

Hall County Employee Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual



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INTRODUCTION

Section 1.1: Organization Description

The purpose of the Hall County Employee Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual (“Manual”) is to acquaint you with Hall County and provide information regarding procedures and policies that affect your employment. This Manual, however, cannot anticipate and is not intended to cover every situation that may arise or to create a specific policy to be applied in every instance.

Employees are expected to read, understand, and comply with all provisions of this manual and are responsible for referring to the content should a question arise. Violation of any of these guidelines may subject the employee to discipline up to and including termination in accordance with the provisions of these guidelines, County ordinances, and Federal, State, and local laws.

The provisions and guidelines contained in this Manual are not binding on the County. As Hall County continues to grow, the need may arise to make revisions, and Hall County reserves the right to revise, supplement, suspend, or rescind any policies or portions of the manual any time as it deems appropriate, in its sole and absolute discretion, with or without notice to employees. The language used in this Manual is not intended to create a contract, or evidence of a contract, between Hall County and any employee. Nothing in this Manual should be construed as an offer of permanent employment.

These guidelines are based on the guiding principles and practices that have developed through years administering personnel policy and procedures. As a basic premise, the County will comply with all applicable local, state, and federal laws. Any practice or policy of the County will be applied consistently with all applicable laws and regulations. The following general principles guide County Officials and Management in making personnel decisions:

- A. Employees are individuals worthy of trust, dignity, and respect.
- B. Employees will do their best if their rewards are based on individual merit and group achievements, and if they have the opportunity for useful employment and personal security.
- C. Hall County’s long-term success and effectiveness depend on the efforts, achievements, and teamwork of all employees.

Section 1.2: Hall County Organizational Values

Organizational values exist to help guide the perspective of the organization as well as its actions. These values play an important role in determining how the organization confronts problems and issues and creates a common purpose for which the organization works. Each employee is critical to the success of Hall County as an organization. Keeping these values in mind and demonstrating them daily will assist every individual employee in making Hall County

successful as an organization.

Serving Citizens: We will always highly value the citizens we serve as the object of our continual focus on service. We will support the advancement of professionalism to our citizens and within the organization by our conduct, speech, demeanor, and decision making.

Enhancing Community: We will pursue innovative and creative means of advancing the organization forward to meet the expectations of growth and economic development opportunities in our future.

Responsible Stewardship: We will exhibit the highest level of stewardship to the citizens we serve, recognizing we are ultimately accountable to the public for our actions and duties.

Valuing Transparency: We will maintain openness and transparency as a basic tenet of our organizational structure. We will adhere to the highest ethical standards in the execution of our duties and responsibilities.

Efficient Cooperation: We will respect each member of staff as a necessary and vital member of the organization, recognizing the importance of the unique gifts, abilities, experiences, and talents which are integral to the organization reaching its maximum potential to best serve the citizens of Hall County.

Section 1.3: The History of Hall County

Established on Dec. 15, 1818, Hall County was named for Dr. Lyman Hall, a signer of the Declaration of Independence and later, Governor of Georgia. As we look to the future, after celebrating over 200 years of excellence, Hall County is poised to build upon its impressive economic and cultural competencies. Our mantra, “We have it ALL in Hall!” signifies the regional impact this community has throughout Northeast Georgia. From the mountainous views of Clermont and Lula to the folk pottery of Gillsville, the views of Lake Lanier, the “Poultry Capital of the World” in Gainesville, to the business corridor of Oakwood and Flowery Branch, all the way to the golf courses of Braselton, Hall County has a lot to offer.

Section 1.4: Hall County Services

The County provides a full range of services, including police and fire protection, the construction and maintenance of highways, streets, and other infrastructure, recreational activities, and cultural events. The County is also financially accountable for a legally separate Health Department and a legally separate Library System, both of which are reported separately within the County’s financial statements.

The County maintains budgetary controls to ensure compliance with State of Georgia law. Departments prepare revenue and expenditure estimates, which are reviewed by the Board of

Commissioners in a hearing open to the public. The Board of Commissioners then adopts the final budget on or before June 30 at an official Commission meeting.

Section 1.5: Organizational Structure

Our organization starts with serving the citizens of Hall County, operating under the Elected Officials, Board of Commissioners, and the Judicial System.

A. County Commission

As the legislative branch of Hall County and the elected representatives of the community at large, the County Commission establishes policy, direction, and goals to be achieved by the organization. The Board of Commissioners embodies five (5) members – one (1) Chairman is elected at-large and the other four (4) are elected by their respective geographical districts. Elections for the district seats are staggered to provide some continuity on the Board of Commissioners.

B. County Administrator

The County Administrator, appointed by the Board of Commissioners, serves as the chief administrative employee and is responsible for the administrative oversight of employees under the Civil Service System.

C. Department Director/Elected Constitutional Officers

Department Directors are responsible for ensuring the optimum performance of their department by providing leadership, guidance, and direction to achieve organizational goals and assure departmental integrity through coordinated teamwork as governed by the County's Rules and Regulations. A Department Director includes individuals appointed by the County Administrator. Elected/Constitutional Officers include the Sheriff, Clerk of Court, Tax Commissioner, and Probate Judge.

D. Departmental Rule Establishment Authority

Each Department Director has the authority to establish additional protocols or standard operating procedures that specifically apply to that department's activity and may not apply to the general employee population. Supplementary departmental protocols and standard operating procedures must be consistent and compatible with the Hall County Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual.

E. Human Resources

Human Resources is responsible for providing guidance and direction to all Hall County employees. Human Resources is here to effectively manage personnel through policy development and individual consultation, assure equitable treatment of all employees while ensuring clear work standards are established.

F. Manager or Supervisor

The Manager and/or Supervisor are responsible for assuring employees perform assigned work responsibilities, enforcing rules, training and developing a competent

workforce, providing feedback about performance, providing coaching and/or counseling to timely document performance concerns, and ensuring compliance with regulations.

G. Employee

The employee is responsible for performing assigned duties with professionalism, efficiency, and timeliness. The employee is expected to be flexible in the changing nature of Hall County functions based on the expectations of Management and our citizens. All employees are responsible for responding to directions from Supervisors, Managers, and Directors.

The County Commission, County Administrator, all elected and appointed Department Directors, and every employee have an important role in making the County an effective, efficient and responsive organization.

The primary goal of our organization is to promote, encourage and develop a strong, viable community and ensure we serve all Hall County citizens.

SECTION 2:

EMPLOYMENT AT WILL

Employment at Hall County is on an at-will basis. In the absence of a specific agreement to the contrary, in writing and by an authorized representative of the County, your employment is for an indefinite period, and it is subject to termination by you or the County for any reason, with or without cause, with or without notice, and at any time.

Nothing in this Manual creates or is intended to create an employment agreement, expressed or implied. Nothing contained in this Manual, or any other document provided to employees, does or should be construed to change the at-will status of employment, and nothing in this Manual is intended to be, nor should it be, construed as a contract, assurance, guarantee of employment, or any other right for any period of time.

Any salary figures provided to an employee in annual or monthly terms are stated for the sake of convenience or to facilitate comparisons and are not intended to and do not create an employment contract.

SECTION 3:

CIVIL SERVICE ACT

Section 3.1: Purpose

The following is a compilation of the provisions Civil Service System Act which became effective on July 1, 2015, together with adopted Rules, Regulations, and Standards of the Civil Service System which have been adopted pursuant to Section V of the Civil Service System Act. If you wish to refer to the Actual Civil Service System Act as enacted in 2015, it is available from the Human Resources Department.

The Act shall be known and may be cited as the “Hall County Civil Service System Act.” The general purpose of the Act is to establish a Civil Service System for Hall County, providing for the recruitment, selection, development, and retention of an effective work force of capable, diligent, and honest employees. The Civil Service System shall include policies for employee hiring and advancement, training, career development and performance evaluation, employee relations, and the disposition of employee grievances, discipline, discharge, and related activities. The purpose of the Act is to establish a Civil Service System in which all personnel matters shall be determined solely on the basis of merit and qualifications, without regard to race, color, sex, age, national origin, disability, or political affiliation.

Section 3.2: Probationary Period

Newly hired employees, as well as rehired employees, shall work under a probationary period of one (1) year, before being considered as a regular employee. During this probationary period, the employee shall not be a member of the Hall County Civil Service System.

Section 3.3: Civil Service Departments and Employees

The Act created and established the Hall County Civil Service System. All non-probationary Hall County employees now employed or hereafter employed shall be members of the Hall County Civil Service System, except for the Court Circuit employees identified in Section 3.4. In addition, all non-probationary employees now employed or hereafter employed by the Hall County Sheriff, the Hall County Probate Judge, the Hall County Clerk of Superior Court, and the Hall County Tax Commissioner shall also be members of the Hall County Civil Service System.

Section 3.4: Non-Civil Service Departments and Employees

- A. The following shall not be members of the Hall County Civil Service System: Elected Officers of the County, employees of the Magistrate, Juvenile, State and Superior Courts; the District Attorney; the Hall County Solicitor; members of appointed boards, members of commissions and authorities, part-time employees, temporary employees, interns, and all employees, who as of the date of adoption of the Act, currently have a contractual employment relationship with Hall County and all employees in the future, who, at the time of hire, by agreement with the hiring authority and with approval of the County Administrator, will enter into a contractual employment agreement instead of the Civil Service System.

- B. Policies for Non-Civil Service System departments and employees shall be as follows:
 - 1. The policies and procedures set forth under this employee handbook are not applicable to the above-listed Non-Civil Service System departments, officials, and employees.
 - 2. The policies and procedures for Non-Civil Service System departments are set forth by each of these individual departments in accordance with their own internal standard operating policies and procedures.

Section 3.5: Civil Service System Hearing Officer

The Hall County Board of Commissioners shall select an independent, impartial attorney who has been a member of the State Bar of Georgia for at least five (5) years to serve as Administrative Hearing Officer in matters for which a hearing is allowed under the Act. The Administrative Hearing Officer shall not be a current or former employee of Hall County and shall receive such per diem compensation, if any, as deemed appropriate by the Hall County Board of Commissioners. The Administrative Hearing Officer shall serve at the pleasure of the Board of Commissioners of Hall County.

- A. Duties of the Administrative Hearing Officer shall include:
 - 1. Conducting hearings and rendering decisions on charges against those employed in departments and offices included in said Civil Service System and hearing appeals from any employee included in the Civil Service System who claims to have been improperly suspended without pay, demoted, or dismissed.
 - 2. Keeping records of evidence presented as all testimony before the hearing officer must be transcribed, rendered under oath or affirmation, by oral testimony, depositions, or interrogatories, and with the right of cross examination. All decisions of the hearing officer shall be entered into a written record which shall be open to inspection by the public during regular office hours.
 - 3. Having limited decision-making authority in that the authority of the hearing officer, while hearing employee appeals, shall be limited to determining if management's decision is supported by the evidence, lies within the lawful discretion of management, and is consistent with County policies and procedures. The hearing officer's discretion is limited to either upholding or overturning the decision of management.
 - 4. Keeping and maintaining an accurate written record of his/her hearings and proceedings and he/she shall be furnished with clerical assistance by the governing authority to keep and maintain his/her records.
 - 5. Making recommendations as to amendments, additions to, and changes in the Hall County Employee Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual from time to time, and when said amendments, changes, or additions are adopted by the governing

authority of Hall County, said amendments shall have the force of law and be binding on all parties affected by said Civil Service System.

6. The Administrative Hearing Officer has the duty, function and responsibility of representing the interest of the public in the improvement of personnel administration and the selection and retention of qualified personnel. All hearings before the Administrative Hearing Officer shall be open and held in offices provided, therefore, by the governing authority of Hall County. The governing authority of said County is hereby authorized to provide necessary clerical assistance to the Administrative Hearing Officer. The Administrative Hearing Officer shall conduct scheduled hearings and may hold additional hearings as may be required for the proper discharge of his/her duties.

- B. In any appeal by an employee, it shall be the burden of the employee to establish and verify that the action in question:
 1. Does not substantially comply with sound management principles, consistent with the rules and regulations of the Hall County Civil Service Act;
 2. Is not supported by a preponderance of the evidence; and
 3. Is not reasonable or relative to the severity of the offense.

