

# Hiring Program Assistants

EFNEP uses the paraprofessional (PA) model for hiring. PAs (or Program Assistants) are usually local residents who live near the population being taught; have neither previous training or teaching experience, nor nutrition background; are trained in basic food and nutrition topics by extension nutrition specialists; and are supervised by county extension staff.

It is important that the overall program remains the responsibility of County Faculty because he or she is uniquely associated with the University of Florida. This brings with it credibility in working with Extension-related groups, government leaders, and other clientele. In addition, Faculty possess academic subject-matter expertise and may have training in the social sciences.

So what exactly is a paraprofessional? The prefix para comes from the Greek word meaning beside - as in working beside a professional. The paraprofessional is an extension of and responsible to county faculty - not a replacement.

This document takes you through everything you need to know about hiring Program Assistants. First is a brief description of the steps involved. More detailed information will be found throughout this document.

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## Steps in the Process



1. **Decide to hire:** This should be a collaborative decision between you, your County and District Directors, and the State Office. To determine if you are able to hire at this time, the State Office will look at the available budget for EFNEP and the poverty statistics for your county.
2. **Director Approval:** Get your County Director and District Director to approve the decision to hire with Request to Fill Position. Once the Directors sign the form, it will be forwarded to the State Office.
3. **Get a Position Number:** Once Request to Fill Position is received at the State Office, an Office Assistant will contact you with a position number for advertising the vacancy.
4. **Advertise and interview.**
5. **Submit Paperwork:** Submit hiring packet with Request to Hire to County Director, District Director, and finally to State Office.
6. **Starting Date:** The State Office will contact you with an official starting date and salary, which will be approximately two weeks after the complete hiring packet arrives.

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### Step 1: Deciding to Hire

As part of your decision to hire a Program Assistant, you need to decide if you want an OPS or TEAMS employee.

For OPS employees, advertising, hiring, and termination procedures are much less stringent than TEAMS procedures, which are formal and strict. OPS employees do not receive any benefits. TEAMS employees receive full benefits of the University.

We encourage hiring TEAMS employees whenever possible so that employees may take full advantage of the generous benefits that UF offers. The decision, however, remains in the hands of the County Faculty. We realize that TEAMS employees may not be right for all counties.

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### Steps 2 & 3: Hiring Signature Sheets

District Directors have asked us to use these forms as a way to improve communication during the hiring process. By doing this everyone in the process knows you have an intent to hire and the County and District Directors are given the opportunity to approve the personnel hired in their district.

The first, Request to Advertise Position, is submitted to the District Directors and the State Office at the beginning of the hiring process (Step 2). Advertising for the vacancy may not begin until you receive a position number from the State Office. This position number is released when the Request to Advertise Position arrives in the State Office (Step 3). The second, Request to Hire, accompanies the complete hiring packet (Step 5).

## Step 4: Advertising and Interviewing

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### Advertising a Vacancy

TEAMS vacancies must be advertised for a minimum of seven calendar days. If re-advertising is necessary, this must be for a minimum of three calendar days. **TEAMS positions must also be advertised through the MyUFI Human Resources System.** The State Office will post the position on this site.

There are no advertising minimums for OPS. In addition, OPS positions are not required to be advertised on MyUFI.

Every position must also be posted at Job Services of Florida for a minimum of 7 days. Posting with Job Services is the responsibility of the County Faculty.

You may ask assistance from other Extension personnel, agencies, and organizations for locating names of prospective qualified candidates. Include local welfare and health departments, service agencies, AFDC mothers, pastors of churches in low-income areas, migrant workers, centers in large cities, Salvation Army, school principals and teachers in low-income areas, and Food Stamp Center Directors.

You may disseminate job opportunity information through local newspaper ads, posters, and other appropriate means.

All advertisements must include:

- The university's logo
- LP# and position title
- Job location/Name of Center
- Deadline date and how to apply
- Minimum and/or special requirements for the position
- Salary range
- The following statements:
  - "If an accommodation due to a disability is needed to apply for this position, please call (352) 392-4621 or the Florida Relay System at 1-800-955-8771 (TDD)."
  - "This job offer is contingent upon a successful background check."
  - "This is a time-limited position."
  - "Equal Employment Opportunity Employer"

Later in this section there is a position announcement that you can use to advertise TEAMS positions. Just add the contact information for your county, position number, expected starting salary, and application deadline. For OPS, just change TEAMS non-exempt to OPS.

