

June 14, 2001

TO: All NIH Employees

FROM: Director of Human Resources

SUBJECT: Excused Absence for Preventive Health Screenings

On January 4, 2001, the White House issued an executive memorandum directing agencies to review their policies and make maximum use of existing work schedule and leave flexibilities to allow Federal employees to take full advantage of health screening programs and other effective preventive health measures. Such flexibilities include promoting alternative work schedules (flexible and compressed work schedules), granting leave under the Federal Government's sick and annual leave programs and granting excused absence to employees to participate in agency-sponsored preventive health activities. In addition, in the case of an employee with fewer than 80 hours (2 weeks) of accrued sick leave, the President directed agencies to establish a policy that provides up to 4 hours of excused absence each year for participation in preventive health screenings. Examples of "preventive health screenings" include, but are not limited to, screening for prostate, cervical, colorectal and breast cancer, and screening for sickle cell anemia, blood lead level and blood cholesterol level. Other examples include screening for immunity system disorders such as HIV and blood sugar level testing for diabetes.

In response to numerous inquiries concerning this directive, the Office of Personnel Management has prepared "Questions and Answers" on the new excused absence policy for preventive health screenings and this information is available on their web site, <http://www.opm.gov/ehs/qsas.htm#eligible>. For further clarification, please contact your NIH Institute or Center Personnel Office.

We urge all employees to use all available resources, including this new directive, to understand their risks for disease, obtain preventive health services and therefore make healthy lifestyle choices.

/s - Eddie Ribas for/

Stephen C. Benowitz