No employee of any department or office of the County who is covered under the Hall County Civil Service System Act may be suspended without pay, demoted, or dismissed from employment in said department or office except for good cause and in accordance with the Hall County Employee Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual as approved by the governing authority of Hall County. Any employee who is suspended without pay, demoted, or dismissed shall have the right to appeal pursuant to the terms of the rules and regulations prescribed herein for appeal. Such appeal shall be heard and determined by the Administrative Hearing Officer within 45 calendar days of the date that said appeal was filed with Human Resources; provided, however, that such employee must file his/her appeal with the Hall County Department of Human Resources in writing within 10 calendar days from the date of his/her suspension without pay, demotion, or dismissal. The decision of the Administrative Hearing Officer shall be binding upon the governing authority of Hall County, the Hall County Sheriff, Hall County Probate Judge, Hall County Clerk of Superior Court, and Hall County Tax Commissioner as to whether such suspension without pay, demotion, or dismissal was for proper cause.

Section 3.6: Hall County Director of Human Resources

The duties and functions of the Hall County Director of Human Resources shall be to prepare and submit proposed rules, regulations, and standards of the Civil Service System or amendments thereto and thereafter, recommend to the governing authority of Hall County the adoption of rules, regulations, standards, and amendments effectuating the Civil Service System established under the provisions of this Act. If the governing authority shall fail to adopt such rules, regulations, and standards within 45 calendar days, they shall become of full force and effect unless the governing authority shall conduct a public hearing thereon, in which event the

governing authority may change, modify, or disapprove such rules, regulations, or standards. Such rules and regulations shall include provisions for the establishment and maintenance of job classification and compensation plans, the conduct of examinations for appointment under the Civil Service System, the certification of eligible persons, appointment, promotions, transfers, demotions, separations, tenure, service ratings, reinstatements, appeals, and such additional regulations as may be deemed to be in the best interest of impartial selection of efficient personnel and improvement of public administration. Such rules and regulations shall prohibit political activity by any employee covered by the Civil Service System or the Administrative Hearing Officer. Said rules and regulations when adopted by the governing authority of Hall County or otherwise becoming effective, shall have the force of law and be binding upon all departments and offices of the County as may be covered under the Hall County Civil Service System Act.

Section 3.7: Appeals Process

The purpose of the appeals process is to provide an orderly process for resolving appeals filed by Civil Service System employees of suspensions without pay, demotions, and dismissals from employment by County management, as stated in the Civil Service System Act. The process is designed to be objective and provide a timely decision as to all appeals. Civil Service System employees and their supervisors/managers should take every opportunity to resolve appeals informally before an appeal is taken to the Hall County Administrative Hearing Officer for a decision.

The only matters that can give rise to a Civil Service System appeal to the Administrative Hearing Officer are employee suspensions without pay, demotions, and terminations of (dismissal from) employment. Other forms of discipline and other employment matters are not subject to the appeal process. Civil Service System and other employees who wish to make a complaint or grievance relating to any matter pertaining to their employment other than a suspension without pay, a demotion, or a termination, must utilize the complaint procedure described elsewhere in this Handbook.

A. Initial Appeal Procedures:

A Civil Service System employee who has received a suspension without pay, demotion, or termination of employment, and who wishes to appeal management's decision, must initially file his or her appeal with his or her department director or elected official within 10 calendar days of the action taken, with a copy filed with the Human Resources Director. The department director or elected official, upon receipt of an appeal, shall schedule a meeting/hearing with the employee within five days of receipt of the appeal if the employee desires a meeting/hearing. At the meeting/hearing, the employee shall have the opportunity to present his or her opposition to the disciplinary action in written or verbal form but shall not be allowed to have an attorney present. The Director of Human Resources and/or his or her designee may participate in this process upon request and may assist with the resolution of the appeal if appropriate. Within 10 calendar days of the meeting/hearing, the department director or elected official shall notify the employee of his or her decision as to the appeal, and include in the decision a

concise statement of the reasons for the decision, including a description of the factual reasons for the discipline, and a listing of any policies, rules, or procedures that relate to the imposition of the discipline. If an employee is not satisfied with the decision of his or her department director or elected official, the employee may file a written request for his or her appeal to be heard by the Civil Service Administrative Hearing Officer by filing said appeal with the County's Director of Human Resources within 10 calendar days of receipt of the decision by his or her department director or elected official. Upon receipt of an appeal, the Director of Human Resources will promptly transmit a copy of the appeal and all attached documents to the Administrative Hearing Officer and the department director or elected official at issue. Any request for an appeal to the Administrative Hearing Officer must include a list of all of the grounds for the appeal, a concise description of the facts supporting the appeal, a copy of all of the decisions rendered by management and the department director or elected official relating to the discipline including the initial discipline letter, and copies of any significant documents that are important to the appeal. Within 45 calendar days of the date that the employee files a request for an appeal hearing before the Administrative Hearing Officer, the Administrative Hearing Officer will set a hearing date, place, and time, subject to any requested continuance pursuant to the procedure below. Human Resources will coordinate with the Administrative Hearing Officer to promptly designate the appropriate time and place to conduct the hearing and shall notify the employee and the department director or elected official in writing. The written notification to all concerned parties shall be sent at least five (5) days prior to the date of the hearing. Consideration will be given to all parties concerned in the scheduling of hearings, and all such hearings will be open and public.

An employee who has an appeal scheduled before the Civil Service Administrative Hearing Officer may be allowed a continuance for good cause, at the discretion of the Administrative Hearing Officer, or may consent to a continuance requested by the County. However, the Administrative Hearing Officer may dismiss the case if more than two (2) continuances are requested without justifiable cause by the employee filing the appeal.

B. Administrative Hearing Officer Hearing Procedures:

In the hearing of an appeal, the proceedings shall be informal as compared to a judicial hearing. All hearings will be conducted in person, unless prior written approval is given by the Administrative Hearing Officer (approval will only be given for emergency purposes). The Administrative Hearing Officer shall preside over the hearing and the hearing shall be conducted in accordance with the provisions of these Rules and Regulations and the requirements of due process. The decision of the Administrative Hearing Officer's decision is considered final in matters of dismissals (terminations), demotions, and suspensions without pay. An employee whose appeal is upheld so that the decision of management is overturned will be reinstated with full restoration of all pay and benefits lost and shall resume previous duties without penalty if directed by the Administrative Hearing Officer. In all appeal cases, the following criteria and procedures will apply.

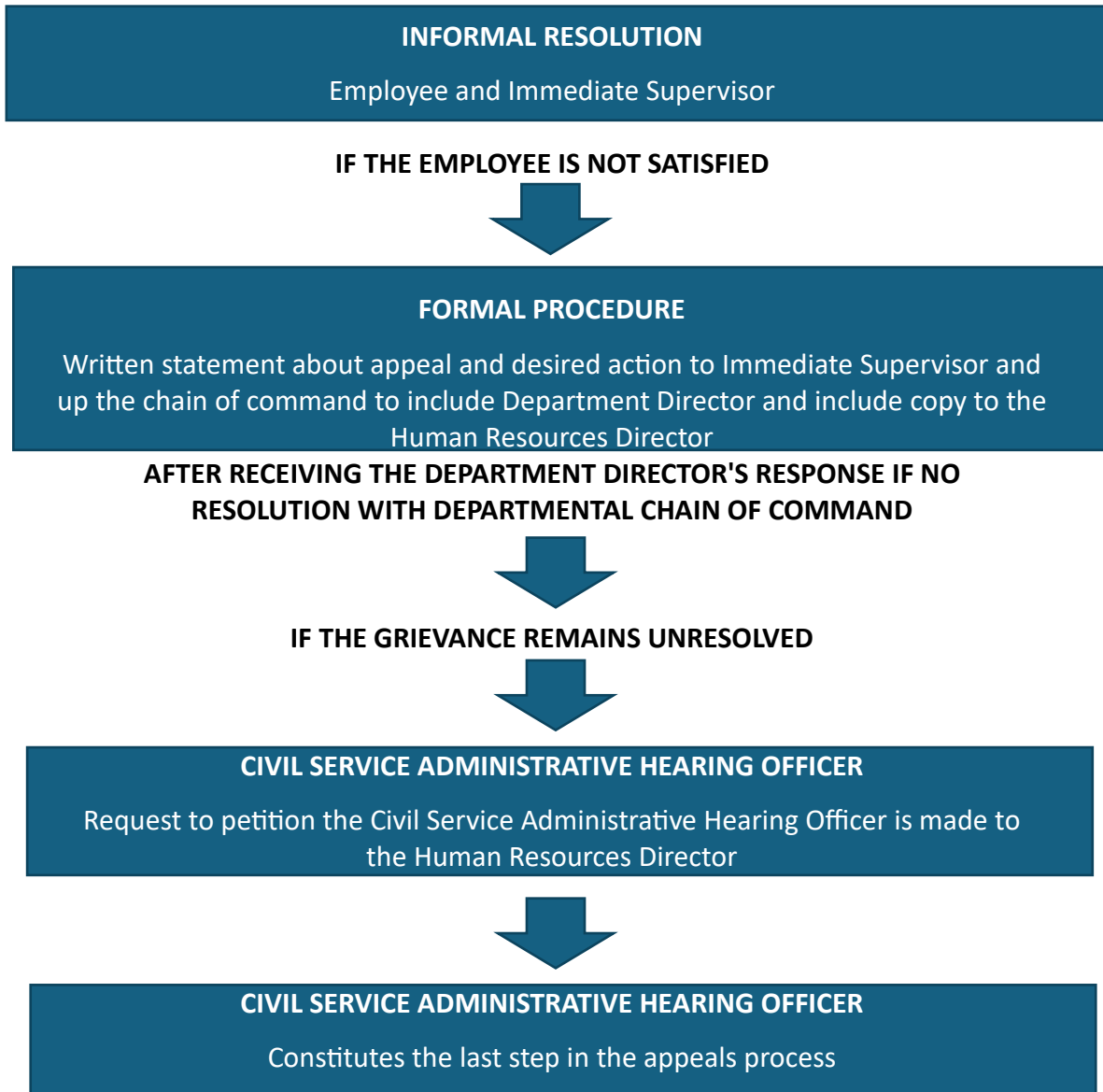
In any appeal by an employee, the employee shall first present his or her initial case to the hearing officer, and then management shall present its case. Both sides shall have the right to cross-examine witnesses, to present documentary evidence, and to make an argument as allowed by the hearing officer. Both sides shall be entitled to legal counsel, provided that legal counsel gives prior notice of their involvement in the case to the Administrative Hearing Officer and the Director of Human Resources. The hearing officer shall conduct the hearing, make evidentiary rulings, and prepare final orders for the decision. The hearing officer's final decision will include summary findings of fact and conclusions supporting the decision. In general, the hearing officer shall conduct the hearing process in conformity with the principle of due process but shall not allow the presentation of irrelevant or immaterial matters. The hearing officer is also authorized to set reasonable parameters on the hearing process designed to ensure that witnesses are not subject to repeat questions or harassment, and that the hearing process is not unduly burdensome. The decision of the hearing officer will be rendered on the preponderance of the evidence standard.

The authority of the hearing officer when hearing employee appeals shall be limited to determining whether management's decision to render discipline is supported by the evidence, lies within the lawful discretion of management, and is consistent with County policies and procedures. It shall be the burden of the employee to establish and verify that the action in question:

1. Does not substantially comply with sound management principles, consistent with these Rules and Regulations;
2. Is not supported by a preponderance of evidence maintaining the finding of facts and judgment; and
3. Is not reasonable or relative to the severity of the offence.

A recording or official transcript shall be made of all hearings. A copy of said transcript shall be made available to the appellant, upon request, at a cost to be determined by Human Resources.

APPEAL PROCEDURES FLOW CHART



NOTE: At any point in this chain of command procedure, the employee, Supervisor, or Department Director may call upon Human Resources to assist in a resolution of the problem.

SECTION 4:

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY

Section 4.1: Equal Opportunity

Hall County is committed to providing and promoting equal employment opportunities for all applicants and employees. Additionally, Hall County is committed to maintaining a work environment that is free of inappropriate or unlawful conduct on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or other protected group status as provided by law. In keeping with this commitment, we will not tolerate harassment, discrimination, retaliation, or unlawful treatment of employees, applicants, contractors, interns, temporary/seasonal staff, and volunteers by anyone, including but not limited to, any Official, Supervisor, co-worker, vendor, client, citizen of Hall County, or third party. It is the responsibility of all employees to ensure that the concepts of equal employment opportunity, non-harassment, and non-discrimination are understood, abided by, and carried out by everyone.