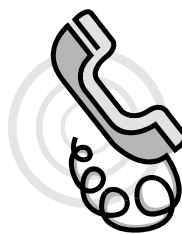
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### Applications

**All applicants must use the MyUFI system to apply.** Once the posting deadline has passed, all qualified applicants will be routed to the State Office. We will then forward this information to you. Because of the nature of the MyUFI application, you may also have applicants complete an IFAS Extension Application, which will include references. We recommend you do this only with the applicants you wish to interview. However, the application in MyUFI is the official application for the University.

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### References



All employees hired by the University must have their education and work experience verified to provide proof in their personnel file that they meet the minimum specifications for the position.

In addition, any questionable work history derived from the preliminary application or personal interview should be verified.

#### **Check employment references.**

After your interview, you will want to verify the most recent and relevant work experience on the application. Be careful to verify whether or not the applicant approved contacting their current employer. You may ask any questions related to work performance and the job. The only questions the previous employer may legally answer are those that can be documented and verified through the employee's personnel file. Be sure to ask the same questions of all previous employers.

**Verify education.** This is the responsibility of our recruiter in Human Resources. They will verify the education of the one candidate you select to hire.

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## Standards For Selection

Program Assistants should be recruited from or near the target area neighborhoods within the designated geographic areas where work will be conducted. Past experience has indicated that Program Assistants who come from the community to be served and who are generally from the same economic level, possess a superior ability to establish rapport and to communicate with their peers.

You will want to consult a variety of local organizations and agencies who serve the target audience for possible assistance in recruiting Program Assistants.

### Physical Resources Necessary

- Transportation - A car is a must, along with a valid Florida driver's license. Liability insurance is necessary to meet State of Florida legal requirements.
- Access to a telephone.

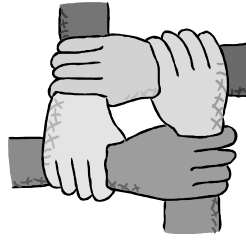
### Other Qualifications

- High school diploma or its equivalent required.
- Demonstrate ability to work with people. Type of work experience and references will help to make this assessment.
- Energetic, enthusiastic, and willing to work even when results are not immediate and not easy to identify.
- Has empathy and compassion for low-income families regardless of their situation. Recognizes the uniqueness of people and believes everyone is worthy of help.
- Is mature and flexible, interested in new ideas and will participate in required training program. Is receptive to supervision from the professional staff.
- Can be resourceful and willing to try new ideas. Can keep information confidential.
- Can talk with people easily and focus on interests of others.
- Understand that Extension is an educational organization and is not service oriented.
- Is not employed full-time on another job.
- Applicants who work with clients of Spanish-American, Cuban or Indian decent must be bilingual.

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## Equal Opportunity Employment



The State of Florida's equal employment opportunity policy requires equal employment opportunity to each applicant or employee in University practices relating to recruitment, examination, appointment, training, promotion, demotion, compensation, retention, discipline, separation, or other employment practice, without regard to race, color, sex, religion, creed, national origin, physical handicaps, age, political opinions or affiliations. Affirmative Action is emphasized to insure that the intent of this policy is realized.

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## Nepotism



Employment of related persons in a single organizational unit or in job-related organizational units, where such employment involves a conflict of interest, actual or potential, and where the employee has or would have direct or indirect administrative or decision-making authority over the related person or where the decisions of such employee may affect such other person, is discouraged, except where the employment of a related person becomes necessary due to a shortage of qualified personnel. If an applicant is a relative of an employee in your office, the applicant and supervisor will be required to complete a nepotism letter to ensure fair employment practices in that unit.

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## Car Insurance and Liability



The Program Assistant is responsible for car insurance and for the liability of any passengers she should carry in her car(s). Please note, however, that PAs should not transport program participants in their own vehicle. Under the provisions of the Florida Workers' Compensation Law, the Extension Service is liable for any work-related accidental injury to the Extension Program Assistant.

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## Interviewing

After you have reviewed the applications, you are ready to interview. For the candidates you do not select for interview, be sure to document why you did not select them.

Some County Faculty have found that an effective method of screening applicants has been to invite prospects to a group meeting at which time the role and job responsibilities of the position are explained. Some applicants may wish to withdraw from seeking the position after this briefing. This voluntary withdrawal should be noted on the Applicant Consideration Record.

