



**HARRIS COUNTY**

**PERSONNEL POLICY HANDBOOK**

**Adopted by the Board of Commissioners on April 4, 2023**

**Effective May 1, 2023**

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Exhibit B:	<a href="#">Classification and Compensation Plan</a>
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# General

## 1.01 Basis and Purpose

The basis and purpose of these personnel policies and procedures are intended to provide for the effective recruitment and development of the best available individuals to work for the Harris County government and to establish orderly and consistent procedures for administering the personnel system based on the following guiding principles:

- Recruit, select, and advance employees on the basis of their ability, education, knowledge, and skills through open and fair competition
- Establish a compensation system that reflects market rates and provides comparable pay for comparable work
- Provide training opportunities to ensure employees are professionally developed to achieve high quality performance and the use of current trends
- Retain employees on the basis of the adequacy of their performance, correcting inadequate performance, and separating employees from County employment whose documented inadequacies cannot be corrected
- Ensure fair treatment of all applicants and employees in all aspects without regard to race, color, religion, sex (including gender identity, sexual orientation, and pregnancy), national origin, age (40 and older), disability, marital status, genetic information, or status as covered veterans in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local laws
- Establish procedures for the acceptance and resolution of employee grievances and complaints based on alleged inequitable treatment
- Ensure employees are protected against partisan political coercion

## 1.02 Applicability

These personnel policies and procedures and the classification and compensation plan shall apply to all full-time and part-time employees of every County department and constitutional office with the following exceptions:

- Elected officials
- Employees in the state merit system
- Members of appointed boards and authorities
- Employees working under contract

None of these policies or procedures shall be deemed to create a vested contractual right with any employee regarding employment or limit the authority of the County Manager or Board of Commissioners.

### **1.03 Compliance with Federal and State Employment Laws**

The County and its employees shall be aware of and comply with various federal and state laws relating to employment including but not limited to the ones listed below. Contact the Administration Department to navigate these complex federal and state employment laws.

#### **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

The County shall comply with the ADA and its implementing regulations and not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities regarding recruitment, application procedures, hiring, advancement, discharge, compensation, promotion, training, leave, reduction in force, or any other employment related activities. The County will provide reasonable accommodations to qualified applicants and employees.

#### **Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA)**

When regular full-time employees leave the employment of the County, they will be offered temporary extension of medical benefit coverage at group rates plus an administrative fee at their expense.

#### **Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)**

The County provides equal employment opportunity to all employees and applicants without regard to race, color, religion, sex (gender identity, sexual orientation, and pregnancy), national origin, age, disability, marital status, genetic information, or status as covered veterans in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local laws. This policy applies to all terms and conditions of employment including but not limited to recruitment, promotion, disciplinary action, termination, reduction in force, transfers, leaves of absences, compensation, working conditions, training, and benefits.

#### **Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)**

The County shall follow all FLSA rules regarding minimum wage, overtime pay, recordkeeping, and child labor standards affecting full-time and part-time employees.

#### **Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)**

The County shall follow all FMLA rules regarding required job protected leave to eligible employees for certain family and medical reasons. See FMLA Leave for additional information.

#### **Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)**

The County shall follow all HIPAA national standards to protect sensitive patient health information from being disclosed without the patient's consent or knowledge.

#### **Georgia Whistleblower Protection Act**

Any County employee that is aware of any misconduct involving fraud, waste, or abuse of County resources may file a complaint under the Georgia Whistleblower Act ([O.C.G.A. 45-1-4](#)) and be protected from retaliation.

#### **Georgia Workers' Compensation Act**

All County employees are responsible to report and document all on-the-job injuries to their Department Head, Supervisor, or Elected Official with a copy to the Administration Department as soon as possible following the occurrence of the injury. The County shall comply with all provisions of the Georgia Workers' Compensation Act to remedy employee injuries that occur on the job and provide benefits for occupational injuries arising out of and in the course of an employee's employment. Affected employees are expected to communicate and cooperate with the County's insurance provider.

## **1.04 Administration, Interpretation, and Enforcement of the Personnel Policies**

The County has adopted a Commission-Manager form of government whereby the County Manager serves as the chief administrative officer of the County and head of the administrative branch of government for the proper and efficient administration of all affairs of the County over which the County Manager has jurisdiction. In addition, the County Manager is charged with overseeing daily operations of County departments to ensure compliance with adopted County policies, procedures, and applicable state and federal laws, proposing and administering management policies related to personnel and general administration, and reviewing and approving final disciplinary actions and coordinating the resolution of employee grievances and appeals. See the County's organizational chart in Exhibit A.

With those established responsibilities and duties as contained within the County Code of Ordinances, the County Manager or his designee shall be responsible for the administration, interpretation, and enforcement of these personnel policies as adopted and amended by the Board of Commissioners. Department Heads, Supervisors, and Elected Officials are also responsible for enforcing the approved personnel policies regarding their departmental employees.

If there is a conflict between these policies and state or federal law, the laws shall always prevail. Amendments to the policies will correct any conflicts.

## **1.05 Amendments**

These personnel policies shall be reviewed on at least an annual basis and may be amended from time to time by the Board of County Commissioners during a public meeting.

## **1.06 Organization of This Document**

This document is organized in a chronological way as individuals enter the organization (Recruitment), move through the organization as employees (Retention), and separate their employment from the County (Separations and Retirement).

**End of Section 1.0: General**

## **2.0 Recruitment**

### **2.01 Recruitment Process**

The Administration Department will maintain a master list of all funded positions. For all known and funded vacancies, the Administration Department, in cooperation with the Department Head, Supervisor, or Elected Official will prepare position announcements based on the official position description. The position announcement shall at a minimum list: position title, position description, duties and responsibilities, required qualifications, knowledge and skills, reporting structure, beginning salary, application deadline, and how/where to apply. The position announcement will be posted for at least 14 business days in a variety of locations such as the County's website, local newspaper, Georgia Local Government Access (GLGA) website, regional and national newsletters, and national internet job sites.

The Administration Department will accept job applications and resumes for posted vacancies through the County's electronic system. For individuals with no Internet service, they will be directed to the County's library or County Administration building for Internet service to submit their application. No applications or resumes will be accepted unless there is a posted vacancy.

The hiring authority (Department Head or Elected Official) shall have the responsibility to review the submitted applications, interview the most qualified candidates, and select the most appropriate and best qualified applicant for their department. Interviews will be scheduled, conducted, and may have assistance from the Administration Department to ensure employment guidelines are followed.

Once a successful applicant has been selected, the Administration Department will continue the recruitment process by obtaining the successful applicant's written approval to conduct pre-employment screenings consisting of reference checks, previous employment verifications, criminal background checks, education verification, drug testing, social media checks, and motor vehicle checks. Once the pre-employment screenings are successfully completed, the recruiting department will be notified and the Administration Department will prepare position offer letters including a proposed start date, benefit start date, and obtain all necessary and required documents including but not limited to tax withholding forms, I-9 form, and E-verify forms. After all documents have been received, the new employee can begin.