Hall County does not discriminate based on disability in its hiring or employment practices and complies with all regulations promulgated by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission under Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). All vacant positions will be posted for a minimum of three (3) calendar days.

Prohibited Conduct

This Policy applies to all aspects of employment, including, but not limited to, recruitment, hiring, promotion, demotion, transfer, lay-off, recall, discipline, termination, compensation, and benefits. Improper conduct also consists of misconduct that includes unwelcome conduct, whether verbal, physical, or visual, that is based upon a person's protected status or activity (such as opposition to prohibited discrimination or participation in the statutory complaint process) as provided for by law. This includes conduct by someone to another of the same gender. We prohibit unlawful conduct that affects tangible job benefits, that interferes unreasonably with an individual's work performance, or that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. No one, including any supervisor, has the authority to engage in such conduct.

If you feel you have been subject to the type of conduct prohibited by this Policy, you must report this conduct in accordance with the County's Employee Complaint Procedure, which is contained in this Manual. You should report any improper conduct before it becomes severe or pervasive and should not wait until it rises to the level of an unlawful action.

Employees should be aware that they have the right to file a charge of discrimination with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), or other state or federal agency as provided by law. According to the EEOC, the deadline for filing any such charge runs from the last date of alleged unlawful action, not from the date that the complaint to Hall County is addressed.

Sexual Harassment

Unlawful harassment based on an individual's sex is prohibited. Unlawful harassment can take many forms. For instance, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other physical, verbal, or visual conduct can constitute sex-based harassment when (1) submission to the conduct is an explicit or implicit term or condition of employment; (2) submission to or rejection of the conduct is used as the basis for an employment decision; or (3) the conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. Inappropriate conduct may include explicit sexual propositions; sexual innuendo; suggestive comments; jokes about gender-specific traits; gender-specific foul or obscene language or gestures; displays of foul, obscene, or sexual material; sexually-related emails and text messages; and physical contact, such as patting, pinching, or brushing against another's body. An individual who feels he or she has witnessed or been subject to harassment must follow the County's Employee Complaint Procedure, which is contained in this Manual.

Prohibition of Other Types of Unlawful Harassment

It also is against County policy to engage in verbal or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of his or her race, color, religion, age, national origin, disability, genetic information, or other protected status (or status of the individual's relatives, friends, or associates) that: (1) has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment; (2) has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance; or (3) otherwise adversely affects an individual's employment opportunities. An individual who feels he or she has witnessed or been subject to harassment must follow the County's Employee Complaint Procedure, which is contained in this Manual.

Americans with Disabilities Act and Pregnant Workers Fairness Act

It is our policy to provide equal employment opportunity to applicants and employees with covered disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended (ADA) or other applicable law. This Policy applies to all aspects of employment and application for employment. As required by the ADA or other applicable law, we will provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with a disability in the workplace unless such accommodation presents an undue hardship or if the individual is a direct threat to the health or safety of the individual or others.

Additionally, the County complies with the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA). In this regard, pursuant to any applicable requirements of the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, the County will provide reasonable accommodations to employees and applicants with known limitations related to pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions that can perform the essential functions of the job with such accommodations unless such accommodations present an undue hardship. Examples of reasonable accommodations under the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act may include:

- Additional break time for restroom use, meals, hydration, and rest

- Seating options allowing for sitting or standing as needed
- Schedule changes, part-time work, and paid and unpaid leave
- Flexible work hours to accommodate medical appointments and physical needs.
- Telework (remote work)
- Closer parking spots to the workplace entrance
- Light duty
- Making existing facilities accessible or modifying the work environment
- Job restructuring
- Temporarily suspending one or more essential functions of your job
- Acquiring or modifying equipment, uniforms, or devices
- Adjusting or modifying examinations or policies

The County further notes that it will not require individuals covered under this Act to take paid or unpaid leave if there is another reasonable accommodation that is available that still allows the individual to perform the essential functions of the job with such an accommodation.

An individual with a disability or a known limitation related to pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions may request a reasonable accommodation at any time during the application process or during employment. Reasonable accommodations are changes made to the work environment or to the manner or circumstances in which the job customarily is performed that allow an individual with a disability to perform all essential job functions. We are not required, however, to provide an accommodation if doing so would cause an undue hardship to the County or if the individual is a direct threat to the health or safety of the individual or others in the workplace.

All requests for accommodations will be addressed in connection with an interactive dialogue with the affected individual. The responsibility for seeking a reasonable accommodation begins with the employee or applicant. To request an accommodation, an individual should submit a request in writing to the Director of Human Resources.

Religious Accommodations

The County respects the sincerely held religious beliefs and practices of all employees and will make, on request, an accommodation for such observances when a reasonable accommodation is available that does not create an undue hardship on the County's business. An employee whose religious beliefs or practices conflict with his or her job, work schedule, or with the County's policy or practice on dress and appearance or with other aspects of employment and who seeks a religious accommodation must submit a written request for an accommodation to the Director of Human Resources. Alternatively, an individual may speak to the Director of Human Resources informally about a request for accommodation, but may be asked to complete an Accommodation Request Form. Upon receiving a request for accommodation, we will seek an interactive process with the individual to clarify his or her needs and identify the appropriate reasonable accommodation. Failure to provide the required information or to otherwise participate in a meaningful way in the interactive dialogue process regarding an

accommodation request may result in the denial of an accommodation. Any individual believing that a reasonable accommodation has not been provided or who otherwise feels he or she has been discriminated against on account of a religious belief or practice must follow the County's Employee Complaint Procedure, which is contained in this Manual.

Compliance with the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA)

It is a violation of County policy to discriminate, harass, or retaliate against an employee or an applicant on the basis of genetic information when it comes to any aspect of employment, including hiring, firing, pay, job assignments, promotions, layoffs, training, fringe benefits, or any other term or condition of employment. The County does not use genetic information to make employment decisions. It is a violation of this policy to ask for or obtain genetic information about an applicant or an employee, unless specifically authorized by law. In those circumstances where genetic information is maintained, it will be retained in a confidential manner and in a separate medical file to prevent unlawful disclosure.

Section 4.2: Commitment to Diversity

We are committed to fostering a workplace where everyone feels valued, respected, and empowered to contribute their unique perspectives and experiences. We embrace diversity in all its forms and strive to create an inclusive environment where differences are celebrated, and opportunities are equitable for all.

Section 4.3: Retaliation

Retaliation means adverse conduct taken because an individual reported an actual or a perceived violation of this policy, opposed practices prohibited by this policy, or participated in the reporting and investigation process described below. Adverse conduct includes but is not limited to:

- A. Shunning and avoiding an individual who reports harassment, discrimination, or retaliation
- B. Expressed or implied threats or intimidation intended to prevent an individual from reporting harassment, discrimination, or retaliation; *or*
- C. Denying employment benefits because an applicant or employee reported harassment, discrimination, retaliation, or participated in the reporting and investigation process

Section 4.4: Employee Complaint Procedure

All employees should help to ensure that we avoid any form of unlawful or inappropriate conduct. If you feel that you have experienced or witnessed (1) harassment, (2) discrimination, (3) improper denial of a request for an accommodation, (4) denial of requested leave under the FMLA, ADA, or otherwise, (5) retaliation, (6) violation of any policy of the County or policy in this Manual, (7) failure to pay overtime or other violation of the FLSA or wage payment laws, or (8) other unlawful or inappropriate conduct by anyone, including an employee, supervisor, manager, coworker, contractor, subcontractor, vendor, client, visitor, customer, agent, or other third party, you are to notify immediately (preferably in writing within 24 hours) the Director of Human Resources. The address and telephone number for the Human Resources Department

are P.O. Drawer 1435, Gainesville, GA 30503, 770-531-6712. If you are not contacted promptly about your complaint or are not satisfied with the response, you are to re-file it with the Director of Human Resources and also send notification of your complaint in writing by certified mail to County Administration, whose address is P.O. Drawer 1435, Gainesville, GA 30503. If you are not comfortable discussing the matter with the Director of Human Resources or otherwise do not wish to discuss the matter with the Director of Human Resources, you are to file your complaint directly with the Assistant County Administrators. If you are not satisfied with the response after filing and discussing your complaint with the Assistant County Administrators, you may file your complaint with the County Administrator. The County Administrator will constitute as the last step in the complaint process. We prohibit unlawful retaliation against anyone who has made a complaint or provides information related to a complaint.

We will undertake an objective and appropriate review of any complaint and expect all employees to fully cooperate with internal investigations that may be initiated by the County to examine any perceived violation of County policy or procedure or any other matter. To the extent practicable and appropriate, we will keep any complaint and the terms of its resolution confidential. We will take corrective action as we determine is appropriate, including such discipline up to and including immediate termination of employment. We will undertake corrective action to stop inappropriate conduct before it rises to the level of an unlawful action. You will be notified as to the outcome of your complaint. If you have any questions about the status of your complaint, you should contact the Director of Human Resources at the above telephone number and address.

Intentionally False Claims

We recognize that intentional or malicious false accusations of misconduct can have a serious effect on innocent individuals. Employees making such false accusations of misconduct will be disciplined in accordance with the nature and extent of his or her false accusation. We encourage any employee to raise questions he or she may have regarding misconduct or this Policy with the Director of Human Resources.

Section 4.5: Immigration Law Compliance

Hall County is committed to employing only United States citizens and aliens who are authorized to work in the United States and does not unlawfully discriminate based on citizenship or national origin.

In compliance with the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, each new employee, as a condition of employment, must complete the Employment Eligibility Verification Form I-9 and present documentation establishing identity and employment eligibility. Former employees who are rehired must complete the form. Employment eligibility must be verified prior to employment and no later than three (3) business days following an employee's hire date. Failure to do so may result in termination of employment.

Further, the County utilizes E-Verify in order to certify the work eligibility of its employees.

E-Verify is an Internet-based system operated by Department of Homeland Security in partnership with Social Security Administration that allows participating employers to electronically verify the employment eligibility of their newly hired employees. E-Verify works by electronically comparing the information on an employee's Form I-9 with SSA and DHS records to verify the identity and employment eligibility of each newly hired employee. As mandated by E-Verify, the County displays both the English and Spanish Notices of E-Verify Participation and the Right to Work Posters in County offices. Following is a copy of the E-Verify Poster.

This Organization Participates in E-Verify

Esta Organización Participa en E-Verify



This employer participates in E-Verify and will provide the federal government with your Form I-9 information to confirm that you are authorized to work in the U.S.

If E-Verify cannot confirm that you are authorized to work, this employer is required to give you written instructions and an opportunity to contact Department of Homeland Security (DHS) or Social Security Administration (SSA) so you can begin to resolve the issue before the employer can take any action against you, including terminating your employment.

Employers can only use E-Verify once you have accepted a job offer and completed the Form I-9.

E-Verify Works for Everyone

For more information on E-Verify, or if you believe that your employer has violated its E-Verify responsibilities, please contact DHS.

Este empleador participa en E-Verify y proporcionará al gobierno federal la información de su Formulario I-9 para confirmar que usted está autorizado para trabajar en los EE.UU..

Si E-Verify no puede confirmar que usted está autorizado para trabajar, este empleador está requerido a darle instrucciones por escrito y una oportunidad de contactar al Departamento de Seguridad Nacional (DHS) o a la Administración del Seguro Social (SSA) para que pueda empezar a resolver el problema antes de que el empleador pueda tomar cualquier acción en su contra, incluyendo la terminación de su empleo.

Los empleadores sólo pueden utilizar E-Verify una vez que usted haya aceptado una oferta de trabajo y completado el Formulario I-9.

E-Verify Funciona Para Todos

Para más información sobre E-Verify, o si usted cree que su empleador ha violado sus responsabilidades de E-Verify, por favor contacte a DHS.

888-897-7781

dhs.gov/e-verify



E-VERIFY IS A SERVICE OF DHS AND SSA

The E-Verify logo and mark are registered trademarks of Department of Homeland Security. Commercial sale of this poster is strictly prohibited.

English / Spanish Poster

IF YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO WORK, Don't let anyone take it away.



If you have the legal right to work in the United States, there are laws to protect you against discrimination in the workplace.

You should know that –

- In most cases, employers cannot deny you a job or fire you because of your national origin or citizenship status or refuse to accept your legally acceptable documents.
- Employers cannot reject documents because they have a future expiration date.