There is no minimum number of applicants to interview for either TEAMS or OPS. IFAS Personnel recommends interviewing

3 or more applicants, depending on the size of the county. Select those you would like to interview and schedule the appointment.

The UF Human Resources website contains comprehensive information about interviewing, including example questions, interviewing techniques, and questions that are illegal or unacceptable to ask. Go to [www.hr.ufl.edu/departmental/interviewing/interview.htm](http://www.hr.ufl.edu/departmental/interviewing/interview.htm) for this information.

Two hand-outs for the interview are included with this section. One is a position description and the other is a summary of benefits.

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## Making an Offer

All new hires must be approved by a Human Resources Recruiter before a job offer is made. Once you decide who you would like to hire, please contact the State Office and we will be in touch with the recruiter. Once we hear back from the recruiter, you may offer the job to the applicant. A job offer will be contingent upon the results of a background check. Once the job offer is made, have the applicant complete the appropriate paperwork.

A starting salary should be discussed at this point. Salary must follow the PA Salary Model. The State Office will make the final determination of salary. The Salary Model is included at the end of this section. Extension Program Assistants are paraprofessionals, not entry-level professionals; the salary model reflects this designation. Applicants should not expect the salary to vary widely from the offered range because of additional training and/or education. The job description is for a paraprofessional and pays as a paraprofessional

position. For example, if a gourmet chef applies for a job as a grill cook at McDonald's, the applicant will not be able to negotiate a salary as high as if he or she were a gourmet chef in a five-star restaurant. The pay is commensurate with the job description, not the qualifications of the candidate. Applicants should keep in mind the wide array of benefits that UF offers when settling on a final salary. This publication includes a hand-out about these benefits for County Faculty to share with applicants.

The starting date depends on when the complete hiring packet arrives at the State Office. In most cases, this will be a week after the interview. Two more weeks are necessary to complete the hiring process. A rule of thumb is to tell the applicant they may begin in three weeks. If you would like them to begin before three weeks, please realize that we are unable to expedite payroll processes and they may have to wait 4 to 6 weeks for their first paycheck and any benefits.

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## Notifying Applicants Who Were Not Selected

The County Extension Director is required to notify in writing each applicant considered, but not hired. In addition, all information from the hiring and interviewing process should be kept on file for a period of six months. To the right is a sample letter to applicants who were not selected.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Recently you applied for a position in \_\_\_\_\_ County. Selection of another person to fill this position has been made based on the applicant's background which most appropriately meets our program objectives at this time. Thank you for your interest in employment with the University of Florida Cooperative Extension

## Step 5: Completing Paperwork

### New Hire Paperwork

These forms can be found at the end of this section and on the EFNEP website. New Hires complete the following forms:

- I-9 with supporting documents
- W-4 with copy of Social Security Card
- 4 in 1 Form (notarized in two places)
- Non-Exempt Employee Questionnaire
- Time limited letter (TEAMS only)
- Emergency Contact and Campus Directory
- Copy of High School Diploma (TEAMS only)
- Copy of Social Security Card
- Copy of Driver's License

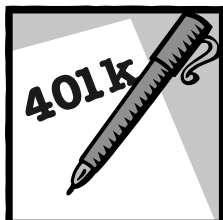
Direct Deposit form with copy of voided check should be faxed directly to the Payroll Office at 352-846-0166.

### County Faculty Paperwork

These forms can be found at the end of this section and on the EFNEP website. County Faculty complete the following forms.

- Request to Hire
- Section 2 of the I-9
- Applicant Consideration Record (TEAMS only)
- Experience and Education Verification (TEAMS only)

### Benefits Enrollment



Once a new TEAMS employee is hired, we will send out a benefits enrollment package. New hires must sign up for benefits within 60 days of hire. If you have questions about benefits paperwork, you can call IFAS Personnel at 352-392-4777. OPS

Employees are not eligible for benefits.

## Step 6: Completing the Hire

Once the complete packet with all appropriate signatures arrives at the State Office, an Office Assistant will contact you with a starting date, which will usually be two weeks from the date the packet arrived.

**If a hiring packet is not complete, the two week period will not begin until all paperwork is submitted.**

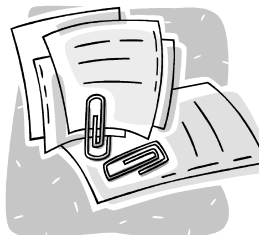
### Social Security Card

It is imperative that all forms are signed using the exact name that is written on the Social Security Card.

