**RIF Frequently Asked Questions**

**Q: Is there anything I can do to prepare for a RIF?**

**A:** It is possible that the Department will place you on paid administrative leave following the issuance of a RIF notice. You may also lose access to your government IT systems and physical office space. In anticipation of such events, AFSA has prepared a “[go bag](https://afsa.org/virtual-go-bag)” list of items you should begin compiling and collecting.

**Q: How do I grieve a RIF?**

**A:** It is extremely difficult to grieve a RIF action. The Foreign Service Act provides: “Grievances under subchapter XI shall be limited to cases of reprisal, interference in the conduct of an employee's official duties, or similarly inappropriate use of the authority of this section.” (FSA 4010(a)(c)). The Foreign Service Grievance Board has interpreted this language very narrowly. If you believe the agency did not follow the published RIF regulations, challenge your separation before the Merit Systems Protection Board, not the Foreign Service Grievance Board. Employees should consult with AFSA or private legal counsel prior to initiating a grievance or MSPB case.

**Q: What do I do if I receive a RIF letter?**

**A:** You should follow the instructions in your RIF letter. Regulations provide that specific notices will be sent to those selected for separation at least 120 days prior to the effective date of separation and will contain the following information:

* The effective separation date
* The competition group; information on entitlement to an immediate annuity or separation payment
* Information on the right to either file a grievance with the agency office responsible for grievances or appeal to the Foreign Service Grievance Board (FSGB) or to the Merit Systems Protections Board (MSPB)\*
* The member’s numerical position on the retention register
* The total number of employees separated from the member’s competition group
* Confirmation of eligibility for participation in the job search/transition program (JSTP), including per diem for members and family for program duration for those assigned outside of Washington

When necessary, the Director General may authorize a notification period of less than 120 days but must provide for at least 30 full days before the effective date of release. The notice period begins the day after the employee receives the notice.

\*However, please see the comments above which provide the limited basis upon which a RIF may be grieved.

**Q: Should I send a copy of my letter to AFSA?**

**A:** If you have a particular question or concern about the wording of the letter you’re welcome to send it to us. If you do, please explain precisely what your concern is. In the event of a RIF, we may be hearing from literally hundreds of people, so the more specific you can be, the better. If you don’t have a specific question or concern, we do not need a copy of your letter. We will not be maintaining a list of everyone RIFed.

**Q: What benefits do I receive in a RIF?**

**A:** 3 FAM 6140 https://fam.state.gov/addresses benefits in the event of a RIF. Additional detailed guidance on benefits can be found [**here**](https://afsa.org/reductions-in-force#:~:text=Employees%20separated%20by%20a%20RIF%20prior%20to,receive%20their%20full%20retirement%20or%20severance%20pay.&text=Employees%20who%20are%20RIF'd%20have%20the%20ability,Employees%20Health%20Benefits%20coverage%20beyond%20this%20period.). If those materials don’t answer your particular question, you can write to OGC@afsa.org and provide your age, grade, and years of service, and we will be able to tell you generally what you should expect to receive. Detailed individual questions should be directed to your retirement counselor in GTM/RET, who will have your full file.

**Q: What about my health benefits?**

**A:** If you receive an immediate annuity, you retain your FEHB benefits into retirement. If you aren’t eligible to keep your FEHB permanently, you will still maintain your health benefits for 30 days. Detailed guidance on health benefits in a RIF is available on the AFSA website. If you have individual questions not answered there please contact us at OGC@afsa.org. You can apply for Temporary Continuation of Coverage (TCC), the equivalent of COBRA, which keeps you on your current plan for up to 18 months, but this is ***very*** expensive. You will be required to pay your and the agency’s premiums, plus an administrative fee so you may want to consider going on your state’s exchange to look for a completely new and potentially less expensive plan.

**Q: How will AFSA communicate updates?**

**A:** We will communicate regularly with our members through Friday "roundups” and separate email messages when necessary, so please ensure that our membership department has a valid personal (not.gov) email address where you can receive those.

**Q: Is there anything that AFSA can do to stop the RIF?**

**A:** AFSA is exploring all potential legal avenues to challenge a RIF at the Department of State. We are also closely monitoring relevant cases pending before courts within the United States.

We will continue to update our members with information on the legal front as they develop, including steps AFSA will take to challenge a RIF.