- Employers cannot terminate you because of E-Verify without giving you an opportunity to resolve the problem.
- In most cases, employers cannot require you to be a U.S. citizen or a lawful permanent resident.

If any of these things have happened to you, contact the Office of Special Counsel (OSC).

For assistance in your own language:

Phone: 1-800-255-7688 or
(202) 616-5594

For the hearing impaired:
TTY 1-800-237-2515 or
(202) 616-5525

E-mail: osccrt@usdoj.gov

Or write to:

U.S. Department of Justice – CRT
Office of Special Counsel – NYA
950 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20530

**U.S. Department of Justice
Civil Rights Division**

**Office of Special Counsel for
Immigration-Related Unfair
Employment Practices**



www.justice.gov/crt/about/osc

Section 4.6: Background Checks

As part of our commitment to fair and equitable hiring practices, Hall County adheres to 'Ban the Box' principles. We do not ask about criminal history on job applications. Background checks, including criminal history checks, are conducted only after a contingent offer of employment has been extended. A background check also may be conducted during employment, such as in connection with the reassignment or promotion of an employee. The County may conduct background checks, or the County may use a third-party administrator to conduct the background checks, and all background checks will be compliant with applicable laws, such as the Fair Credit Reporting Act. The information that may be collected includes, but is not limited to, criminal background, employment history, motor vehicle records, credit history, education, and professional and personal references. A prior criminal arrest or conviction is not an absolute or automatic bar to employment. The County will consider additional information from the applicant or employee to determine whether the individual's criminal record should bar the individual from working.

SECTION 5:

EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP

Section 5.1: Business Ethics and Conduct

The successful business operation and reputation of Hall County is built upon the principles of fair dealing and ethical conduct of our employees. Our reputation for integrity and excellence requires careful observance of the spirit and letter of all applicable laws and regulations, as well as a scrupulous regard for the highest standards of conduct and personal integrity at all times. Staff always reflect Hall County, on or off duty, and are expected to maintain the standards of conduct.

The continued success of Hall County is dependent upon our citizens' trust, and we are dedicated to preserving that trust. Employees owe a duty to Hall County, and its citizens to act in a way that will merit the continued trust and confidence of the public.

Hall County will comply with all applicable laws and regulations and expect its Directors, Officials, and employees to conduct business in accordance with the letter, spirit, and intent of all relevant laws and to refrain from any illegal, dishonest, or unethical conduct. If an employee has been charged with any illegal offense, an administrative inquiry may be conducted, and disciplinary action may be taken up to and including termination.

No employee shall accept any gift, favor or reward other than regular compensation for any service rendered as an employee of Hall County.

No employee shall in any way knowingly participate in falsifying records including but not limited to purchasing, payment approval, receiving, inventory records, or payroll.

No employee may buy or charge any goods or services of any amount to the accounts of Hall County unless following the procedures established through the County Code and regulations established through the Purchasing Office. An exception can be made under genuine emergency conditions, and then such purchase must be confirmed as soon as possible with a proper purchase order. (Full purchasing regulations are available through the Purchasing Department.)

In general, the use of good judgment, based on high ethical principles, will guide you with respect to lines of acceptable conduct. If a situation arises where it is difficult to determine the proper course of action, the matter should be discussed openly with your immediate Supervisor for advice and consultation. Compliance with this policy of business ethics and conduct is the responsibility of every Hall County employee. Disregarding or failing to comply with this standard of business ethics and conduct could lead to disciplinary action, up to and including possible termination of employment.

Employees should familiarize themselves with the Hall County Code of Ethics which can be found in the Code of Ordinances, Chapter 2.110

(<http://library.municode.com/index.aspx?clientId=12961>)

https://library.municode.com/ga/hall_county/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=PTIOFCO_TIT2ADPE_CH2.110COET

A. Political Activity Rule

Employees of the County are encouraged to exercise their right to vote, but no employee shall make use of County time or equipment to aid a political candidate, party or cause; or use a County position to influence, coerce or intimidate any person in the interest of a political candidate, party, or cause.

B. Seeking Elective Office

Any County employee seeking elective office within Hall County shall, upon declaring candidacy as defined by Georgia Law, resign their position or submit a request in writing to the County Administrator or appropriate Elected Department Director, for a personal leave of absence without pay from the date of his/her announcement through the duration of the campaign or the announcement of election results.

If elected to office, the employee shall immediately upon the date of election be separated from employment with the County upon the written request and approval of the County's Administrator or appropriate elected Department Director. Nothing contained herein shall be construed as providing the employee with the right to return to work after the election.

Declaring candidacy shall be defined as stated in O.C.G.A 21-5-3(4): "Candidate" means an individual who seeks nomination for election to any public office, whether or not such an individual is elected; and a person shall be deemed to seek nomination or election if such person has taken necessary action under the laws of this state to qualify such person for nomination for election or has received any contributions or made any expenditures in pursuit of such nomination or election or has given such person's consent for such person's campaign committee to receive contributions or make expenditures with a view to bringing about such person's nomination for election or election to such office.

C. Participation in Local Political Campaigns

An employee may not:

1. Be involved in any political activity that would constitute a conflict of interest, including participation in any aspect of any local political campaign on behalf of oneself if intending to seek elected office, or other individual, or in opposition to any candidate for office within Hall County, including municipal and/or county government offices. This includes but is not limited to displaying or distributing information, materials, or paraphernalia in support of any political candidate, party, or organization.

2. Knowingly solicit, accept, or receive political contributions from any person, to be used in support of or in opposition to any political candidate for election within Hall County, including municipal and/or county government offices.
3. Use, or promise to use, directly or indirectly, any official authority or influence, whether possessed or anticipated, to secure or attempt to secure for any person, a job or other advantage for the purpose of influencing the vote or political action of any person.

Nothing in this policy shall be construed to restrict the right of employees to hold membership in and support a political party, to vote as he/she chooses, to express personal opinions on political subjects and candidates, to maintain express personal opinions on political subjects and candidates, to maintain political neutrality, or to attend political meetings during non-working hours. No employee shall be hired, promoted, favored, or discriminated against with respect to employment because of his/her political opinions or affiliations. An employee violating this section shall be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Any person in government service must comply with all applicable ethics laws, regulations, and ordinances, including but not limited to the Code of Ethics for Government Service set forth in – **O.C.G.A. 45-10-1** and Chapter 2.110 of the Official Code of Hall County.

Section 5.2: Whistleblower and Fraud, Waste, and Abuse Reporting Policy

Ethical conduct is integral to the success of the County. Because the conduct and character of the County depend upon the actions of many people, it is important that each employee understands that the County is committed to conducting its activities with integrity. In keeping with this commitment, the purpose of this Whistleblower and Fraud, Waste, and Abuse Reporting Policy is to encourage the reporting of suspected fraud, waste, or abuse in or relating to any programs of the State of Georgia and operations of the County, such as:

- Violation of or noncompliance with any law, rule, ordinance, or regulation;
- Theft or unauthorized use of County property, including funds, monies, or other assets;
- Embezzlement or other financial irregularities;
- Forgery or other deliberate and wrongful alteration or destruction of County documents or files;
- Misappropriation or destruction of County resources;
- Improprieties in the handling or reporting of money or financial transactions;
- Unauthorized or wrongful manipulation of County systems or databases;
- Disclosing confidential and proprietary information to outside parties that otherwise is not subject to public disclosure by law without advance approval;
- Knowingly authorizing or receiving payment or reimbursement for goods not received, expenses not incurred, or services not performed; and
- Knowingly providing false or misleading information as a part of the County's filing with any government agency.

If you feel you have witnessed or have knowledge of the type of conduct prohibited by this Policy, you should report this conduct by using the County's Employee Complaint Procedure, which is contained in this Manual. The County will not retaliate against any employee who makes a complaint pursuant to this Policy or who objects to, or refuses to participate in, any activity, policy, or practice of the County that the employee has reasonable cause to believe is in violation of or noncompliance with a law, rule, or regulation. This Policy does not apply to policies or practices of the County that implement, or to actions by the County against employees who violate, privilege or confidentiality obligations recognized by applicable law.

Section 5.3: Employee Privacy and Inspection/Monitoring

It is Hall County's goal to respect the individual privacy of its employees and at the same time maintain a safe and secure workplace. When issues of safety and security arise, you may be requested to cooperate with an investigation. The investigation may include the following procedures to safeguard the County and its employees: searches of personal belongings, searches of work areas, searches of private vehicles on County premises, medical examinations, and the like. Failure to cooperate with an investigation is grounds for termination. Providing false information during any investigation may lead to discipline, including termination.

The County provides offices, desks, computers, and other County property to employees for their use while employed by the County. These items are the property of the County.

The County can make no assurances about the security or privacy of any office, desk, filing cabinet, computer, or other County facility and discourages the storage of valuables, perishables, and other personal items in them.

Additionally, the County reserves the right to open and inspect any item of any kind on County property, including in an office, desk, computer and files, file cabinet, or County property and its contents, at any time with or without reason, notice or consent. All vehicles parked in secure parking areas that restrict the general public by way of a gate, security officer or station, or other similar means and all vehicles parked in temporary parking areas are subject to search at any time with or without reason. All policies will be applied in compliance with state law regarding inspection of persons and vehicles, including, if applicable, O.C.G.A. § 16-11-135. Employees are expected to cooperate with property searches. If an employee refuses to cooperate, that employee may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

As part of its security measures and to help ensure a safe workplace, Hall County has video cameras positioned to monitor various areas of its facilities and may conduct video surveillance of any portion of its premises at any time. Video cameras will not be used in private areas, such as break rooms, restrooms, lockers, and/or dressing rooms, etc. Video surveillance will not include an audio component without the appropriate notification and signage. Employment with the County constitutes an express awareness of and consent to such surveillance.

Section 5.4: Privacy of Social Security Numbers

This policy and procedure explain Hall County's general standards and practices for how Social Security numbers are gathered, stored, disclosed, and ultimately disposed of. It is Hall County's policy that Social Security numbers obtained from employees, vendors, contractors, customers, or others are confidential information.

Social Security numbers will be obtained, retained, used, and disposed of only for legitimate business reasons and in accordance with the law and this policy. Documents or other records containing employee Social Security numbers generally will be requested, obtained, or created only for legitimate business reasons consistent with this policy. For example, Social Security numbers may be requested from employees for tax reporting purposes (i.e., Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Form W-4), for new hire reporting, or for purposes of enrollment in the County's employee benefit plans.

All records containing Social Security numbers (whether partial or complete) will be maintained in secure, confidential files with limited access.

Any employee who obtains, uses, or discloses Social Security numbers for unauthorized purposes or contrary to the requirements of this policy and procedure may be disciplined, up to and including discharge. The County will cooperate with government investigations of any person alleged to have obtained, used, or disclosed Social Security numbers for unlawful purposes.

Section 5.5: Employment Applications

We rely upon the accuracy of information contained in the employment application and the accuracy of other data presented throughout the hiring process and employment. To ensure that individuals who join Hall County, regardless of employment classification, are well qualified and have a strong potential to be productive and successful, Hall County may conduct background investigations of applicants. This employee background check policy applies to candidates who go through Hall County's hiring process.

Human Resources, or appointed designee, may investigate a candidate's background to include but not be limited to prior employment, training, education, criminal, credit and driver's history to verify the statements contained in the application.

Any falsification, misrepresentation, or material omission in information or data in the application process or employment may result in exclusion of the applicant from further consideration of employment, or if the person has been hired, disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. An employee terminated for such conduct shall be ineligible for rehire with the County.

Section 5.6: Employment Categories

A. Categories of Employment

To determine eligibility for benefits and overtime status and to ensure compliance with federal and state laws and regulations, Hall County classifies its employees as shown below. It is important for all employees to understand that: (1) no employee is guaranteed a certain number of hours per week or a particular schedule; (2) employees may be shifted from part-time to full-time or vice versa; and (3) the County specifically reserves the right to make changes to employees' hours and schedule without any advance notice or consent from the employee.

1. **Exempt:** Exempt employees are typically paid on a salary basis and are not eligible to receive overtime pay.
2. **Nonexempt:** Nonexempt employees are entitled to receive overtime pay as required by applicable federal and state law.
3. **Regular:** A regular employee has satisfied their probationary or working test period and is regularly scheduled to work a full-time schedule. An employee given a probationary appointment shall acquire regular status and official appointment upon satisfactory completion of the working test period, which lasts 12 months. Generally, they are eligible for Hall County's benefit package, subject to the terms, conditions, and limitations of each benefit program as described in the applicable benefit plan documents.
4. **Part-time:** Part-time employees are limited to working no more than 28 hours per week and are eligible for statutory benefits only.
5. **Acting Capacity Status:** An employee may serve in an acting capacity only in a position that has been duly established and is vacant or temporarily vacant.