If the applicant does not have a SSC, they must fill out Form SS-5, "Application for Social Security Number Card." This application must be sent with the employment package. The University will not accept a "Receipt for Application of Social Security Number" from the Social Security Office. Without a SSC or the application, the employee can not be put on payroll.

If the applicant has had a name change, all employment papers should still show the name that is on the SSC. After the employee is on payroll and wish to change his or her name, he or she should apply for a new SSC at the Social Security Office. When the new SSC arrived, fill out a new W-4 with a copy of the new SSC attached.

### Paperwork Tips



Form I-9: Section 2 must be completed by the County Faculty. See the instructions on the back of the form.

The Faculty should sign her name at the bottom of Section 2, giving name, title, Cooperative Extension Service, name of county, and date.

Loyalty Oath (4 in 1 Form): This section of the form must be notarized. If it is not possible to have the form notarized without charge, obtain a receipt and the State Office will reimburse the employee. If a person is not a citizen of the United States, then white-out State of Florida and United States of America and insert the name of the person's country. If he is applying for citizenship, this statement could be added.

**UNIVERSITY OF  
FLORIDA**  

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**IFAS EXTENSION**

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA  
COUNTY EXTENSION OFFICE

TEAMS Non-Exempt Position

Extension Program Assistant  
LP #

Expected Starting Salary: \$9—\$ /hour

To Apply, Contact:

Application Deadline:

**Minimum Qualifications**

High school diploma. Able to plan and deliver nutrition education lessons. Able to follow directions and complete reports. Experience working with low income clients helpful. May require occasional night and weekend hours due to the nature of the program. Offer of employment is contingent upon successful completion of background check. This is a time-limited position.

**Examples of Duties**

Supervisor has complete position description.

**Program Delivery/Planning** Teaches nutrition education classes to low income participants. Works in coordination with appropriate agency staff to ensure the delivery of quality services to EFNEP clients. Maintains a viable workload by continually recruiting and involving new clients in the educational program. Determines the clients' knowledge and skills in food and nutrition and related areas.

**Training** Participates in orientation training, continuous on-the-job training, and self study to: develop and improve knowledge of food and nutrition subject matter, become more proficient in determining client needs, understand various methods of reaching and teaching the clientele, develop proficiency in using the EFNEP teaching materials.

**Travel** Stays within assigned travel allocation while traveling to assigned teaching sites from the official headquarters.

**Reporting** Maintains accurate records and reports on clients and personnel requirements. Submits reports on time to EFNEP Coordinator. Works with EFNEP Coordinator, agency staff, and co-workers in utilizing records, reports, and other resources to assist in program implementation and in evaluating program impact.

Preference will be given to eligible Veterans as required by Florida Statutes.

Only United States Citizens or aliens who have the legal right to work in the US are eligible for employment.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER/  
AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER/  
EQUAL ACCESS EMPLOYER

If an accommodation due to a disability is needed to apply for this position, please call (352) 392-4621 or the Florida Relay System at 1-800-955-8771 (TDD)."

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## EFNEP Extension Program Assistant

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) is a Cooperative Extension Service educational program funded by USDA to help limited-income families and youth acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and changed behavior necessary to improve their diets in normal nutrition. EFNEP will provide communities with an effective, research supported, nutrition education program that enables limited resource families and youth to acquire nutrition behaviors contributing to quality health and wellness.

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### Complete Position Description

**Program Delivery** Teaches lesson topics from EFNEP Curricula and uses identified teaching methods for groups. Utilizes group teaching as a major delivery method. Delivers a planned series of lessons within designated time frames. Maintains continuous participation by a reasonable number of EFNEP clients. Works in coordination with appropriate agency staff to ensure the delivery of quality services to EFNEP clients.

**Reporting** Understands the specified EFNEP reporting procedures. Maintains accurate records and reports on clients and personnel requirements. Submits reports on time to EFNEP Coordinator. Works with EFNEP Coordinator, agency staff, and co-workers in utilizing records, reports, and other resources to assist in program implementation and in evaluating program impact.

**Travel** Stays within assigned travel allocation while traveling to assigned teaching sites from the official headquarters.