### **2.02 Hiring Criteria**

Prospective employees shall be hired based on the requirements listed on the position description and job announcement including but not limited to knowledge, skills, abilities, training, education, licenses, certifications, and experience required for the position.

### **2.03 Disqualification of Employment**

Applicants may be disqualified from County employment for a variety of reasons including but not limited to:

- Omission, misrepresentation, or falsification of any material fact on an application, resume, or any other official documents. Disciplinary action may be taken against current employees for omission, misrepresentation, or falsification of documents up to and including termination regardless of when the omission or falsification is discovered

### **2.03 Disqualification of Employment** *(continued)*

- Failing the pre-employment drug testing
- Felony or misdemeanor conviction of child molestation or child abuse
- Felony or misdemeanor conviction regarding the possession, sale, use, distribution of illegal or controlled substances
- Any felony conviction
- Conviction of an issue involving moral turpitude. Moral turpitude is defined as an act which is contrary to accepted and customary rules of honesty, good morals, justice, or general society mores
- Where the position requires operation of a County vehicle, conviction or plea of nolo contendere within the past five (5) years for driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol (DUI) or for any serious traffic offense, including but not limited to, fleeing or attempting to elude a police officer, vehicular homicide, failure to stop, failure to render aid or failure to leave information, and racing
- Sufficient misdemeanor convictions to establish a pattern of disregard for the law
- Any outstanding criminal charge pending adjudication

### **2.04 Employment of Relatives (Nepotism)**

Department Heads, Elected Officials, or any other Supervisor shall not employ or recommend for employment, promotion, classification, or compensation immediate family members within their line of supervisory authority. Immediate family members shall include mother, father, spouse, brother, stepbrother, sister, stepsister, child, foster child, grandchild, grandparents, mother-in law and father-in law.

If an employee becomes a relative of someone who is their Department Head, Supervisor, or Elected Official or within the line of supervisory authority, then one of them must either resign or transfer into another County department if a position is available within 90 days.

### **2.05 Employment of Friends (Cronyism)**

Department Heads, Elected Officials, or any other Supervisor shall not employ or recommend for employment friends or associates that do not meet the qualifications for the position as listed in the position announcement or job description.

**End of Section 2.0: Recruitment**



## 3.0 RETENTION

### 3.01 New Employees

All new County employees and their positions will be classified in a variety of ways in accordance with federal laws and local policies as follows:

#### Position Classification

- Exempt  
Exempt employees, as classified by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), are exempt from receiving overtime pay. Exempt employees include executive, administrative, professional, computer, or highly compensated employees.
- Non-Exempt  
Non-Exempt employees, as classified by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), are eligible to receive overtime pay.

#### Employment Status

- Probationary  
Upon hiring, all full-time and part-time County employees shall serve a 90-day probationary period to ensure the new employee is compatible with the organization and is effective in their job performance. During the probationary period, employee shall not be eligible to take accrued vacation leave. Upon satisfactory completion of the probationary period as demonstrated by a written evaluation and a Personal Action Form prepared by the Department Head, Supervisor, or Elected Official, the employee will become a regular employee and able to take accrued benefits.

If the employee's performance during the probationary period is not satisfactory, the probationary period may be extended an additional 90 days for further review by the Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor or the employee will be transitioned out of the organization without appeal rights.

- Regular Full-Time  
Upon the successful completion of the probationary period, employees that are employed in positions that are continuing on an annual basis for at least 30 hours per week are considered regular full-time and are eligible to accrue County benefits.
- Part-Time  
Upon the successful completion of the probationary period, employees that are employed in positions that are continuing on an annual basis for less than 30 hours per week are considered part-time and are not eligible to accrue County benefits.
- Temporary  
The County Manager may authorize the use of temporary employees to temporarily fill vacant positions or in cases of emergencies to maintain the expected level of public service. Temporary employees are not eligible to receive any County benefits.

### **3.01 New Employees *(continued)***

#### Employment Status

- Acting (Interim) Status

Those County employees that are acting in a higher capacity such as Acting/Interim Department Head in the absence of the regular Department Head shall receive a temporary 5% increase in pay or the minimum starting pay for the Department Head position whichever is higher while acting in that higher capacity with the approval of the County Manager.

- Internship/Volunteer Status

Employees may be hired on a temporary basis for a predetermined amount of time to serve as interns or volunteers in various departments that may be paid by the County or other sources subject to budget availability or grant award. These types of employees shall follow all aspects of the recruitment process including but not limited to drug testing and background checks.

### **3.02 On-Boarding and Orientation Process**

All new County employees shall complete the online on-boarding process prior to beginning employment and attend an orientation conducted by the Administration Department during their first week of employment. The orientation will allow new employees to enroll and familiarize themselves with County benefits, obtain an identification badge, review job descriptions, become accustomed to departmental rules and policies if applicable, review purchasing policies, and formally acknowledge in writing the receipt of the county's Personnel Policy Handbook.

The Administration Department will conduct additional training sessions periodically on relevant topics such as purchasing policies, personnel policies, active shooter training, IT training, among other topics.

### **3.03 Classification and Compensation Plan**

The County shall have, maintain, and update periodically a county-wide classification and compensation plan for all full-time and part-time employees to ensure all employees are being paid fairly, equitably, and at market rates. The classification and compensation plan shall consist of position descriptions, salary grades, and salary ranges for all position titles. Additional position titles and their associated descriptions, grades, and ranges may be added from time to time based on need. All new employees shall begin their employment at the beginning of the pay range established for that position. Each position's pay range shall be increased at the beginning of every fiscal year in the same amount as the annual cost-of-living allowance (COLA), if any.

A copy of the current classification and compensation plan is attached in Exhibit B.

### **3.04 Work Hours, Overtime Pay, Compensatory Time, and On-Call Pay**

#### Work Hours

The County work hours are generally Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with an unpaid hour for lunch. However, certain work groups including public safety, public works, and public utilities have their own work schedules. Normal work hours that are missed due to tardiness shall not be made up during lunch, after hours, or before hours except by prior written approval of the Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor. Work hours can be altered by the Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor to avoid overtime or compensatory time. The County does not offer flex-time or remote working.

#### Overtime Pay

Overtime by non-exempt employees more than the established work periods (40 worked hours/7 days or 86 worked hours/14 days) shall be at the direction and prior written approval of the Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor. Any overtime worked that has not been approved by the Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor will be paid but the employee will face disciplinary action. Overtime is paid at time and a half in excess of the regular work schedule. Exempt employees are not eligible to receive overtime pay.

#### Compensatory (Comp) Time

Exempt employees that are not eligible to receive overtime pay may receive compensatory (Comp) time. Comp time will be paid at straight time for attending required after-hour meetings or at the specific need and prior written approval of the Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor. Any earned comp time shall be used during the semi-annual period it was earned (January 1 to June 30 and July 1 to December 31) or during the next subsequent month if earned during the latter part of the semi-annual period, shall not be accrued, or paid out. Non-exempt employees are not eligible to receive comp time.