B. Employment Classification

1. **Class Specifications:** Class specifications are written to define each group or class of job positions and are intended to be descriptive and explanatory, not restrictive. They are designed to indicate the kinds of positions that should be allocated to a class as determined by duties and/or responsibilities and shall not be construed as prescribing what the duties or responsibilities of any particular job in a department shall be. The use of an illustration of duties shall not be regarded as exclusive to other duties not mentioned that are similar in nature.
2. **Minimum Qualifications:** Minimum qualifications are statements of the minimum background, education and experience required for a particular job position.
3. **Revisions to Classification Plan:** Revisions to the Classification Plan may be made to reflect new or changed conditions or work practices within the classified service. Suggested revisions and amendments shall be presented to the County

Administrator. If additional funds are required, such changes are subject to the budgeting approval of the County Commission.

4. Addition of Jobs: Additional positions can be authorized by the County Commission as part of the budget process.

Additionally, Department Directors may request reallocation of existing staff, reclassification of existing positions, or the creation of a new classification. These requests are to be developed through Human Resources and approved by the County Administrator.

5. Job Descriptions: Human Resources maintains job descriptions for jobs within the County, the job classification plan, and classification specifications for job positions in the system. A copy of the plan shall be available for inspection by the public under reasonable conditions during business hours.

C. Duty of Loyalty

Upon becoming an employee of Hall County, you become obligated to exercise a duty of loyalty. The duty of loyalty requires that:

1. The employee serves the employer (Hall County) faithfully and refrains from knowingly or willfully acting to harm the business;
2. The employee refrains from conflicts of interest with the employer (Hall County);
3. The employee acts in the best interest of his or her employer during the employment relationship;
4. Everything an employee acquires through the employment relationship, except for compensation, belongs to the employer (Hall County);
5. Information regarding the County obtained during your employment is confidential and proprietary and should remain confidential. Under no circumstances may any information be used for your own personal benefit.
6. As an employee, you are responsible for ensuring that your conduct is reflective of the requirements established by Hall County.
7. When public employees make statements pursuant to their official duties, the employees are not speaking as citizens for First Amendment purposes, and the Constitution does not insulate their communications from employer discipline (2006, Supreme Court, Garcetti v. Ceballos).

Section 5.7: Separation from Employment

An employee may be separated from employment with Hall County in the following circumstances:

- A. **Resignation:** Employees who decide to leave their employment with Hall County are asked to submit to their Supervisor a written notice of voluntary resignation at least 14 days in advance of the date of resignation. Your providing this notice will be appreciated and noted favorably should you ever wish to reapply for employment with the County. Please understand that, once you provide your notice of resignation, the County retains the sole discretion on deciding when your last day will be, and nothing in this Manual should be construed to require the County to allow an employee to dictate a particular resignation date or work out a specific notice period. Employees are not permitted to use any paid time off (PTO), vacation and/or sick time during a resignation notice period unless authorized in advance by their supervisor. Hall County is not obligated to honor a request to rescind a resignation once it has been submitted.
- B. **Abandonment of Job:** An employee who is absent from work for three (3) consecutive working days without calling in to report the absence will be considered to have voluntarily abandoned his/her job.
- C. **Involuntary Termination:** Employment with the County also may be terminated by the County for any lawful reason, including but not limited to for performance or attendance reasons or due to a layoff or a reduction in force.
- D. **Retirement:** An employee may retire from employment if he/she has met the requirements under the provisions of the applicable retirement plan.
- E. **Death:** Separation from employment shall be effective as of the date of the death of the employee. All compensation due to such an employee as of the effective date of separation shall be paid first to the surviving legal spouse of such an employee. If there is no legal spouse, payment will go to the beneficiary as designated in the applicable executed documents, or lacking such documents, to the estate of the employee as may be determined by law.

Return of County Property:

Employees must return all Hall County property immediately upon separation from employment for any reason. Where permitted by applicable laws, Hall County may withhold from the final paycheck the cost of any items that are not returned when required, provided the employee is paid minimum wage for all hours worked. Hall County may also take all lawful action to recover or protect its property.

Section 5.8: Rehire Eligibility and Service Recognition

Rehire occurs when a former employee is eligible for consideration of employment with the County, in either the same or different position than previously held. Employees who separate from service and are rehired within 12 months into the same position may be rehired at the rate of pay in place at the time of termination.

Employees who separate from service and are rehired within 12 months into a different position could be rehired at the rate of pay comparable to the pay grade for the position.

Employees who terminate and complete a withdrawal of their vested 401(a) retirement funds may not return to work in less than 60 days.

A. An employee may not be eligible for rehire for the following reasons:

1. Egregious behavior such as theft, fraudulent activities, violence in the workplace, and falsification of County documents. Behaviors of this nature will result in being ineligible for employment with the County.

Employees terminated for reasons other than egregious behavior may still be eligible for reemployment with the County in other departments, excluding the terminating department.

B. Rehire Compensation and Benefits

1. Insurance and Similar Benefits: New coverage can be elected within 30 days of the rehire date, and the newly elected insurance will go into effect the first day of the month following thirty days of employment from the rehire date. Employees rehired less than 13 weeks from termination will have their medical benefits reinstated with no waiting period.
2. Retirement Benefits: The rehired employee may participate in the retirement program, e.g., 401a or 457b plan, as soon as practicable based on the plan and the rehire date.
3. Accrual of Leave: A rehired employee will accrue PTO (Paid Time Off) at the same rate as a newly hired employee. If rehired within 12 months of the employee's prior separation date into a full-time benefit-eligible position, the previous years of service will be considered and may be restored upon the Department Director's request and approval from the Director of Human Resources or his/her designee. No vacation time, sick, or PTO is accrued during the period between the termination date and the rehire date.
4. Sick Accrual: An employee who separates from employment with the County forfeits all unused sick leave as of the separation date. The County does not reinstate sick leave for rehired employees.

SECTION 6:

TIMEKEEPING

Section 6.1: Attendance and Punctuality

All employees are expected to arrive on time and ready to work every day they are scheduled to work. Regular, reliable attendance is required of all employees. Maintaining good attendance is a condition of employment and is an essential function of every employee. An employee shall be considered tardy when reporting to work more than three (3) minutes after the department's established beginning of the workday, assigned shift hour, or assigned meal period.

If an employee is late, or will be absent for an entire day, the employee must contact their Supervisor as soon as possible and in advance of their shift. Voicemail, text, and e-mail messages are not acceptable except in certain emergency circumstances. Excessive absenteeism or tardiness will result in discipline up to and including termination. Failure to report an absence or to work a scheduled shift without prior approval also may result in discipline up to and including termination. If an employee is absent for 3 consecutive days without notifying their supervisor, this action will be considered job abandonment, and that the employee has voluntarily resigned from their employment.

Excessive absenteeism and/or tardiness will result in termination. Excessive absenteeism and/or tardiness includes but is not limited to partial days absences or illnesses; failure to keep Supervisor properly informed concerning absences or tardiness; unauthorized time-swapping and/or shift-swapping; falsifying attendance or timekeeping record; or any unacceptable pattern of absences and/or tardiness over an individual's employment history. It is important to understand that other circumstances may be considered excessive absenteeism or tardiness. Your attendance is simply one aspect of your job performance and will be considered together with your overall performance and attitude.

This Policy will be applied consistent with all applicable laws. If your absence is approved under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA), or other applicable law, your absence will be considered in accordance with the requirements of such law. Please be advised that leave under the FMLA, ADA, PWFA, or other applicable law may require approval in advance and does not necessarily relieve you from your responsibilities as set forth in this Attendance and Punctuality Policy.

If you believe that an absence or tardy improperly has been considered, please utilize the County's Employee Complaint Procedure, which is contained in this Manual.

Certification by Physician

The County reserves the right to request a medical certificate signed by a licensed physician to verify a request for sick leave, including for any period of absence consisting of three (3) or

more consecutive workdays and to support a request for sick leave during a period when the employee is on vacation.

Typically, for pay purposes, timekeeping rounds time to the nearest quarter hour.

For example: If the department's regular starting time is 8 a.m., and an employee clocks in between 8 a.m. and 8:07 a.m., they will be paid from 8 a.m. If the employee clocks in between 8:08 a.m. and 8:15 a.m., they will be paid from 8:15 a.m. However, employees who clock in after their shift time are still considered tardy under this Attendance and Punctuality Policy.

Section 6.2: Workweek, Hours of Work, and Overtime

The standard workweek is from Sunday 12 a.m. until Saturday 11:59 p.m. and generally consists of 40 work hours. Office hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., with a 60-minute lunch break. Individual work schedules may vary depending on the needs of each department.

Overtime

When required due to the needs of the business, you may be asked to work overtime.

Nonexempt employees will be paid overtime compensation at the rate of one and one-half (1.5) of their regular rate of pay for all hours worked over 40 in a single workweek. All overtime work must be pre-approved by the Supervisor.

For fire protection or law enforcement employees, the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) provides those employees engaged in fire protection or law enforcement may be paid overtime on a "work period" basis. A "work period" may be from seven (7) consecutive days to 28 consecutive days in length. For work periods of at least seven (7) but less than 28 days, overtime pay is required when the number of hours worked exceeds the number of hours that bears the same relationship to 212 (fire) or 171 (police) as the number of days in the work period bears to 28. For example, fire protection personnel are due overtime pay after 106 hours worked during a 14-day work period, while law enforcement personnel must receive overtime after 86 hours worked during a 14-day work period.

For all employees, only actual hours worked count toward computing weekly overtime. Paid leave, such as holiday, paid time off (PTO), bereavement time, and jury duty, do not apply toward work time. All overtime work must be approved in advance by a Supervisor or Manager.

If an employee feels he or she has been subject to an improper salary deduction, has been improperly classified as exempt or non-exempt, or has not been paid overtime for any hours worked over 40 in a workweek, the employee must utilize the County's Employee Complaint Procedure, which is contained in this Manual. In the event it is determined that an improper deduction was made or that an employee was not paid any overtime due, the County will reimburse the employee.

Section 6.3: Time Records

We want to be sure that you are paid fairly for all hours that you work. To accomplish this, we must have an accurate record of the time that you work. Your supervisor will explain the timekeeping system you are required to use. The important points to remember are:

1. Be sure that you clock when you start your shift.
2. Be sure you clock out at the beginning of your meal period.
3. Be sure you clock in at the end of your meal period.
4. Be sure you clock out when you stop your shift.
5. If you leave the building on non-County business, you must clock out.

Using any timecard other than your own, or tampering with a timecard in any way, will result in disciplinary action up to and including discharge. Any change to or omission from a timecard must be approved by your supervisor.

At the end of each pay period, you are required to approve your time worked and any leave hours recorded for the pay period by noting your approval on your timecard. If you believe any of the information reflected is incorrect, you must notify your Manager or Payroll immediately, and you will have the opportunity to explain the issue. By approving your timecard, you are certifying that the information you submitted is complete and accurate. You may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination for submitting any inaccurate information on your report.

If you are asked or instructed by anybody in the County to perform work “off the clock” (in other words, perform work without reporting it on the time system), you are directed to refuse and immediately report the situation. Finally, if you contend you have not been compensated for all hours worked, inform your Supervisor and/or Human Resources.

Section 6.4: Payroll

The Payroll Team works hard to ensure that each person is paid correctly. To help us, and you, please check your pay information (including your hours and benefits deductions), each pay day, to ensure you have been paid correctly and report any errors promptly.

A. Payday

All employees are paid biweekly every other Friday. Each paycheck will include earnings for all work performed at the end of the previous payroll period.

Hall County pays its employees using direct deposit and may in some cases, issue “live” checks (first paycheck). Employees will receive an itemized statement of wages when Hall County makes direct deposits.

B. Pay Deductions

The law requires that Hall County make certain deductions from every employee's compensation. Among these are applicable federal, state, and local income taxes. Hall

County also must deduct Social Security taxes on each employee's earnings up to a specified limit that is called the Social Security Wage Base. Hall County matches the amount of Social Security taxes paid by each employee.

