



American Federation of Government Employees AFGE Local 3607 (AFL-CIO)

PARS FACT SHEET 2

What are “assumptions” and how can they help me?

The PARS agreement that EPA signed with AFGE defines assumptions to be:

“Known factors over which an employee has little, if any, control, but which might exert a significant impact on the employee’s performance or ability to achieve an objective. It is understood that employees cannot be held accountable on critical elements for factors outside of their control.”

Assumptions can be included for each critical element in your performance plan. Assumptions can apply to every level of performance from the unacceptable level of performance to the outstanding level of performance. The purpose of an assumption is for your supervisor to acknowledge that there are factors that could impact your ability to perform and that you have no real control over those factors. The purpose of identifying such factors in your PARS plan is to ensure that your performance appraisal will not be lowered because of factors beyond your control.

For example, suppose your performance standard requires that you complete an audit or inspection by a specific date. However, suppose the entity being audited or inspected cannot accommodate your visit in a timely fashion and that will prevent you from meeting the deadline listed in your PARS plan. The way PARS plans are written, your failure to meet the required deadline could mean that your performance is either minimally satisfactory or unacceptable requiring that you be placed on a PAP! One way to avoid such problems is to ask that specific assumptions be added to the critical job elements of your PARS plan.

The PARS employee training materials issued by the Agency do not train you on the development of assumptions. The PARS Agreement states the following:

“The supervisor shall work collaboratively with the employee to identify all assumptions relevant to the employee’s Performance Plan. The supervisor shall then make the determination of the applicable assumptions and list them in the standard. The employee may attach her or his comments on assumptions to the Performance Plan.”

If your supervisor is not meeting his obligation to work with you to identify assumptions one option is to propose them yourself.

Examples of possible assumptions

Example 1 – My performance under this critical job element is dependent on the timely receipt of input from parties who are beyond my control.

Example 2 – My performance under this standard is dependent on the work performed by other team members who are beyond my control.

Example 3 – My performance is dependent on timely and adequate resources supplied by management including travel money and contract funds.

Keep in mind that you lose nothing by including such assumptions in your PARS Plan!