#### On-Call Pay

Employees in some departments are required to be on-call after normal business hours in their normal course of business to respond to after-hour duties and emergencies. In this situation, employees that are on-call shall receive on-call pay in the amount of one hour per day while on call at their regular pay rate or as determined by the Administration Department.

Designated on-call employees shall be easily accessible by phone, remain in close proximity to the County, and not consume alcohol while on-call. On-call hours will not count toward overtime. However, hours worked if called in will count toward overtime.

### **3.05 Attendance and Reports**

All employees are expected to report to work on time and give a full day's work during their scheduled work hours. Department Heads, Elected Officials, or Supervisors shall ensure the employees' work time is accurately documented and approved through the County's electronic time keeping system.

It is also the employees' responsibility to ensure their work hours and benefit calculations are accurately reflected in the electronic time keeping system. If there are concerns, the employee shall contact the Administration Department immediately. Knowingly falsifying or manipulating employees' time, timesheets, or the electronic time keeping system shall result in disciplinary actions.

### **3.06 Chain of Command**

County employees shall follow the established chain of command and organizational chart to ensure an effective system of communication, performance, and accountability among all officials and employees at every level within the organization not to undermine the management structure.

In accordance with the County Code, “Except for the purpose of inquiries and investigations, the board of commissioners or its members shall deal with the county officers and employees who are subject to the direction and supervision of the county manager solely through the county manager, and neither the board of commissioners nor its members shall give orders to any such officer or employee either publicly or privately.”

### **3.07 Direct Deposit of Payroll Checks**

All County employees are expected to participate in direct deposit of their payroll checks into their preferred financial institution for more efficient payroll management. Exceptions may be granted by the Administration Department in rare circumstances on a case-by-case basis. The County will not print individual paycheck statements for distribution, but employees can and are encouraged to examine their paycheck statements electronically at any time.

### **3.08 Employee Benefits**

The County offers eligible employees with various benefits as outlined below:

#### Annual Cost-of-Living-Allowance (COLA) and Longevity Pay

All regular full-time and part-time employees may receive an annual COLA increase at the beginning of each fiscal year (July) and the salary ranges for all positions will be adjusted by the same percentage.

In addition to the annual COLA, all regular full-time and part-time employees may receive an annual longevity increase during their anniversary hiring month.

When regular full-time and part-time employees reach the maximum salary amount on the salary range, no longevity increases will be granted.

The annual COLA and longevity increases are subject to Board of Commissioners budget approval every year and are not guaranteed.

#### Health Insurance, Vision Insurance, Dental Insurance, Life Insurance, and Optional Insurances

See Exhibit C for the current employee benefit guide.

#### Defined Benefit (with an early retirement option) and Defined Contribution Retirement Plans

See Exhibit D for the current retirement plan document. The Defined Benefit retirement plan includes local policies supplementing Section 10.07 that states: any retired County employee may be elected or eligible to be rehired by the County after a bona fide retirement and may elect to continue or cease receiving their accrued retirement benefits. If this occurs, the rehired employee must have left the County’s employment for at least six months, return to a separate County department than previously served, begin at the starting rate of pay for the new position, and start accruing benefits as a new employee.

### 3.08 Employee Benefits *(continued)*

#### Paid Holidays

The County's official paid holidays are:

New Year's Day	Veterans Day
Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday	Thanksgiving Day
Memorial Day	Day After Thanksgiving
Juneteenth Day	Christmas Eve
Independence Day	Christmas Day
Labor Day	Employee Birthday

An official County holiday schedule will be prepared by the Administration Department and distributed every October for the upcoming calendar year showing all paid County holidays and their observance to minimize confusion on when County holidays are observed.

An employee's birthday holiday should be taken near the actual birthday but must be taken during the calendar year in which it falls.

Part-time and temporary employees are not eligible to receive holiday pay.

Employees not on approved leave and fail to report to work on a scheduled work day before or after a holiday shall forfeit the holiday pay. However, a doctor's note proving sick leave will suffice to avoid the forfeiture of the holiday pay.

All full-time County employees that are required to work on an official County holiday shall be paid eight hours for that holiday in addition of their regular hours.

County paid holidays that occur during an employee's approved leave will not be charged against the employees' leave.

#### Vacation Leave

All full-time employees shall begin accruing vacation leave immediately upon employment according to the following schedule:

Years of Service	Hours Earned for Exempt and 40 Hour Employees (2,080 hours per year)	Hours Earned for 12 Hour Shift Employees (2,184 hours per year)	Hours Earned for 24 Hour Shift Employees (2,920 hours per year)
0-2	3.08 hours per pay period / 80 hours per year	3.23 hours per pay period / 84 hours per year	4.32 hours per pay period / 112 hours per year
3-5	4.62 hours per pay period / 120 hours per year	4.84 hours per pay period / 126 hours per year	6.46 hours per pay period / 168 hours per year
6-10	6.16 hours per pay period / 160 hours per year	6.46 hours per pay period / 168 hours per year	8.61 hours per pay period / 224 hours per year
11-19	7.69 hours per pay period / 200 hours per year	8.07 hours per pay period / 210 hours per year	10.77 hours per pay period / 280 hours per year
20+	9.23 hours per pay period / 240 hours per year	9.65 hours per pay period / 251 hours per year	12.92 hours per pay period / 336 hours per year

### **3.08 Employee Benefits *(continued)***

#### Vacation Leave

Part-time and temporary employees are not eligible to receive vacation leave.

Full-time employees shall not use any accrued vacation leave until completion of their probationary period.

Vacation leave cannot be taken prior to accruals.

All requests for vacation leave shall be submitted to the Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor for approval through the county's electronic time keeping system at least one week prior to taking leave.

Employees are encouraged to take their accrued vacation leave for rest and rejuvenation. A maximum of 360 hours of accrued but unused vacation leave may rollover to the next calendar year.

In the event an employee cannot take their annual vacation leave due to work demands, the employee can be paid up to two weeks of accrued vacation leave per fiscal year upon approval of the County Manager.

Upon separation of employment from the County, employees shall be paid for all accrued but unused vacation leave.

#### Sick Leave

All full-time employees shall begin accruing sick leave immediately upon employment according to the following schedule: four hours per pay period.

Part-time and temporary employees are not eligible to receive sick leave.

Sick leave cannot be taken prior to accruals.

All requests for sick leave shall be communicated to the Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor preferable in writing at least two (2) hours in advance of the normal work schedule if possible or as soon as practical.

Sick leave is to be taken for the employees' and their dependents' medical appointments, bona fide illnesses and injuries, and maternity/paternity leave even during the probationary period. A maximum of 1,440 hours of accrued but unused sick leave may rollover to the next calendar year.

If an employee is out of work for three consecutive business days or more due to sickness or is on vacation and wants to use sick leave in lieu of vacation leave, or is known to abuse sick leave, a doctor's certificate will be needed to return to work.

Upon separation of employment from the County, employees shall forfeit any accrued but unused sick leave.

