

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
Washington, DC 20405

September 15, 2020

Federal Travel Regulation
GSA Bulletin FTR 21-02

TO: Heads of Federal Agencies

SUBJECT: Relocation Allowances – Waiver of certain Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) provisions for Renewal Agreement Travel (RAT) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. What is the purpose of this bulletin? This bulletin informs agencies that certain provisions of the FTR governing RAT are temporarily waived to accommodate individuals whose RAT was delayed or suspended due to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) travel restrictions. Specifically, this bulletin waives the requirement for an employee to have 12 months remaining on their successor tour of duty to be eligible for RAT.

2. What is the applicable date of this bulletin? This bulletin is retroactively effective for employees whose official RAT was delayed or suspended after March 13, 2019 (one year prior to the date of the national emergency issued by the President concerning COVID-19), and who have not yet taken RAT.

3. When does this bulletin expire? This FTR Bulletin will expire one year from March 13, 2020, unless extended or rescinded by this office.

4. What is the background of this bulletin? Federal agencies authorize relocation entitlements to those individuals listed at FTR §302-1.1. Such individuals must sign a service agreement stating that the individual agrees to serve for a minimum time period after they have relocated, as prescribed in FTR §302-2.14. Once an employee has completed their initial tour of duty, an agency may offer RAT for the employee to serve a new tour of duty at the same or different OCONUS location, if the employee meets the conditions under FTR §302-3.212.

RAT is intended to provide expenses of round-trip travel and transportation for the employee and their family members to their continental United States (CONUS) actual residence or other approved location in the U.S. for the purpose of taking leave between successive tours of duty and prior to the new tour of duty (FTR §302-3.211). An employee cannot accrue the RAT entitlement from one period of service to another if not used.

In light of the unsettled conditions throughout the world due to COVID-19, U.S. agencies and foreign countries have issued travel advisories warning U.S. citizens not to travel internationally until further notice or to delay departure until conditions are normalized. Consequently, employees and their immediate family members may be, or may have

been, required to delay taking RAT despite the employee's successful completion of their initial tour of duty and commitment to a second overseas tour of duty. As a result of the delay, employees might not have 12 months remaining in their second tour of duty upon their return from RAT as prescribed at FTR §§302-2.14(d) and 302-3.505(d)).


5. What waivers may my agency apply to the FTR provisions addressed by this bulletin?

Due to COVID-19 pandemic travel restrictions, agencies may waive FTR §§302-2.14(d) and 302-3.505(d), meaning that RAT travelers are not required to have 12 months of service remaining on their second overseas tour of duty after taking RAT, in order to be eligible for RAT. This waiver does not impact the length of an employee's service agreement with their agency. For example, the employee still must 1) have satisfactorily completed their initial tour of duty and 2) complete the agreed upon period of service under their new service agreement for entitlement to RAT. An employee who fails to complete the minimum period of service under their new service agreement for reasons that are not acceptable to the agency must pay the Government all transportation and per diem expenses the employee and their immediate family received for RAT as specified in FTR §§302-3.223 and 302-3.224.

6. What should agencies do? Agencies should update their internal relocation policies, as needed, for RAT and service agreement commitment requirements.

7. Whom should I call for further information? For further information or clarification of content, please contact Mr. Rick Miller, Office of Government-wide Policy (M), Office of Asset and Transportation Management (MA), at (202) 501-3822 or by email at travelpolicy@gsa.gov. Please cite FTR Bulletin 21-02.

By delegation of the Administrator of General Services.

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