



# Army Benefits Center - Civilian

SWCPOC at Fort Riley, Kansas

# ABC-C News

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To reach the ABC-C: <https://www.abc.army.mil> or 1-877-276-9287 (TDD: 1-877-276-9833)

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## How Do I Reach A Benefit Counselor?

Have you ever been frustrated because you cannot get to a live person? Well, this is a common complaint we hear at the ABC-C so we would like to provide a little information to make this an easier task.

After you dial our toll-free number 1-877-276-9287 (visit the ABC-C website for OCONUS numbers), you must press 1 for Army civilian employee, 2 for Benefits & Entitlements, and 1 for current Army employee. Then you will need to input your Social Security Number (SSN) and 6-digit Personnel Identification Number (PIN). If you have never created your PIN, you will need to first create a temporary 4-digit PIN that consists of your mmyy of birth (e.g. July 1945 is 0745) and then enter/verify your duty telephone number.



At this point you will come to the "main menu". You must then press the number that best corresponds with the purpose of your call (FEHB, Retirement, TSP, etc.). The following menu will give you the opportunity to press 0 to transfer to a benefit counselor.

We realize these are a lot of steps to go through to reach a live person, but these steps are necessary to provide the best security possible. Also, this will assist the counselor in preparing to answer your question.

## Did You Know . . .



ABC-C counselors handled 24,397 calls in the months of December, January, and February?

The average wait time was 48 seconds.

## Employee Benefits Information System (EBIS)



Do you prefer making your benefit changes through the EBIS website? To make transactions online, you must first go to the ABC-C website at <https://www.abc.army.mil> and select the *Benefits/EBIS* button. Then you will need to enter your Point-

Of-Entry (POE) password. Your POE password must contain 8-10 characters. POE is an extra security level that is required online only.



Next, you must enter your 6-digit PIN. If you have never created your PIN, you will need to first create a temporary 4-digit PIN that consists of your mmyy of birth (e.g. July 1945 would be 0745).

Please keep in mind that your POE expires every 90 days but your PIN never does. We recommend that you change your POE or PIN anytime you feel they have been compromised.

## Thrift Savings Plan Catch-Up Information

Don't forget you can still contribute to TSP Catch-Up for calendar year 2004. Because the annual IRS elective deferral limit for catch-up contributions changes yearly, you must make a new election each year. The maximum for 2004 is \$3,000.



Visit the ABC-C website to review a chart to help you plan your contributions for 2004. Remember to input the amount of money you want deducted *per pay period*, not annually!

## Flexible Spending Account (FSA)



Calling all new employees! Although the FSA Open Season has been over, new and newly eligible employees have 60 days after their entry of duty (EOD) date to enroll in this exciting program.

Information about FSA can be found on the OPM website at <http://www.opm.gov/insure/pretax/fsa> or at the **FSAFEDS** website at <https://www.fsafeds.com/fsafeds>.

At these sites, you can find valuable information to assist you in planning for and managing a FSA. You can also contact SHPS, the administrator for the FSA program, at 1-877-FSAFEDS (372-3337) to speak with a customer service representative. The toll free number is not available in most OCONUS locations.

SHPS has provided an email address, [fsafeds@shps.net](mailto:fsafeds@shps.net), to provide service to those employees who want to communicate with SHPS but do not have access to the toll free number or prefer email contact.



## TSP Participant Statements

TSP has made some significant changes to the participant statements. TSP Participant Statements will now be mailed quarterly. The next statement will be available mid-month April and will cover the period from January 1 through March 31, 2004.

For your convenience, this and all future quarterly statements can be viewed and printed from the TSP website at [www.tsp.gov](http://www.tsp.gov). Statements will no longer be automatically mailed; however, you may request one through the Account Access section of the TSP website or through the voice response feature of the ThriftLine at (504) 255-8777. Online statements are easy to access and cost you virtually nothing. Quarterly paper statements cost participants \$9.8 million per year (\$3 per participant). You can help minimize this cost by using online statements.

## Does the Government Owe YOU Money?



Sound too good to be true? It may not be.

If you no longer have any eligible family members who require FEHB and/or FEGLI, you may be entitled to a refund of some of the premiums you have paid. For example, when your last eligible child turns 22, you should review your FEHB and FEGLI elections.

If you no longer have an eligible family member (to include a spouse) that requires coverage under your FEHB, you should change from Self and Family coverage to Self-Only. If you have FEGLI Option C (Family Coverage), and you have no more eligible family members, you should drop your family coverage. The change is effective the pay period following your child's 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday or loss of last eligible family member.

Please visit the ABC-C website or contact our office for more information.

## DFAS Corner

The Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) implemented myPay, a web-based system in March 2000. myPay provides DoD civilian and military service members with a secure and convenient means for controlling and managing their pay account. You may now view your LES as well as tax statements and can make various pay changes online 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



If you do not have a PIN for accessing myPay, you can obtain one via email by clicking on the *New PIN* button on the myPay website at <https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay.aspx>. A temporary PIN will be emailed to your official email address. If you have any questions concerning myPay, please call the contact center toll free at 1-800-390-2348.

## On a Personal Note



Well, we're already 3 months into a new year. Have you started your Christmas shopping yet?

While it may sound crazy, planning ahead seems to be something we may not be as good at as we would like.

Last calendar year ABC-C processed 8,201 retirements. In addition, there were 863 disabilities and 4,647 retirement estimates. Post-56 actions totaled 2,798 and, unfortunately, there were 365 deaths within the Army civilian family.

While death is normally something that is never planned, we encourage you to submit your other benefit requests to ABC-C as soon as you start thinking about them. Retirement packages should be submitted 90-120 days in advance. YOU contribute to YOU receiving your annuity payment in a timelier manner.

Contact one of our professional benefit counselors and allow us to guide you through all your questions and/or concerns. Last month the average wait time to reach a counselor was 33 seconds.

We look forward to hearing from YOU!

ABC-C is a Division of SWCPOC, at Fort Riley KS

Send comments or suggestions to:

Mail to: [NewsletterINQ@cpocswr.army.mil](mailto:NewsletterINQ@cpocswr.army.mil)