### **3.08 Employee Benefits *(continued)***

#### Sick Leave

When a regular full-time employee qualifies for retirement, has at least 10 years of continuous service, and has at least 720 hours of accrued but unused sick leave, that sick leave may be paid in lieu of their regular salary for 720 hours prior to retirement. The payment may be paid in a lump sum or in the same manner that all other employees are paid, on a biweekly basis. If paid on a biweekly basis, benefits, any COLAs, and longevity will apply but no vacation or sick leave will be accrued.

#### Military Leave

Employees shall be entitled to military leave in accordance with the Uniform Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act.

#### Jury Duty

Employees that are called for jury duty shall be given time off to perform their civic duty. If payment is received for jury duty, the employee shall endorse the payment to the County or have the equivalent amount deducted from their regular pay during the next pay period. Employees shall not receive both regular County pay and jury duty pay for same time period. It is the responsibility of the employee to notify their Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor of their jury duty and any payment received and ensure that the electronic timekeeping system reflects this type of leave.

#### Voting Leave

Employees, if requested and coordinated with their Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor, shall be given voting leave up to a maximum of two hours to vote in any election for which they are registered and qualified if the employee begins work less than two hours after the polls open or leaves work less than two hours before the polls close. Early or absentee voting is preferred.

#### Bereavement Leave

Regular full-time employees that experience unforeseen events such as death of a family member which prevents the employee from reporting to work shall be given up to 24 hours of paid bereavement leave to attend to family matters. Family in this situation is considered mother, father, spouse, brother, stepbrother, sister, stepsister, child, foster child, grandchild, grandparents, mother-in law and father-in law. Bereavement Leave does not have to be taken continuously. It is the responsibility of the employee to notify their Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor of these situations, provide verification of the event, if requested, and ensure the electronic time keeping system reflects this type of leave.

#### Administrative Leave

An employee may be placed on paid or unpaid administrative leave if an employee is being investigated for possible misconduct, possible criminal investigation, or if it is in the best interest of the County and the employee. The Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor consulting with the County Manager will determine if the administrative leave is paid or unpaid and the duration pending the outcome of the situation.

### **3.08 Employee Benefits** *(continued)*

#### FMLA Leave

Pursuant to the federal Family and Medical Leave Act, (“FMLA”), 29 U.S.C. §2601, et seq., an employee may be eligible for a Family and Medical Leave of Absence for up to twelve (12) weeks of unpaid leave in any twelve-month period for one or more of the following:

- the birth of a child and care of a newborn child (“bonding time”);
- placement of a child for adoption or foster care and to bond with child;
- the serious medical condition of a parent, spouse, or child; or
- the employee’s own serious medical condition that prevents him/her from performing the functions of his/her job

For purposes of this Section, a “12-month period” means a rolling twelve (12) months measured backward from the date the employee uses any FMLA leave.

If the provisions in this handbook conflict or come into conflict with FMLA as it presently exists or is amended from time to time, the provisions contained in the FMLA shall control.

- **Eligibility:** To be eligible for leave, an employee must have been working for the County for at least twelve months and must have worked at least 1,250 hours during the twelve-month period prior to the request for leave. Eligible employees under FMLA shall be entitled to leave upon the conditions and limitations of FMLA.
- **Concurrent Utilization of Paid Leave and/or Compensatory Time:** An employee requesting leave pursuant to FMLA is required to utilize short-term disability benefits (if applicable), all accrued leave, and/or compensatory time available as part of the 12-week leave period. If the available paid leave for the employee is less than twelve working weeks, the additional weeks of leave necessary to obtain the twelve work weeks of leave available under FMLA shall be provided without compensation. In any event, any combination of leave, compensatory time, and/or unpaid family and medical leave shall not exceed twelve (12) weeks. Use of short-term disability benefits, leave, and/or compensatory time, or any combination thereof, must be used concurrently with FMLA leave. FMLA requests will be retroactively dated to the date on which the serious health condition commenced. If the employee is absent on unpaid FMLA leave, he/she will not continue to accrue holiday hours or annual, sick, or other types of leave during this unpaid FMLA leave.
- **Accruals and Benefits during FMLA Leave:** The employee, while on FMLA leave, is not entitled to accrue annual leave, sick leave, and holidays during the periods of leave. For the purposes of retirement plans, any period of FMLA leave will be treated as continuous service for the purposes of vesting and eligibility to participate. During any period of leave, the County will maintain any medical insurance provided by the County to the employee for the duration of the paid leave at the level and under the condition’s coverage would have been provided if the employee had continued in employment continuously for the duration of such leave. The employee will continue to be responsible for his/her share of the cost. In addition, the employee’s dental, vision, life, and disability coverage (if applicable) will continue as long as the employee pays his/her share of the costs in a timely manner.



### **3.08 Employee Benefits *(continued)***

#### FMLA Leave

- Military Caregiver Leave: Employees eligible under FMLA who have been employed by the County for 12 months or more and who have worked the required number of hours during the 12 month period immediately preceding the commencement of leave, are eligible to take unpaid leave for a total of 26 work weeks in any single 12 month period to care for a covered service member with a serious injury or illness, if the employee is the spouse, son, daughter, parent, or the next of kin of the covered service member. Military caregiver leave extends to those seriously injured or ill members of both the Regular Armed Forces and the National Guard or Reserves.

#### Inclement Weather/Power Outages/Pandemic

If County offices are closed, partially closed, or have a delayed opening due to inclement weather, sustained power outages, or pandemic as approved by the County Manager or under a formal declaration, employees will not report to work during the closure but will receive inclement weather/power outage/pandemic pay for those hours of closure or delayed opening. However, public safety, public works, and public utilities employees, by the nature of their jobs, will need to work regardless. In these instances, public safety, public works, and public utilities employees will be paid their normal rate of pay plus the hours of closure, partial closure, or delayed opening. Hours paid for this type of leave will not count toward overtime.

#### Leave Without Pay

Regular full-time employees may request leave without pay for non-medical purposes after all vacation and sick leave have been exhausted and only up to three months. Medical purposes will be covered by FMLA. When considering leave without pay, Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor may determine if the leave will adversely affect the Department and quality of service. Leave without pay shall be requested by the employee in writing at least two weeks in advance before it is to begin for approval. Failure of an employee to return to work at the expiration of the approved leave shall be considered as job abandonment and the employee terminated. If the employee wants to return to work prior to the leave period expiration, they can do so with at least a one week written notice to the Department Head, Supervisor, or Elected Official. When the employee is on leave without pay, no vacation or sick leave will be accrued and no longevity or holiday pay will be granted. When the employee who is on leave without pay returns to work, they will return at the same pay rate as when they left.

#### Donation of Leave to Others

Employees may, at their option, donate their accrued but unused vacation or sick leave to another employee's sick leave who has exhausted their leave or does not have sufficient accrued sick or vacation leave for documented serious medical conditions. The donor employee shall be at the same pay rate or higher as the receiving employee. Donations are not guaranteed and should not be expected by any employee at any time. It is the responsibility of the receiving employee to file the necessary paperwork with the Administration Department to accept donated vacation or sick leave from other employees. Donated vacation or sick leave will be used as needed.

