.

Implementation: K-State Extension administration supports agents in meeting their professional responsibilities while practicing professional scheduling within these guidelines:

1. Professional scheduling should be practiced at the mutual convenience of the organization and the individual. This professional scheduling policy gives agents the flexibility to take care of personal commitments during office hours when necessary.
2. Agents should keep office support staff apprised of their work schedule and should be reasonably responsive to phone calls, texts, and emails when working away from the office during regular office hours. Professional courtesy requires that Extension personnel communicate with their office/unit team in advance about their work schedule and when they will be using professional scheduling.
3. It is NOT the intent of professional scheduling to allow the accumulation of time. Professional scheduling is to be practiced on a day-to-day and week-to-week basis and is not intended to result in the accumulation of large blocks of time.
4. Leave of four or more hours is to be documented as vacation or sick leave and reported bi-weekly to the designated office professional or supervisor in either four hour or eight-hour increments. The use of professional scheduling does not need to be officially documented.
5. Extension support staff within the office or unit should understand the concept of professional scheduling, be informed when agents are using it to balance their work schedule, and develop an informed, professional, sensitive, and considerate response if asked where agents are or what they are doing. The office should develop a plan that describes how to respond to walk-ins and phone calls intended for an agent who is utilizing professional scheduling.
6. Agents should be aware that members of the public may not be aware of, or understand, professional scheduling. In exercising professional scheduling, extension professionals must be sensitive to public perceptions and expectations regarding public employees. For example, scheduling personal hours regularly on Friday afternoons, Monday mornings or just before or after a holiday may create a negative perception. Use of professional scheduling during these times is not prohibited but should be carefully considered and justified. Conversely, community members should understand that while agents have a vested interest in the success of the organization, working too many hours does not contribute to the organization's bottom line and is likely to result in burnout.
7. If an agent feels his/her management of professional scheduling is being questioned for inappropriate reasons, the agent may contact the next level supervisor for consultation and guidance.
8. The professional scheduling policy should be reviewed with the local unit board at the beginning of each year.