Hall County offers fringe benefits to eligible employees. Eligible employees may voluntarily authorize deductions from their paychecks to cover the costs of participation in these programs.

C. Garnishments

If your wages have been garnished by a court order or other legal entity, please understand that the County is required by law to honor garnishments, including child support. Until notified by a court to stop a garnishment, or unless otherwise required by law, we will deduct from your wage's amounts ordered to be garnished and you will be notified by the governing agency when this is going to occur.

D. Payroll Advances

Payroll advances or loans on unearned wages or salaries are not provided.

Section 6.5: Deductions from Pay and Safe Harbor Exempt Employees

Exempt employees receive a salary and do not receive overtime pay. Please understand that an employee's salary is paid to compensate for all work of every amount and kind that the employee performs in performing the job, and that the salary does not represent compensation only for the expected, regular, scheduled, average, normal, or typical amount or kind of work done for the County. Exempt salaried employees are subject to deductions from their salaries only for lawful reasons in compliance with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Employees classified as exempt from the overtime pay requirements of the FLSA will be notified of this classification at the time of hire or a change in position.

If an employee feels he or she has been subject to an improper salary deduction, has been improperly classified as exempt or non-exempt, or has not been paid overtime for any hours worked over 40 in a workweek, the employee must utilize the County's Employee Complaint Procedure, which is contained in this Manual. In the event it is determined that an improper deduction was made or that an employee was not paid any overtime due, the County will reimburse the employee.

Section 6.6: Paychecks

Hall County's pay period for all employees is bi-weekly, on Friday. If payday falls on a federal holiday, employees will receive their paycheck on the preceding workday. Paychecks are directly deposited into your checking and/or savings accounts.

Section 6.7: Salary Administration

The salary administration program at Hall County was created to achieve consistent pay practices, comply with federal and state laws, mirror our commitment to Equal Employment Opportunity, and offer competitive salaries within our labor market. The County maintains a

Compensation Plan providing salary schedules for each job classification in the system
Compensation for every position is determined by various factors, such as the duties and responsibilities of the job. Hall County may periodically review and restructure its salary administration program.

When authorized and in use, pay adjustments may be made based on the following: merit based on performance evaluation process, promotion, demotion, transfer, acting capacity assignment, or other circumstances. In addition, at times, employees may be eligible for supplemental pay because of the following:

- A. Achieving certifications which relate to one's position from which the County derives an increased benefit;
- B. Assignment on special teams such as SWAT, Dive Team or Honor Guard; and/or
- C. Fluency in a language other than English for which an employee would be designated for translation services as a regular duty.

Advance review and approval are required from Human Resources.

Please understand, however, that compensation increases and the terms and conditions of employment, including job assignments, transfers, promotions, and demotions, are determined by and at the discretion of the County.

A. Promotion

Promotion is the advancement of an employee from a job within one (1) class to a job in another class having a higher salary range. Upon promotion, an employee will receive a five (5) percent increase per grade up to a 20% cap. Upon the date of promotion, an employee begins a new probationary period for that position.

B. Demotion

A reduction of a regular position to a lesser grade. A lesser grade means a grade that is less than the one currently held. A demotion may be made for cause or may be made on a voluntary or involuntary basis. An employee who is demoted shall retain the same employment status in the lower position that he/she had in the higher, except that if the demotion is to the position from which the employee was promoted, the employment status will be that of the original position. In the event of an involuntary demotion, the Department Director must give notification to the employee being demoted of the action being taken, describe the action causing the demotion and give reason for the demotion.

An employee who is reclassified by demotion may have his/her salary reduced in accordance with the Demotion Policy. A demotion will result in a decrease in pay of two point five (2.5) percent with a 15% cap. Exceptions to this provision may be made due to market conditions, experience levels, scope of responsibilities and comparable salaries

for those employees occupying the same or similar level position and must be approved by Human Resources.

C. Transfer

Transfer is defined as a change from one (1) position to another at the same pay grade level. The individual accepting the transfer will do so at his/her current salary. Salary adjustments for transferees may be made for the purpose of maintaining salary equity.

D. Acting Capacity and Temporary Pay

1. Acting Capacity: The employee working in an acting capacity shall be expected to fully perform all the normally assigned duties of the position on a temporary basis until the incumbent returns to their assigned position or a full-time replacement is appointed.
2. Duration of Acting Capacity Assignment: An employee required to temporarily perform in a higher-level job classification and perform the actual duties normally assigned to the duly authorized vacant position for an extended period. Acting pay assignments should generally last for no longer than 12 months, unless there are specific circumstances and should be discussed with Human Resources.
 - a. Acting Capacity Pay: The amount of the temporary pay increase, if authorized, will be no less than 5% or the minimum of the salary range of the position being filled, whichever results in the higher wage. At the discretion of the Director of Human Resources, the temporary pay may be set at a higher level. Upon conclusion of the acting capacity or interim period, the employee's rate of pay will be returned to the amount prior to appointment.
 - b. Authorization: A personnel action form shall be completed and approved by the Department Director on any employee placed in an acting capacity; and the same procedure shall be followed upon discontinuation of that employee's functioning in this status.

E. Compensation Plan Review

A review of the Compensation Plan for Hall County should take into consideration such factors as:

1. The competitiveness of Hall County wages versus the labor market;
2. Living costs; and
3. Others that may be relevant.

F. Final Compensation Approval Authority

Through the budgetary process, the Board of Commissioners shall have final authority in all matters concerning the Compensation Plan.

SECTION 7:

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Section 7.1: Conflicts of Interest

Hall County expects all employees to conduct themselves and County business in a manner that reflects the highest standards of ethical conduct and in accordance with all federal, state, and local laws and regulations. This includes avoiding real and potential conflicts of interest.

It is important that each employee understands and accepts the following standards of conduct for which he or she will be held accountable:

- Honest and ethical conduct, including the ethical handling of actual or apparent conflicts of interest between personal and professional relationships;
- Full, fair, accurate, timely and understandable disclosure in all reports or other public communications made by the County;
- Compliance with applicable laws and governmental rules and regulations;
- Prompt internal reporting of violations of this policy to an appropriate person or persons identified in this Code; and
- Accountability for adherence to this policy.

The County is committed to maintaining a business environment that is free of inappropriate or unlawful conduct. In keeping with this commitment, we will not tolerate any unethical or illegal conduct on the part of our employees, contractors, subcontractors, vendors, citizens, or agents. All persons or entities performing work on behalf of or for the benefit of the County are expected to follow the letter and spirit of all applicable laws, regulations, ordinances and accepted financial reporting standards applicable to our business.

Conflict of Interest: While employed by the County, it is your obligation to always act in the best interest of the County and not allow any personal activity to conflict with or interfere with your service to the County. As a result, any interest, relationship, or activity by an employee that does or may impair the independence of that person's judgment with respect to the best interest of the County constitutes a conflict of interest. Employees must report verbally and/or in writing all situations involving even a possible conflict to their Director and the Director of Human Resources, and avoid any attempt to judge their own case. Any doubts about outside business interests or activities should be discussed with these two authorities.

Gifts

You should not accept a gift from a vendor, supplier, or citizen of the County.

Outside Employment

Our County hopes that you will not find it necessary to seek additional outside employment. However, if you seek or accept an outside position, the role must not conflict or interfere in any way with your responsibilities within the County. While on a leave of absence, you may not

work or be gainfully employed by yourself or by another employer. If you are on a leave of absence and are found to be in violation of this policy, you will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Employee Complaint Procedure

The County will not tolerate unlawful or unethical conduct. No employee, director, or official has the authority to engage in such conduct. If you feel you have witnessed or have knowledge of the type of conduct prohibited by this policy, you must report this conduct by utilizing the County's Employee Complaint Procedure, which is contained in this Manual.

Retaliation

The County prohibits harassment, discrimination, unlawful treatment, or other forms of retaliation against any individual making a report of a violation of this Policy by anyone, including any employee, supervisor, coworker, contractor, subcontractor, vendor, citizen, or agent of the County. If you feel you have been subjected to retaliation for making a complaint pursuant to this policy, you must report this conduct by utilizing the County's Employee Complaint Procedure, which is contained in this Manual.

Section 7.2: Confidential Information

The protection of confidential business information and trade secrets is vital to the interests and success of Hall County. Employees must carefully protect and must not disclose to any third party any confidential or proprietary information belonging to the County or its citizens, unless expressly authorized or specifically required in the course of performing authorized services for the County or as required by applicable law, such as the Georgia Open Records Act.

Misuse of confidential information can include accessing information not directly relevant to your specifically assigned tasks; disclosing, discussing, and/or providing confidential information to any individual not authorized to view or access that data; and failing to properly handle, store, or dispose of confidential data. An employee is prohibited from accessing any of the County's confidential information, including over the County's networks, servers, or drives, to which the employee has not been granted access. Employees also should clearly understand that they are prohibited from accessing confidential information by exceeding any authorization they have been granted to access any part of the County's technology systems, such as networks, servers, or drives (this includes accessing any other person's computer, voicemail, files, or data without approval).

Employees with access to confidential information should ensure that any materials containing confidential information are stored safely before leaving their work areas each day and that any confidential information on your computer, tablet, or other personal mobile device shall be protected by use of a reasonable password. In the event that a personal mobile device with

confidential information on it is lost or stolen, you must report it immediately to your supervisor.

An employee who improperly uses or discloses trade secrets or confidential business information will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment and legal action, even if the employee does not actually benefit from the disclosed information.

Further, upon separation from employment for any reason, employees are required to return all of the County's property that is in their control or possession to the County, including, but not limited to, confidential information. This Policy specifically requires employees to return all County property (including electronically stored information) that employees may have taken outside of the office (such as to their personal residence) or transferred to or stored on non-County computers and other electronic storage devices during the course of their employment. Employees should clearly understand that, upon separation from their employment, they are without authorization to access or use any such County property, whether through a County-sponsored computer or computer network or via a non-County computer or other electronic storage device. Further, for the avoidance of doubt, this Policy also makes clear that no individual is authorized to access the County's computer/network system after they are no longer performing services for the County, unless such post-termination access is expressly authorized in writing by your supervisor or department director.

Finally, the County has no desire or intention to acquire trade secrets or confidential information belonging to other persons or entities. Accordingly, if you are aware of trade secrets or confidential information belonging to other persons or entities not affiliated with the County, you shall not use or disclose that information as a part of your performance of job duties for the County.

All inquiries from the media must be referred to the Communications Department.

Section 7.3: Personal Data Changes and Employee Records

A. Personal Data

It is the responsibility of each employee to promptly notify Human Resources of any changes in personal data. Personal mailing addresses, telephone numbers, number and names of dependents, individuals to be contacted in the event of an emergency, educational accomplishments, and other such status reports should be accurate and current at all times.

B. Personnel Transactions and Records

All appointments, separations, and other personnel transactions shall be made on Request for Personnel Action forms. Personnel files for all County employees shall be kept in Human Resources.

Human Resources shall maintain the personnel files on each County employee. Departments may prepare or maintain additional documentation regarding employees (excluding medical documentation), but all such documentation must be forwarded to Human Resources for storage in the employee's personnel file. All personnel documentation maintained by a supervisor or director should be locked in an area that is controlled and secured by the supervisor and/or director.

Section 7.4: Access to Personnel Files and Information

Hall County maintains a personnel file for each employee. The personnel file may include information about the employee's job application, resume, records of training, documentation of performance appraisals, salary increases, and other employment records.

Personnel files are the property of Hall County, and access to the information they contain will be administered in compliance with the Open Records Act. Employees who wish to review their own file should contact Human Resources. With reasonable advance notice, employees may review their own personnel files in Hall County's offices and in the presence of an individual appointed by Hall County to maintain the files.

A. Public Inspection of Personnel Records

All personnel records of employees covered under these rules and all other records and material relating to the administration of the personnel system shall be considered confidential and the property of Hall County. Information obtained in the course of official duties shall not be released by any employee other than those with this responsibility as part of official duties. All requests for personnel information must be processed through Human Resources. This release of personnel records is governed under the Georgia Open Records Act. (O.C.G.A. 50-18-70).