### **3.08 Employee Benefits *(continued)***

#### Cell Phone Stipend

Employees that are required to have a cell phone as part of their job can either obtain a County-paid cell phone for County business use only or use their own personal device and receive a \$50 monthly cell phone stipend for County use. Either one of these methods shall be approved by the Department Head, Supervisor, or Elected Official with a copy to the Administration Department. However, it should be recognized that communications that relate to County business, even if the communication is on a personal device, may be subject to the Georgia Open Records Act.

#### Clothing/Clothing Allowance

Employees that are required to wear a uniform as a condition of their employment such as law enforcement officials or health care workers and the uniform is not suitable for everyday wear, that clothing is not taxable to the employee.

Employees that are not required to wear a uniform but purchase clothing items from County funds, that cost will be added to the employee's taxable income and subject to payroll taxes in accordance with existing IRS rules. See Exhibit E for the IRS Quick Reference Guide for Public Employers.

#### Use of Take-Home Vehicles/Vehicle Allowance

The County may provide selected employees with a County-owned vehicle or a vehicle allowance as an additional benefit if it assists in the speed of response to emergencies or after-hours services or is a part of a total compensation package for a position. Use of County vehicles that are driven by employees that are marked as police, fire, and public safety, unmarked vehicles used by qualified law enforcement officials, utility repair trucks, and ambulances are not taxable to the employee.

All other take-home vehicles that do not meet the above criteria are considered a taxable benefit and the value of that benefit will be calculated and added to the employee's taxable income and subject to payroll taxes in accordance with existing IRS rules. See Exhibit E for the IRS Quick Reference Guide for Public Employers.

#### Employee Development

Department Heads, Elected Officials, County Manager, and Board of Commissioners shall encourage the staff in professional development and active involvement/membership in professional associations by funding training opportunities, conferences, seminars, among other opportunities for the good of the County and its employee as well as more effective provision of public services. Employees that want to participate in conferences and seminars shall submit a written request to their Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor along with a copy of the event schedule at least three weeks prior to the event for approval and funding availability.

### **3.09 Employee Promotions**

All existing employees are eligible to be promoted to a higher vacant position in any department if they meet the qualifications of the higher position. However, a promotion does not replace the formal recruitment process. The Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor shall make a promotion determination and approve the promotion through a completed Personal Action Form. Upon promotion, the employee will receive a new title and salary based on the higher position classification and compensation rates and subject to a 90-day probationary period.

### **3.10 Employee Transfers**

All existing employees are eligible to be transferred from one department to another if they meet the qualifications of the vacant position. However, a transfer does not replace the formal recruitment process. Both Department Heads, Elected Officials, or Supervisors shall make a transfer determination and approve the transfer through a completed Personnel Action Form. Upon transfer, the employee may receive a new title and salary based on the new position classification and compensation rates and be subject to a 90-day probationary period.

### **3.11 Employee Demotions**

An employee may be demoted by the Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor due to documented inadequate performance, reduction in workforce, disciplinary purposes, or loss of a required certification or other needed qualification. This action shall be documented through a completed Personnel Action Form. The employee may be assigned a new position title, position classification, and compensation rate and be subject to a 90-day probationary period.

### **3.12 Job Reclassifications**

Employees may request their Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor reclassify their existing position to an existing higher classification and its corresponding rate of pay based on additional duties and responsibilities. All position reclassifications shall be approved by the County Manager through a completed Personnel Action Form.

### **3.13 Re-employment**

An individual who has left the employment of the County in good standing (within six months and given a proper amount of notice) but not retired may be eligible to be rehired to their previous position if the position is available at the compensation rate in affect at the time of departure. However, a re-employment does not replace the formal recruitment process. The re-employed employee shall be considered a new employee for benefit purposes.

### **3.14 Personnel Transactions**

All employee appointments, promotions, transfers, demotions, reclassifications, re-employment, acting in a higher capacity, separation, and other personnel transactions shall be documented in writing on a Personnel Action Form by the Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor with a copy to the Administration Department and retained in the employees' personnel file.

### **3.15 Employee Evaluations**

Department Heads, Elected Officials, or Supervisors shall evaluate all their regular full-time and part-time employees using a standardized written appraisal form at least annually on a schedule as prepared by the Administration Department. Before the annual evaluation, all employees shall complete a self-evaluation detailing their accomplishments and contributions during the previous 12 months and submit that form to their Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor. The annual evaluation is meant to review the employees' previous 12-month work quality and attendance, discuss successes and failures, and make

### **3.15 Employee Evaluations *(continued)***

appropriate corrections to improve future performance. The self-evaluation form and the evaluation form are in the appendix as Exhibit E. The completed self-evaluation and the annual evaluation forms shall be retained by the Administration Department in the employees' personnel file.

All Department Heads, Elected Officials, or Supervisors are encouraged to communicate with their employees periodically throughout the year to adjust any unfavorable behaviors.

### **3.16 Departmental Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)**

Various departments may have their own standard operating procedures (SOPs) detailing specific procedures for employees within that department to follow. In the event of any conflicts between departmental SOPs and this official Personnel Policy Handbook, the Personnel Policy Handbook shall supersede. If employees have issues with departmental SOPs, those issues need to be resolved at the departmental level with the Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor.

Departmental SOPs and any amendments shall be submitted to the Administration Department for retention and reference as needed.

### **3.17 Drug Free Workplace**

The County shall maintain a workplace free of illegal drugs and prohibit the misuse and abuse of alcohol and other intoxicants by employees. Employees are encouraged to request access to the County's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) before drugs and alcohol affect their job performance. To enforce this policy, the County will use a variety of drug testing circumstances including the following:

#### Pre-employment

All individuals who have received a conditional offer of County employment shall pass a drug screen test at County expense prior to beginning their job. If the individual refuses or fails the drug test, the individual will be considered ineligible for hire for up to two years.

#### Random

County employees that are in safety sensitive positions, drive or operate or potentially can drive or operate County vehicles or equipment, carry firearms, or interact with inmates shall be subject to random drug testing using a random number generator selection method. All selected employees are required to submit to drug testing when notified. If the employee is not at work, they shall have the drug test as soon as practical the next scheduled workday. If an employee tests positive, a verification will be performed. If the subsequent verification is positive, or an employee refuses to submit to a drug test, the employee will be terminated.

#### Reasonable Suspicion

If a Department Head, Supervisor, or Elected Official has a reasonable suspicion after careful observation that a County employee seems to be impaired or intoxicated during work hours, the employee shall submit to a drug test to determine fitness for duty. If the drug test is positive, the employee will be driven home and will be terminated thereafter. If an employee refuses to submit to a drug test, the employee will be terminated.

### **3.17 Drug Free Workplace** *(continued)*

#### Post-Accident

Any County employee that has an accident while operating a County vehicle, equipment, or a personal vehicle while on County business or who has suffered an on-the-job injury shall be required to submit to a drug test immediately following the accident/injury. If the drug test is positive, the employee will be driven home and will be terminated thereafter. If the employee refuses to submit to a drug test, the employee will be terminated.

