

## **The Extension Program Assistant: Policy, Roles and Responsibilities**

Program assistants play a vital role in K-State Research and Extension's expansion and implementation of educational programming for Kansas residents. Program assistants are para-professionals who may be employed by local extension boards. They are generally employed for a specific time frame and for the completion of well-defined program objectives. The employing entity provides salary, benefits, and travel expenses associated with the responsibilities of the position.

At the local level, program assistant positions are to be developed by the extension board in partnership with the area extension director.

Following is specific information related to the employment of program assistants by local units.

- 1) The local extension board and the area extension director will meet together to define the responsibilities of the program assistant position. An *Approval to Employ an Extension Program Assistant* (EXOP 3-5) will be signed by both parties.
- 2) The program assistant reports to the local unit director and/or an agent for their responsibilities and performance. The board and area director should be kept informed of the progress toward assigned responsibilities. A performance review is to be conducted at the end of the first three months of employment and at least annually thereafter.
- 3) The program assistant's responsibilities are to be specifically focused with well-defined objectives and a targeted audience. In contrast, an extension agent gives leadership to a comprehensive educational program directed to a wide variety of the residents of the county or district.
- 4) Program assistants who work more than 1000 hours annually are eligible for the Kansas Employees Public Retirement System and the State of Kansas Health Insurance program if the local board provides these benefits.
- 5) Program assistant positions are non-exempt from the overtime provision of the Fair Labor Standards Act and thus the assistant will be paid an hourly wage and overtime or compensatory time for any hours worked over 40 in a workweek.
- 6) It is recommended that the minimum educational requirement for a program assistant position be a high school diploma or associate degree.
- 7) Appropriate professional development for the program assistant is to be arranged through the supervising agent.