



## **Flight Attendant Health Reporting System (FA-HRS)**

Association of Flight Attendants, AFL-CIO

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### **What is a health reporting system?**

Over the years, AFA has fielded calls from members with medical conditions or concerns, ranging from asthma to leukemia to multiple miscarriages. These members want to know if we know of other flight attendants that have reported the same problems, and in many cases, whether we have any information to suggest that their conditions or concerns could be work-related.

Currently, there is very little available information on possible associations between flight attendants' work environment and their health. In an attempt to address this problem, AFA developed a health reporting system especially for flight attendants. It is a voluntary, confidential, standardized registry for reporting health problems that *could* be work-related - the Flight Attendant Health Reporting System (FA-HRS).

### **What are the benefits?**

A health reporting system enables AFA to establish: (1) A network of flight attendants with similar medical conditions or concerns that can share information and support - if they so choose; and (2) A standardized database of information on medical conditions that, in some cases, could be related to chemical exposures or other hazards in the aircraft environment.

### **How does it work?**

If you want to participate in AFA's health reporting system, you need to fill out two forms: the reporting form and the privacy policy. You can download both forms directly from the AFA website (<http://ashsd.afacwa.org>, click on "report health problems" on left side of screen) or contact the AFA Safety, Health & Security Seattle satellite office at 206-932-6237. The reporting form includes basic questions about your work history, your work environment, and your condition or concern. The privacy policy needs to be signed and sent to AFA to show that you understand how your information will be processed and maintained by AFA. To ensure your security, we ask you to fax or mail the forms to a specific contact, either via the AFA international office or directly to the Seattle field office. We do not accept forms sent across the internet or email.

### **How can I get in touch with other flight attendants who have the same medical problem?**

Call in your request to AFA (206-932-6237) or email [Judith@AFAseattle.org](mailto:Judith@AFAseattle.org). We will not give out any names and numbers unless we have express permission to do so.

### **As an AFA member, do I have to report?**

No. Although the system will only be useful if people use it, reporting is strictly voluntary. It is open to AFA members and non-AFA members alike. You can specify upfront if you do not want to be contacted by AFA in the future about networking with other flight attendants that might be diagnosed with the same medical condition or have the same concerns.

### **How do I know that the information will be kept confidential?**

As an organization, AFA commits that any report submitted to the AFA FA-HRS will be kept confidential to a limited number of staff members with the Safety, Health & Security Department at the international office (including the Seattle satellite). The paper copy of your reporting form will be stored in a secure file cabinet. Your responses - except for your name and contact information - will be entered into a secure computerized database, again accessible only to those limited staff. On the computer, you will be referenced by a number and not by your name. While it is possible that an attorney could attempt to subpoena the information on the reporting forms, AFA would resist any attempts to access the forms on the grounds that they contain confidential medical information that cannot be disclosed unless an individual gives her/his consent.

### **Will this reporting system tell me if my condition or concern is work-related?**

No. First, we have no assurance that everybody with a particular medical condition will report to AFA, so we cannot calculate disease rates, for example, nor can we conclude that flight attendants have a higher or lower risk of a given condition than anybody else. Also, we are not requesting any "proof of diagnosis," unlike medical research studies. However, a "cluster" of cases – particularly for very rare conditions - may serve as a red flag for a possible environmental cause. Even though the FA-HRS is an imperfect source of information, it is an important first step because to date, there is very little information about health hazards in the cabin environment and the impact on flight attendant health.

### **Why is there a question on the reporting form about cigarette smoking?**

Collecting information on risk factors that are *not work-related* strengthens the quality of the information that we collect on hazards that *are work related*. Cigarette smoking puts people at risk of various medical conditions. This does not mean that work-related factors are ruled out if you smoke, but it is a standard question in health-based studies.

### **Other questions?**

If you have other questions, please contact Judith Murawski at AFA's Air Safety, Health and Security Department office in Seattle, WA at 206-932-6237 or email [Judith@AFAsattle.org](mailto:Judith@AFAsattle.org).