### **3.18 Disciplinary Actions**

Reasons for disciplinary actions include but are not limited to:

- Convicted of a felony
- Convicted of a misdemeanor involving moral turpitude
- Absent without leave or excessive tardiness
- Abuse of paid time off
- Inefficiency, misconduct, negligence, or incompetence in performance of duties
- Careless, negligent, or improper use of County property, vehicles, or equipment
- Willfully giving false statements to supervisors, officials, or the public
- Violating County personnel policies, regulations, or departmental SOPs
- Under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or other drugs while at work that have not been prescribed by a physician
- Instigation of, or participation in, or leadership of, a strike, work stoppage, slowdown, or artificial restriction of productive work
- Accepting gratuities in conflict with these personnel policies
- Political activity in conflict with these personnel policies
- Insubordination
- Failure to obtain or maintain necessary or required certifications, training, or licenses
- Violating any federal, state, or local laws while operating a County vehicle or lack of notification of such to the Department Head, Supervisor, or Elected Official within a timely manner
- Harassment or bullying in any form
- Failure to follow the established chain of command
- Falsifying or manipulating employees' time, timesheets, or the electronic time keeping system
- Taking photos/videos of accident scenes or using video footage from County-owned cameras and sharing that with others not part of an official investigation or on social media
- Other good and sufficient cause

### **3.19 Progressive Discipline**

If disciplinary actions are warranted, Department Heads, Elected Officials, or Supervisors may institute the following progressive disciplinary measures based on the severity of the actions. However, it should be noted that progressive discipline may not be appropriate in all situations and circumstances and some employee misconduct may require alternative and quicker disciplinary actions.

### **3.19 Progressive Discipline** *(continued)*

#### Oral Warning

A private discussion between the Department Head, Elected Officials, or Supervisor and the employee to counsel the employee regarding an infraction and ways to improve performance. Documentation of this discussion shall be prepared, acknowledged in writing by both the Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor and the employee, and placed in the employee's personnel file. The employee's signature does not signify agreement with the action but does indicate that the matter was discussed.

#### Written Reprimand

When oral warning(s) have not resulted in the expected improvement or when more severe action is warranted, a written reprimand will be prepared that details the offense, presented to, and discussed with the employee, acknowledged in writing by both the Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor and the employee, and placed in the employee's personnel file. The employee's signature does not signify agreement with the action but does indicate that the matter was discussed.

#### Performance Improvement Plan

In the event an employee's performance is not corrected by oral warnings and written reprimands, a Performance Improvement Plan will be developed by the Administration Department in conjunction with the Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor to assist the employee with improving their performance before more severe disciplinary action is taken.

#### Suspension

When oral warnings, written reprimands, and a Performance Improvement Plan have not resulted in expected improvement or when more severe action is warranted, an employee may be suspended without pay for a period not to exceed 30 business days. The written suspension will be prepared that details the offense, presented to, and discussed with the employee, acknowledged in writing by both the Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor and the employee, and placed in the employee personnel file. The employee's signature does not signify agreement with the action but does indicate that the matter was discussed. During suspension without pay, no benefits will accrue or holidays paid.

#### Demotion or Reduction in Salary

When oral warnings, written reprimands, Performance Improvement Plan, or suspensions have not resulted in expected improvement or when more severe action is warranted, an employee may be temporarily or permanently demoted to a lower position and pay grade or their salary reduced to a lower pay grade and range. The reasons for the demotion or reduction in salary will be prepared that details the offense, presented to and discussed with the employee, acknowledged by both the Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor, and placed in the employee personnel file. The employee's signature does not signify agreement with the action but does indicate that the matter was discussed.

#### Dismissal

When an employee receives at least a total of three oral warnings or written reprimands, or been suspended or demoted at least once within a six-month time frame, or demonstrates a pattern of non-compliance with established work rules, or an offense so egregious that dismissal is warranted immediately without going through the progressive discipline process, the employee may be dismissed from County employment by the Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor after consultation with the Administration Department. The reasons for the dismissal will be prepared that details the offense,

### **3.19 Progressive Discipline** *(continued)*

presented and discussed with the employee, acknowledged in writing by both the department head or supervisor, and placed in the employee personnel file.

### **3.20 Harassment, Accusations, Bullying, and Disability Discrimination**

#### Discriminatory Harassment

All employees are expected to avoid any behavior or conduct that could reasonably be interpreted as harassment including but not limited to offensive remarks, comments, jokes, slurs, pictures, drawings, posters, reading material, threatening reprisals, or communications including emails or text messages that pertain to or exploits an individual's race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, citizenship, sexual orientation, or other protected group status.

In addition, employees are expected to avoid behavior or conduct that have the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an employee's work performance or that creates an intimidating, hostile work environment.

#### Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is a form of unlawful discrimination on the basis of sex that violates law and policy. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitutes sexual harassment when this conduct: 1) explicitly or implicitly affects an individual's employment, 2) unreasonably interferes with an employee's work performance, or 3) creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

#### Accusations

The County recognizes that intentional or malicious false accusations of misconduct by individuals or employees against other employees can have serious effects on innocent employees. Therefore, such accusations will be taken seriously and investigated.

#### Bullying

All employees are expected to avoid behavior or conduct that could reasonable be interpreted as workplace bullying including but not limited to repeated behavior of verbal bullying (i.e. slander, name calling, abusive and offensive remarks), physical bullying (i.e. pushing, poking, or damage to employee's work space), gesture bullying (i.e. nonverbal threatening gestures or glances), or exclusion (i.e. physically excluding an employee in work related activities).

#### Disability Discrimination

An applicant or employee with a disability must be qualified to perform the essential functions for the job with or without reasonable accommodation. A reasonable accommodation is any change or adjustment to a job or work environment that permits a qualified applicant or employee with a disability to participate in the job application process, to perform the essential functions of the job, or to enjoy the benefits and privileges of employment equal to those enjoyed by employees without disabilities. Any request for a disability-related accommodation should be directed to the Administration Department. It shall be the responsibility of the Administration Department to initiate an interaction with the applicant/employee to determine whether the requested modification or adjustment is reasonable or whether it might result in undue hardship to the County's operations. If the requested accommodation is not reasonable, the Administration Department shall be responsible for recommending an alternative reasonable

### **3.20 Harassment, Accusations, Bullying, and Disability Discrimination *(continued)***

accommodation. If there is no reasonable accommodation that would enable the employee to perform the essential functions of his or her position, the employee may be deemed unqualified for the position and, consequently, separated from County employment.

Medical Inquires: at the pre-employment offer stage, all disability-related inquiries and medical examinations are prohibited even if job related. Upon receipt of a conditional offer of employment but prior to the start of work, disability-related inquiries and medical examinations are permitted if required for all employees entering the same job category. After employment begins, disability-related inquiries and medical examinations are allowed only if job-related and consistent with business necessity.

#### Reporting

The County will not tolerate discrimination, harassment, accusations, or bullying of any kind or form. Any form of harassment that is reported or known will be taken seriously, investigated, and treated as a disciplinary matter. Complainants will be protected from reprisal and retaliation. Any issues regarding any type of discrimination or harassment should be reported to the Administration Department for investigation and corrective action. In no event shall an employee be required to report directly to the offending individual or anyone who is a direct report to the offending individual. Accordingly, complaints can be made directly to the County Manager when necessary to avoid such a situation.