1. Within three (3) business days after the request is received, Human Resources will determine if the requested information can be released;
2. Verbal requests are acceptable for any employee to see his/her own file with three (3) business days advance notice.
3. A written request shall be provided for the purpose of reviewing any personnel records or files.
4. Charges for documents requested through the Georgia Open Records Act will be determined at a reasonable hourly rate for staff time and copies.
5. Items not subject to the Georgia Open Records Act. (O.C.G.A. 50-18-72(2)-(7) includes but is not limited to medical records, personal data such as social security numbers, similar files or related information.

B. Destruction of Records

Employee records shall be kept in accordance with the State of Georgia retention requirements. Such records may be kept in their original form or in any other form that Human Resources deems appropriate. Destruction of all other records, including correspondence, applications, and examinations, is governed by and will be in accordance with the Georgia Records Management Act (O.C.G.A. 50-18-90) (85)-(503).

C. Release of Application Materials and Administrative Investigations

The release of resumes and applications for employment, as well as records consisting of materials obtained in an investigation related to the suspension, firing, or investigation of a complaint against an official or employee, will be governed by the Open Records Act and other applicable laws.

D. Job References and Other Requests Relating to Employees

The County's reference policy is that employees are not to provide any reference regarding a current or former employee's employment with the County. Any request for a reference or employment history of any kind must be directed to the Director of Human Resources. For your information, the Director of Human Resources or his/her designee's response will be limited to providing dates of employment and last-held job positions (and, upon written request with authorization from the former employee, last-held pay rate).

Any other request relating to a current or former employee (including, but not limited to, a request from a government agency relating to a garnishment action or a claim for unemployment benefits compensation) must be directed to the Director of Human Resources.

Section 7.5: Employment of Relatives and Domestic Partners

An otherwise qualified candidate is excluded from consideration for a vacancy or transfer if a potential conflict of interest involving a relative or domestic partner would be created. The employment of relatives and partners in an organization may cause serious conflicts, perception of favoritism, and impact on employee morale. In addition to claims of partiality in treatment at work, personal conflicts from outside the work environment can be carried over into day-to-day working relationships. This policy applies to all employment (full-time, part-time, seasonal, and temporary employees). Employees are required to notify their Department Director and/or Human Resources should they become aware of any violations of this policy.

A. Definition of Relatives and Domestic Partners

Four purposes of this policy, relatives shall be defined as immediate family by blood or marriage to include spouse, parent or guardian, child, brother, sister, father-in-law, mother-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, aunt, uncle, first cousin, niece, nephew, grandparent, grandchild, stepmother, stepfather, stepson, stepdaughter, stepsister, stepbrother, legally adopted parents and children, or other relative living in the employee's

household. For the purpose of this policy, a “domestic partnership” is defined as a committed relationship between two (2) individuals who are sharing a home or living arrangements.

B. Prohibited Conduct

Candidates are ineligible for employment, promotion, or transfer to a job where an employee who is a relative or domestic partner would recommend or approve hiring, termination, performance appraisals, pay changes, disciplinary actions, or promotions for the candidate. No employee may directly or indirectly supervise a relative or domestic partner. Relatives and domestic partners of Department Directors, their Deputy Directors and/or Assistant Directors, whose span of influence extends throughout the County, such as County Administration, Human Resources, MIS, Finance, Payroll, and Purchasing, shall not be considered, for any Civil Service position within the County.

The County also prohibits dating or romantic relationships between a supervisor and a subordinate who reports either directly or indirectly to that supervisor. This prohibition applies to all employees regardless of their marital status.

In the event a supervisor and subordinate desire to date or enter into a romantic relationship, or if a relative relationship or domestic partnership is established after employment between employees who are in a reporting situation described above, the supervisor should immediately notify the Director of Human Resources so that the County may take appropriate steps to avoid any adverse impact in the workplace. This may include the transfer, reassignment, or resignation of one (or both) of the employees involved. The County may, at its discretion, also require any participants in a consensual romantic and/or sexual relationship to execute a Consensual Relationship Agreement. The County may consider the preference of the individuals involved regarding who will be transferred or reassigned to another available position or resign. The County will address these situations as confidentially and discreetly as possible. When a violation of this Policy is determined to have occurred, appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including discharge, will be taken.

Section 7.6: Unauthorized Recordings

To maintain the security and confidentiality of our premises and systems, the County prohibits unauthorized photography or audio and video recording by an employee during working time. The utilization of a cell phone or any other device to make any type of unauthorized photograph, audio, or video recording is prohibited unless explicitly authorized by law. Authorization for any type of recording requires the advance written approval of your supervisor. Violation of this policy may result in discipline up to and including immediate termination. Nothing in this policy is intended to or shall preclude an employee from engaging in conduct that is protected by applicable federal or state law.

SECTION 8:

RISK and WORKPLACE SAFETY

Section 8.1: Commitment to Safety

The County is committed to safety in the workplace and safety is always a top priority. We consider the safety of our employees of paramount importance. To this end, every effort will be made to provide the safest possible work environment and conditions. We strongly believe that safety in the workplace is everyone's responsibility and is a core value that drives everything we do. We are dedicated to creating and maintaining a safe environment for our employees, citizens and the community we serve. Hall County's commitment should be reflected in every aspect of our operations.

Section 8.2: HALL CLEAR Safety Campaign

HALL CLEAR is Hall County's safety-first initiative.

Safety is more than a set of rules; it's a collective commitment to protecting lives, preserving health, and safeguarding the environment. Our HALL CLEAR Safety Campaign helps employees identify safety behaviors and includes error prevention tools that are integral to keep Hall County a safety-first organization.

Our belief is that every incident is preventable, and safety is the responsibility of everyone. HALL CLEAR has been designed as an easy acronym to help everyone stay accountable for maintaining a culture of safety excellence by appropriately and promptly recognizing, addressing and reporting risk.

Whether you are a seasoned employee or a new member of Hall County, HALL CLEAR is designed to provide you with the tools you need to safely and effectively navigate risk. We encourage every individual to not only familiarize themselves with HALL CLEAR but also actively participate in our safety culture by utilizing the CLEAR acronym:

C – Communicate

L – Locate

E – Evaluate

A – Address

R – Report

Section 8.3: Safety in the Workplace

In addition to our HALL CLEAR Campaign, Hall County provides information to employees about workplace safety and health issues through internal communication channels such as Supervisor and employee meetings, bulletin board postings, memos, or other written communications.

Employees and Supervisors receive periodic workplace safety training. The training covers potential safety and health hazards and safe work practices and procedures to eliminate or minimize hazards.

Each employee is expected to obey safety rules and to exercise caution in all work activities. Employees must immediately report any unsafe condition to the appropriate Supervisor. Employees who violate safety standards, such as performing work in an unsafe manner or failure to use required safety equipment, who cause hazardous or dangerous situations for employees, co-workers, or the general public, or who fail to report or, where appropriate, remedy such situations, may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Section 8.4: Substance Abuse/Drug Free Workplace

It is Hall County's desire to provide a drug-free, healthy, and safe workplace. To promote this goal, no employee shall work, report to work, be present on County premises or in County vehicles, or engage in County activities while under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances. The unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, sale, or use of alcohol or controlled substances while employed with the County is also strictly prohibited. Any violation of this Substance Abuse Policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. The County further reserves the right to take any and all appropriate and lawful actions necessary to enforce this Policy, including, but not limited to, the inspection of employees' personal property in certain circumstances, as well as County-issued lockers, desks, or other suspected areas of concealment.

Under the Drug Free Workplace Act, no employee shall store or allow storage of illegal drugs or alcohol or intoxicants upon any land or within any building owned, rented, leased by, or under the control of Hall County. No employee shall transport any form of an intoxicant in any County vehicle, equipment, or machine.

Legally prescribed medications/drugs may be taken during working hours but working while under the influence of prescription or over-the-counter drugs (or another substance) is not allowed to the extent that such use, influence, or presence in the body may affect the safety of employees, citizens, and/or members of the public; the employee's job performance; or the safe and efficient operations of the County. Employees must notify their supervisor or Human Resources if the use of prescribed medications/drugs may affect the safety of employees, citizens, and/or members of the public; the employee's job performance; or the safe and efficient operations of the County. Abuse of prescription medications/drugs will not be tolerated.

Employees must notify Human Resources of a violation of any criminal drug statute, including a charge, indictment, arrest, or conviction for a violation occurring in the workplace within five (5) days of the arrest or conviction.

To help ensure a safe and healthy working environment, the County may conduct pre-employment screening examinations designed to prevent the hiring of individuals for safety-sensitive job positions who use illegal drugs. The County also may conduct drug and alcohol testing if and when there is reasonable cause to suspect an employee is under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol in violation of this Policy. Additionally, the County reserves the right to conduct unannounced substance abuse tests for employees in safety-sensitive job positions to ensure compliance with this Policy, and your continued employment reflects your consent to such tests. Furthermore, the County reserves the right to conduct drug and alcohol testing of an employee who is involved in or whose conduct could have contributed to a work-related accident. The purpose of post-accident testing is to promote workplace safety and health, including to evaluate the cause of a workplace incident that harmed or could have harmed employees. Post-accident testing will not be conducted to penalize an employee for reporting a work-related injury or illness, and the County encourages such reporting. An employee's refusal to submit to testing at the time requested may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. If, due to injuries, the employee cannot submit to testing within the prescribed time, the employee will provide the County with necessary authorization required to obtain hospital reports and other documents that would indicate the presence or non-presence of any drugs and/or alcohol in the employee's system at the time of the accident. Refusal by an applicant to submit to testing may result in withdrawal of an employment offer.

The County recognizes that alcohol and drug abuse and addiction can be treatable. Employees who have drug or alcohol dependency problems, or who feel they may have such problems, are encouraged to seek assistance. The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides confidential counseling and referral services to employees for assistance with such issues. Additional services also may be available through the County's health insurance plan, at the employees' expense. Please contact Human Resources for information regarding these resources. We will support voluntary treatment efforts. It is the employee's responsibility, however, to pursue and complete treatment before the problems result in unsatisfactory job performance, attendance, safety concerns, or other misconduct, and before a violation of this Policy occurs. Participation in the EAP after the disciplinary process has begun does not necessarily preclude disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. An employee who tests positive for an illegal drug, for example, cannot immediately enter a drug treatment program to avoid the possibility of a disciplinary action or employment separation. An employee who makes a first-time voluntary report that he or she intends to seek assistance for dependency problems may be placed on a leave of absence or adjusted working schedule to allow for inpatient or outpatient treatment.

Section 8.5: Drug and Alcohol Policy

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for maintaining a drug and alcohol-free workplace in compliance with the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988 and in accordance with Civil Service Rule. Hall County recognizes its obligation to employees and the public to take reasonable steps to ensure safety in the workplace and in the community. Hall County is aware that alcohol and substance abuse may have an adverse effect on safe, effective, and productive job performance. The County recognizes that employees who are impaired in their ability to

perform their jobs jeopardize the integrity of the workplace, place the public at risk, and jeopardize the County's overall mission.

A. Applicability

This drug and alcohol policy applies, in its entirety, to all Hall County employees. Employees that hold safety sensitive positions will be subjected to random drug and alcohol testing. The following positions are considered safety sensitive:

1. Paramedic and paramedic trainee
2. Positions requiring a CDL license
3. Equipment operators
4. Certified Firefighter positions, including new recruits in training
5. Positions requiring the use and possession of a firearm
6. All sworn law enforcement positions (I.e., Jailers, Animal Control Officers)
7. All certified Corrections Officers
8. All P.O.S.T. certified positions
9. Certified Communications Officers

B. Scope of Testing

Testing will include at a minimum, but not be limited to screening for marijuana, synthetic substances, cocaine, opiates, amphetamines, and phencyclidine.

The use of marijuana or cannabis oil for medicinal purposes requires a medical certification or registration card and only exempts the individual from the enforcement of criminal penalties.

The use of marijuana or cannabis oil or being under the influence of these substances in the workplace is not an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The use of marijuana is still illegal under federal law and in Georgia and not entitled to accommodation under ADA.

C. Random Testing

All safety-sensitive employees will be subject to random drug and alcohol testing. The selection of employees shall be made by randomly generating an employee identifier from a pool of safety-sensitive employees.

1. Selections will be unannounced and spread reasonably throughout the calendar year.
2. The number of employees randomly selected for drug and alcohol testing during the calendar year shall be not less than 20% of the average number of safety-sensitive employees.