**Planning** Understands and complies with CES and EFNEP guidelines and State priorities for conducting the program. Maintains a viable workload by continually involving new clients in the educational program. Utilizes a variety of teaching techniques including audio and/or visual aids and food demonstrations to teach clients. Continues to improve knowledge of subject matter and teaching methods. Determines the clients' knowledge and skills in food and nutrition and related areas. Utilizes information from the EFNEP curricula and reporting procedures to determine needs and evaluate progress of participants. Determines appropriate referrals for the clients, and encourages clients to utilize federal nutrition programs and other community resources.

**Training** Participates in orientation training, continuous on-the-job training, and self study to: develop and improve knowledge of food and nutrition subject matter, become more proficient in determining client needs, understand various methods of reaching and teaching the clientele, develop proficiency in using the EFNEP teaching materials.

**Minimum Qualifications** High school diploma. Able to plan and deliver nutrition education lessons. Able to follow directions and complete reports. Experience working with low income clients helpful. May require occasional night and weekend hours due to the nature of the program. This is a time-limited position.

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### Summary

As a PA, you will be taught how to teach nutrition. Then you will travel to sites and teach low-income audiences about nutrition. You will keep track of who you teach, including their race, gender, and age. You will complete any reports that the program needs to run, including your time card and activity reports. You will help your Coordinator create new nutrition lessons and find people to teach. You will also spend time learning more about nutrition.

Regular working hours are Monday through Friday 8 am to 5 pm, but sometimes you might need to work evenings or weekends. You will have to use your own car for travel, but you will be reimbursed at the state-approved amount.

Preference will be given to eligible Veterans as required by Florida Statutes.

Only United States Citizens or aliens who have the legal right to work in the US are eligible for employment.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY  
EMPLOYER/ AFFIRMATIVE  
ACTION EMPLOYER/  
EQUAL ACCESS EMPLOYER

If an accommodation due to a disability is needed to apply for this position, please call (352) 392-4621 or the Florida Relay System at 1-800-955-8771 (TDD)."

Job offer depends on successful completion of national background check.

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## University of Florida Benefits

The University of Florida offers a wide range of generous benefits for TEAMS employees. This document will highlight some of the more frequently used benefits. For a complete list of benefits and restrictions, go to the Human Resources website at [www.hr.ufl.edu](http://www.hr.ufl.edu).

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### Paid Time Off



The University of Florida gives TEAMS employees more paid time off than most US employers, both public and private.

**Vacation:** Vacation is accrued every two weeks at 6.769 hours per pay period. That's 22 vacation days or 1 month of vacation each year!

**Sick leave:** Sick leave is accrued at 4 hours every pay period. That's 13 sick days a year.

**Holidays:** Employees follow county holiday schedules and usually receive about 9 paid holidays every year.

**Personal leave days:** TEAMS employees get off all the days from December 26 to December 31, every year. That means you never have to work from Christmas Day to New Year's Day!

**Administrative leave:** This is leave for special circumstances. Two of the most common forms are for jury duty and death in your immediate family.

**December Cash Out:** You may cash out up to 16 hours of annual leave each December. Certain restrictions apply.

**Termination Cash Out:** When you leave UF employment, you may cash out all annual leave. If you have worked at UF for 10 or more years, you may cash out 25% of your sick leave.

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### Insurance

The most-used insurance that UF offers is state of Florida health insurance. Employees may choose from an HMO or a PPO. Co-pays are low and coverage is high. Employees may also take advantage of other types of insurance: life insurance, supplemental insurance (cancer, dental, vision, short-term disability), flexible benefits, personal accident insurance, etc.

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### Higher Education Opportunities

You may take up to six credit hours per semester at any state university or Santa Fe Community College free of charge. Human Resources is working on a program for other community colleges, too!

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### Retirement



UF is part of the Florida Retirement System.

Employees may opt to be part of Public Employees Option Retirement Program, which has portable benefits if you are not planning on long-term University employment. UF

also offers retirement counseling sessions and tax-sheltered annuities.

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### Higher Education Opportunities for Your Kids!

If you're a full-time employee with kids, this is an amazing opportunity! Each year, the Division of Human Resources will choose at random from a pool of eligible applicants 50 children of TEAMS employees to participate in this program. If selected, the university will pay the in-state matriculation fees, less any Bright Futures scholarship award, for a maximum of 132 credit hours toward an undergraduate degree at the University of Florida or a public community college in the state over a six-year period for each selected child. Some restrictions apply.

In 2003, 51 people applied for this benefit and all 51 were awarded the scholarship! That's four years of college for your kids—for free!



If you take full advantage of leave benefits, you will get **48 days** of leave every year!