Prompt reporting is essential to the County's ability to respond to discrimination and harassment and prevent it from reoccurring. When an aggrieved employee delays more than thirty days before reporting an incident, the aggrieved employee fails to take full advantage of all available corrective measures under these policies. During the delay, discrimination may continue or escalate in severity. In addition, memories of witnesses may fade resulting in the County's inability to take preventative measures in a timely manner.

Employees are encouraged to report acts of disparate treatment before those actions result in adverse employment actions. Similarly, employees are encouraged to report perceived acts of harassment before they create a hostile environment. The County may elect to implement proactive and other preventative measures even in the absence of finding unlawful conduct has occurred. Such measures may include among other things, department-wide training, implementation of revised SOPs, and compliance monitoring.

All allegations of discrimination and harassment will be promptly and fully investigated by an individual with adequate training in conducting such investigations. Both the accused employee and the alleged victim will be entitled to notice of the investigator's findings. A substantiated complaint of discrimination or harassment may result in disciplinary action against the offending employee but other remedial, preventative, and corrective actions that do not involve separation of employment may also be considered where appropriate under the circumstances.

### **3.21 General Grievance Procedures**

If any County employee has a general grievance regarding administrative issues such as interpretation of personnel rules, compensation, employee benefits, or other administrative items not based on a disciplinary action, and their immediate Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor cannot resolve it, the employee may file a written general grievance with the County Manager within 10 business days of the grieved event. If the grievance pertains to the County Manager, the grievance may be filed with a



### **3.21 General Grievance Procedures *(continued)***

member of the Administration Department. The County Manager or the member of the Administration Department shall have ten business days from receiving the written grievance to review it and render a written decision to the employee.

### **3.22 Public Inspection of Personnel Records**

All employee personnel records, with exception of medical and other records including but not limited to I-9 forms, tax forms, and benefit election forms, are subject to the Georgia Open Records Act. Pursuant to O.C.G.A. 50-18-72 (a)(21), the County will redact the following information from employee records prior to producing them in response to an Open Records Request Act request: home address, home telephone number, personal mobile or wireless telephone number, day and month of birth, social security number, insurance information, medical information, mother's birth name, any available credit/debit card information, bank account information, account numbers, utility account numbers, if any, passwords, financial data, and information other than compensation by a government agency, unlisted telephone number (if so designated), and the identity of the employee's immediate family members or dependents.

### **3.23 Destruction of Personnel Records**

All employee personnel records shall follow the Georgia Records Management Act regarding retention and destruction.

### **3.24 External Employment and Volunteer Work**

Employees may engage in external employment outside normal County work hours when the external employment does not interfere with their County job, efficient performance of their County duties, or creates a conflict of interest. No employee shall engage in external employment or volunteer work during normal County work hours.

### **3.25 Interaction with Inmates**

Since the County operates a correctional institution that houses state inmates that work within the County offices, the County needs to limit the amount and type of interactions between employees and inmates. Any employee that supervises county correctional institution's inmates shall be trained and certified by a POST certified instructor as arranged by the Prison Warden prior to supervising the inmates as well as receives eight hours of annual recertification training.

Employees shall not maintain social, emotional, sexual, business, or financial associations with inmates on or off duty including through telephone calls, letters, or other communications. Furthermore, employees shall not give or accept anything from inmates or their family members to include without limitation items such as alcohol, drugs, food, drink, money, tobacco, or cell phones. Employees that engage in sexual misconduct with any inmate shall be terminated and subject to arrest.

### **3.26 Gifts and Gratuities**

Employees shall not accept gifts, gratuities, or loans from organizations, businesses, or individuals with whom they have official relationships when representing the County to minimize the appearance of favoritism, coercion, unfair advantage, or collusion. This policy is not intended to prohibit the acceptance of items of negligible value or social courtesies (less than \$200) which promote positive public relations or obtaining loans from local lending institutions. Employees shall not use County funds to purchase any type of gifts for employees.

### **3.27 Political Activity**

It is imperative that County employees maintain the public's trust that County functions, programs, and activities will be performed and administered in a nonpartisan manner. For purposes of this policy, "political activity" is defined as any activity directed toward the success or failure of a political party, candidate for partisan public office, or partisan political group.

Employees must refrain from engaging in political activity during work hours or while using County resources. Employees may not represent their personal views to be those of the County or its elected officials.

Nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent employees from becoming or continuing to be members of any political party, club or organization, or attending political meetings after work hours.

If an employee wishes to run for public office such as county offices, city offices, state offices, or federal offices, they may do so but shall not campaign during normal work hours. If elected, the employee shall resign from the employment of the County prior to taking office and cannot hold both positions at the same time.

### **3.28 Firearms in the Workplace**

County employees will comply with [Georgia Senate Bill 319 \(2022\)](#) regarding firearms in the workplace.

### **3.29 Children in the Workplace**

The presence of children in the workplace with the employee parent during the scheduled workday is inappropriate and shall be avoided except in emergency situations. Children brought to work in short-term emergency situations shall be always under the direct supervision of the employee parent.

### **3.30 Use of County Vehicles**

County employees that operate a County vehicle for County business shall abide by rules including but not limited to:

- have a valid state issued drivers' license
- use seat belts and ensure all passengers use seat belt
- obey all traffic rules on roads and parking areas
- keep the County vehicle locked when unattended

### **3.30 Use of County Vehicles *(continued)***

- don't use a phone to talk, text, email, or video while driving in accordance with O.C.G.A. 40-6-241
- don't allow unauthorized users to drive the County vehicle
- don't use any tobacco or vape products or intoxicants in County vehicles
- don't transport others besides employees, consultants, or others as necessary for County business
- spouses and limited family members may be transported while attending conferences
- don't affix personal items on vehicles such as stickers
- de minimis use is allowed such as going to lunch or running a brief errand during work hours
- report all accidents and traffic citations to Department Head or Supervisor in a timely manner
- pay any traffic fines using personal funds, not County funds, which may lead to disciplinary actions
- operate the County vehicle in a respectful manner that would not discredit the County

Department Heads shall ensure all assigned vehicles are in good working order, clean, receive preventative maintenance, and have a County logo as identification, excepted as provided by law.

### **3.31 Use of Personal Vehicles for County Business**

Use of personal vehicles for County business should be rare to avoid liability to the County. If a County vehicle is not available for County business purposes, personal vehicles may be used and the County will reimburse the employee for mileage using the current published IRS rate. The personal vehicle shall have the minimum liability limits of insurance as required by state law. If the personal vehicle is involved in an accident while conducting County business, the County will not assume any liability for bodily injury or property damage or be involved in the reporting or settlement of any insurance claims.

### **3.32 Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy**

The County's computer network consisting of computers, software, cell phones, internet connections, web browsers, web accounts, email system, printers, copiers, office phones, and security cameras shall be used by employees to support the County's business and improve customer service. The County's computer network and electronic communication that flows from its Internet address is an extension of the County and is to be used for County purposes in good taste. Specifically, electronic communication that flows from the county's network should not be offensive, harassing, derogatory, insulting, or list personal items for sale and should never contain sensitive information, sexually explicit materials, images, jokes, or chain letters. Visiting inappropriate websites that feature pornography, terrorism, illegal drugs, or gambling are strictly prohibited. Downloading or use of any software, music, or movies from the Internet that violates copyright laws is prohibited. Connecting a mobile device or a private peripheral device to the County's computer network may damage the network and shall only occur with advanced written approval from the IT Director.

The County understands that, from time to time, some of the County's computer equipment may be used for de minimis personal use but that minimal personal use shall be brief, infrequent, and within the spirit and intent of this acceptable use policy. To that end, all employees shall be aware that all electronic information and communications on the County's network are the property of the County, is subject to the Georgia Open Records Act, and employees should not expect any right to privacy. The County may review and monitor its network at its discretion at any time.

### **3.32 Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy *(continued)***

The Information Technology Department may mandate network security measures that employees shall adhere to in order to protect the County's IT infrastructure.

Failure to follow this policy may result in the loss of network access and disciplinary action.

### **3.33 Social Media Policy**

Employees shall not use County computer equipment or County-paid cell phones to engage in social media activities or engage in social media activities during normal work hours unless the social media postings are on a County-sponsored social media platform and advances the County's interest, not the employee's

interest. Employee's posts on social media sites that are discriminatory, threatening, or harassing will not be tolerated and subject to disciplinary actions. Employees that have been assigned a County email address shall not use it to register on a social media site or any other on-line site for personal use. The County encourages anyone to monitor social media postings and report violations to the Administration Department.

Employees are strongly encouraged to address issues related to their employment through the grievance process rather than resorting to social media. Employees who use social media to resolve job-related grievances do so at their own risk. Where such speech undermines the County's legitimate interest in efficient public service or impedes government functions, the County may take disciplinary actions against the employee.

**End of Section 3.0: Retention**

## **4.0 SEPARATIONS AND RETIREMENT**

Employees may transition out of County employment in a variety of ways including the following:

### **4.01 Voluntary Resignations**

An employee that voluntarily resigns their employment from the County should give their Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor a written notice of resignation with a copy to the Administration Department at least 10 business days prior to departure. The Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor may insist the employee leave immediately for security concerns but the employee will be paid for the ten-day notice and remain in good standing. Failure to give an adequate notice may result in denial of eligibility for reinstatement or rehire with the County.

### **4.02 Termination, Dismissal, or Firing**

When an employee receives a total of three oral warnings or written reprimands or been suspended or demoted at least once within a six-month time frame, can't obtain/loses a necessary license or certificate, can no longer perform the job duties, or commits an offense that is so egregious that dismissal is warranted immediately, the employee may be terminated from County employment. The reasons for the dismissal will be prepared that details the offense, presented to the employee, acknowledged by both the employee and the Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor, and placed in the employee personnel file.

### **4.03 Disability**

An employee who becomes unable to perform the essential functions of their positions with reasonable accommodation may be separated from employment.

### **4.04 Retirement**

Employees shall offer a written notice of retirement to their Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor with a copy to the Administration Department at least 30 business days prior to the intended date of retirement to facilitate a smooth transition of job responsibilities and timely processing of retirement paperwork and benefits.

### **4.05 Abandonment of Position**

An employee that fails to report to work during normal scheduled working hours for three consecutive business or workdays without any communication with their Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor and is not on authorized leave shall have abandoned their job. In this case, the employee shall be terminated and not considered for reinstatement with the County.

### **4.06 Reduction in Force and Lay-off**

If a reduction in the employee workforce is necessary based on a discontinued County service, lack of approved funding, economic distress, departmental reorganization, or other reason, the County Manager shall prepare a presentation to the Board of Commissioners detailing the reduction in force plan for

#### **4.06 Reduction in Force and Lay-off *(continued)***

consideration and approval in a public meeting. The reduction in force plan shall take into consideration the affected employees' length of service, annual performance reviews, skill set, among other items. If the reduction in force plan is approved by the Board of Commissioners, the County Manager shall implement the approved plan and notify all affected employees in writing. The affected employees may transfer to or apply for any County job vacancies that are available.

#### **4.07 Death**

If an employee dies while employed with the County, their stated beneficiary shall receive the employees' accumulated vacation leave and retirement benefits as detailed in the approved retirement plan.

#### **4.08 Return of County-Owned Property**

Upon separation of employment from the County, employees or their family members shall return all County-owned property to their Department Head, Elected Official, or Supervisor prior to and as a condition of receiving their last paycheck. The last paycheck may be adjusted to offset the cost of any County-owned property that is not returned in working order.

**End of Section 4.0: Separations and Retirement**

## 5.0 APPENDIX

- Exhibit A: [Organizational Chart](#)
- Exhibit B: [Classification and Compensation Plan](#)
- Exhibit C: [Employee Benefits Guide](#)
- Exhibit D: [Defined Benefit Retirement Plan](#) and [Defined Contribution Retirement Plan](#)
- Exhibit E: [IRS Quick Reference Guide for Public Employees](#)
- Exhibit F: Self-Evaluation Form and Annual Evaluation Form
- Exhibit G: Personnel Action Form
- Exhibit H: Personnel Policy Handbook Acknowledgement Form



**Personnel Action Form**

Employee's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Position Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- Exempt       Non-Exempt      Effective Date of Action: \_\_\_\_\_
- Regular       Temporary
- Full Time       Part Time (# of hours per week \_\_\_\_\_)

**Employment Action**

- New Hire       Off Probation       Promotion       Transfer
- Demotion       Re-Class       Re-Employ       Acting Status
- Pay Change       Cell Phone Stipend       Drug Test       Unexcused Leave
- Leave Without Pay       Disciplinary       Separation       Other

Description of Personnel Action:

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*[Reference Section(s) of the Personnel Policy Handbook]*

**Approval**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Department Head/Supervisor/Elected Official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
County Manager

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date





## Personnel Policy Handbook Acknowledgement Form

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Harris County Personnel Policy Handbook which describes important employment information about how the County operates and their specific work rules.

I understand that if I have any questions or concerns regarding this Handbook, its contents, or its interpretation, I should consult with the Administration Department.

I understand that this Handbook is not intended to provide any contractual obligations between the County or any employee related to continued employment, compensation, or contract.

This Handbook is subject to change and amendment from time to time by the Board of County Commissioners in a public meeting. Any changes or amendments will be communicated to all employees through Department Heads or Supervisors and posted to the County's website.

Any written or oral statements made by a Department Head, Supervisor, or Elected Official contrary to this Handbook shall be deemed invalid and should not be relied upon.

I further understand and agree that I will read and comply with the policies as contained in the Handbook and any changes or amendments and that my continued employment is contingent on following those established and approved policies.

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Employee Name (printed)

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Employee Signature

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Witness

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Department

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Date