3. Safety-sensitive employees will have an equal chance of being drawn each time selections are made. Employees will remain in the pool and subject to selection, whether the employee was previously tested.
4. A safety-sensitive employee may be tested for drugs and alcohol any time the employee is on duty.
5. Upon notification of their selection, employees actively at work (not a day off or during a leave of absence) are required to proceed to the collection site immediately or as soon as possible as determined by department leadership. Specimen collection must be completed within four (4) hours from the point of notification.
6. Should a result be inconclusive (E.g. diluted) a retest will be ordered and upon notification a Supervisor will accompany the employee to the testing site.

D. Post-Accident Testing

County employees involved in a work-related incident or vehicle/equipment accident (regardless of fault) will be required to undergo drug and alcohol testing regardless of injury to the employee.

Employees will be directed by their Supervisor or Department Director to immediately proceed to the testing site for breath and urine testing.

1. Any employee who is subject to post-accident testing and fails to remain readily available for the required screening may be deemed to have refused to submit to testing. Additionally, employees who do not remain available and/or leave the scene of the accident.
2. Employees who are subject to post-accident testing and leave the scene of the accident prior to submission to such test, may be deemed to have refused to submit to testing.
3. Nothing in this section shall be construed to require the delay of necessary medical attention for the injured following an accident, or to prohibit an employee from leaving the scene of an accident for the period necessary to obtain assistance in responding to the accident, or to obtain necessary emergency medical care.
4. Supervisors do not have discretion to waive post-accident testing. Supervisors who waive testing will be subject to disciplinary action.

E. Reasonable Suspicion Testing

Hall County employees will be subject to reasonable suspicion drug and alcohol tests when there are reasons to believe that drug or alcohol use is impacting job performance and safety. Reasonable suspicion testing can be conducted anytime the employee is on duty. Observations must be made by a Supervisor who is knowledgeable of the signs and symptoms of drug use and alcohol misuse.

1. Reasonable suspicion shall mean:

There is objective evidence, based upon specific and contemporaneous observations of the employee's appearance, behavior, speech, and or body odor that are consistent with possible drug use and/or alcohol misuse, such as but not limited to:

- a. Slurred, fragmented, or slow speech
- b. Disoriented and/or confused
- c. Unsteady gait
- d. Dilated or pinpointed pupils
- e. Bloodshot eyes
- f. Lack of motor coordination
- g. Odor of alcohol or controlled substance
- h. Admission of employee that he or she was drinking alcohol or ingesting drugs

2. Upon determination of reasonable suspicion, the Supervisor shall:

- a. Take the employee aside to a private area, but do not leave the employee unattended.
- b. Maintain confidentiality by only discussing your suspicions with the Department Director or Manager helping you with the investigation.
- c. Express his/her observations.
- d. Require the employee to submit to a drug and alcohol test in accordance with this policy.
- e. Remove the employee from performing safety-sensitive functions pending the outcome of the test result(s).
- f. DO NOT accuse the employee of being "drunk" or "on drugs" or any similar accusations.

3. Transportation to testing site

Hall County shall be responsible for transporting the employee to the testing site. This is to avoid placing the employee or others in a situation that might endanger the physical safety of the employee or the public.

4. Documentation

Reasonable suspicion must be documented in writing at or near the time of observation. A written record of the observations leading to the reasonable

suspicion for drug and alcohol testing must be prepared and signed by the Supervisor making the observation.

5. Refusal of Testing

An employee who refuses to submit to a drug or alcohol test shall not be permitted to finish his or her shift and shall immediately be placed on administrative leave pending disciplinary actions up to and including termination.

F. Pre-Employment Testing

All applicants being considered for employment shall be required to pass a drug and alcohol screening test prior to being hired.

1. Refusal to Test

- a. Job Applicants: Any applicant for a job with the Hall County who refuses a drug and alcohol test shall be denied employment.

2. The following are also considered a refusal to test the employee if they:

- a. Fail to appear for any test within a reasonable time, as determined by Hall County, after being directed to do so.
- b. Fail to remain in the testing site until the testing procedure is complete.
- c. Fail to provide a urine specimen for any drug test.
- d. In the case of a directly observed or monitored collection in a drug test, fail to permit the observation or monitoring of the procurement of a specimen.
- e. Provide a sample that does not meet the required standards.
- f. Fail to provide a sufficient amount of urine when directed, and it has been determined, through a required medical evaluation, that there was no adequate medical explanation for the failure.
- g. Fail or decline to take a second test the employer or collector has directed.
- h. Fail to undergo a medical examination or evaluation, as directed by the Medical Review Officer as part of the verification process, or as directed by the Designated Employer Representative as part of "shy bladder" procedures.
- i. Fail to cooperate with any part of the testing process (e.g. refuse to empty pockets when so directed by the collector, behave in a confrontational way that disrupts the collection process).
- j. Have a verified adulterated or substituted test result reported by the Medical Review Officer.
- k. Fail or refuse to sign required documents.

G. Test Results

An employee who refuses to submit to a drug or alcohol test shall not be permitted to finish his or her shift and shall immediately be placed on administrative leave pending disciplinary actions up to and including termination. Probationary employees who test positive will be terminated. If an employee is allowed to return to work, he or she may be required to first complete a course of rehabilitation as prescribed by an approved counselor hired at the discretion of the County.

1. Positive Test Results

Should an employee wish to appeal a positive test result, a second test will be performed at the expense of the employee. The retest will be conducted from the original sample and must be requested within 72 hours of notification.

2. Prescription and Legally Obtained Drugs

An employee using prescription medication while on the job shall do so in strict accordance with medical directions. It is the employee's responsibility to notify the prescribing physician of the duties required by the employee's position and to ensure that the physician approves the use of the prescription medication while the employee is performing their duties. The employee shall be responsible for notifying his or her Supervisor of any restrictions that may affect and/or prevent the safe performance of the required duties.

The abuse of legally prescribed drugs shall be prohibited. Any employee whose job performance or attendance deficiencies result from abuse shall be subject to disciplinary actions. If the employee's behavior and/or job performance gives rise to a reasonable suspicion that the employee is abusing prescription drugs, the employee may be required to submit to drug testing and must not be permitted to return to duty.

Employees taking medications that are sedating in nature or modify behavior are required to inform their Supervisor of use. The Supervisor will be authorized to reassign or send home the employee so as not to place the employee, co-workers, or the public at risk.

H. Assistance and Rehabilitation

Voluntary participation in an employee assistance program (EAP) prior to an employee being requested to submit to a test is encouraged and such participation shall be kept confidential. No disciplinary action shall be implemented because an employee volunteers to participate in such a program. Employees who, prior to being requested to take a drug and/or alcohol test, voluntarily identify themselves as a drug user or alcohol abuser and obtain counseling and rehabilitation through the employee assistance program shall not be disciplined for their drug use and/or alcohol abuse if they

thereafter refrain from use. Use of a Last Chance Agreement may be utilized following treatment.

Employees who have been terminated under the provisions of this chapter shall be provided with the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of substance abuse professionals, and counseling and treatment programs that can determine what assistance, if any, the employee may need to help him or her resolve any problems associated with substance abuse. Hall County shall not be responsible for such evaluation, treatment, rehabilitation, or counseling. Hall County also has no obligation to rehire terminated employees.

I. Record Retention

Hall County will maintain records of alcohol misuse and controlled substance testing programs as required by federal rules and regulations. The records will be maintained in a secure location with controlled access.

J. Records Access

Human Resources will keep testing records. The County will not release employee information except as specifically allowed. Employees may obtain copies of any records pertaining to his/her alcohol or drug use with a written request. DOT agencies will have access to all drivers' records.

K. General

Violations of this policy may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination of employment, and/or required participation in a substance abuse rehabilitation or treatment program. Such violations may also have legal consequences.

Employees with questions or concerns about substance dependency or abuse are encouraged to use the resources of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). They may also wish to discuss these matters with their Supervisor or Human Resources to receive assistance or referrals to appropriate resources in the community.

Employees with drug or alcohol problems that have not resulted in, and are not the immediate subject of, disciplinary action may request approval to take unpaid time off to participate in a rehabilitation or treatment program. Leave may be granted if the employee agrees to abstain from usage of the problem substance; abides by all Hall County policies, rules, and prohibitions relating to conduct in the workplace; and if granting the leave will not cause Hall County any undue hardship.

Employees with questions about this policy or issues related to drug or alcohol use in the workplace should raise their concerns with their Supervisor or Human Resources without fear of retaliation.

Section 8.6: Smoke and Tobacco Free Workplace

In keeping with Hall County's intent to provide a safe and healthy work environment, smoking, use of smokeless tobacco, cannabis oil, e-cigs, vapor cigarettes, hookah pipes, and any other forms of smoking are prohibited throughout the workplace including County vehicles, work areas, conference and meeting rooms, private offices, hallways, cafeterias, employee lounges, stairs, restrooms, and all other enclosed buildings and facilities. In some instances, where designated, facilities and properties may be completely smoke free.

This policy applies equally to all employees, citizens, and visitors. All smoking is confined to designated areas.

Section 8.7: Fleet Management Policy/Driving Vehicles for County Business

Some employees may be required to drive their personal vehicles or County vehicles as a part of their job duties. Any employees required to drive their personal vehicles or County vehicles as a part of their job duties must comply with this policy. The safety of all individuals on the roadway shall be a primary concern for all employees.

Employees who reside within the geographical boundaries of Hall County may be permitted to drive their assigned vehicle to and from work. Employees who reside outside of the geographical boundaries of Hall County (20 mile limit) will be required to complete a special permission form signed by the County Administrator, prior to being authorized to operate a County vehicle outside of such boundaries.

Safe Driving

In addition to following and abiding by all traffic regulations, the use of seat belts is required by the driver and passengers in any vehicle (personal, County or rental) while conducting County business. Law enforcement officials may be exempt from this policy as it relates to passengers when it is impossible to secure a passenger or as otherwise stated in the Sheriff's Office procedures.

Personnel will exercise good judgment in utilizing their assigned vehicle and shall not drive or use their vehicle to cause unfavorable comment or bring discredit upon the County.

Under no circumstances may an employee be under the influence of any substance (alcohol or drugs) which may impair their driving ability while operating a County vehicle or otherwise violate the County's Substance Abuse/Drug-Free Workplace Policy.

It shall be the sole responsibility of any employee whose job duties and responsibilities may include the operation of a motor vehicle or equipment to notify their Supervisor and/or Department Director of any changes to their ability to maintain a valid driver's license or insurance or to operate a motor vehicle or equipment. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

An employee who receives a citation for a moving violation or DUI/DWI, whether on or off the job, must report that fact in writing to their supervisor and Human Resources within 24 hours. Similarly, any employee whose license is suspended, restricted, or revoked for any reason must also report this in writing to their supervisor and Human Resources within 24 hours. We will then review the employee's driving record and make a determination regarding continuation of employment in the employee's current position, transfer to another position that does not require driving if one is available, or separation from employment. However, if an employee fails to disclose the citation, revocation, or suspension and we later learn about it, the employee will be subject to immediate termination and will not be considered for another position.

To prevent vehicular accidents, the County prohibits the following acts while driving either County vehicles or personal vehicles while performing your job duties. This list is not intended to be an exhaustive list of actions covered by this policy, but is intended to illustrate the type of actions that employees must be aware of when they operate a vehicle while performing their job duties:

- Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs;
- Operating any vehicle without the proper license;
- Speeding;
- Operating a vehicle carelessly, negligently, improperly, illegally, or outside recommended safety protocols;
- Driving a vehicle without using a seat belt, shoulder belt, or other safety harness;
- Operating a vehicle while eating, writing, reading, texting, or performing other functions that reduce the driver's awareness or ability to control the vehicle;
- Turning off or dismantling vehicle safety devices, such as airbags.
- Looking away or down while driving or otherwise becoming distracted while operating a vehicle;
- Passing another vehicle in a "no pass" lane or in the wrong lane;
- Tailgating another vehicle;
- Driving too fast or aggressively during poor conditions, such as rain or snow;
- Receiving a citation by law enforcement after an accident; or
- Operating a vehicle while overly tired or with an illness or condition that impairs or could impair motor skills and judgment.

Driving County Vehicles

Employees who are entrusted with the operation of a County vehicle in the furtherance of their duties are a direct reflection on all employees of the County. While using, operating, or riding in a County vehicle, an employee has no expectation of or the right to privacy.

While driving a County vehicle, individuals may not stop to conduct any personal business. Hall County vehicles are for business use only and should not be used for personal matters.

Employees are responsible for the appearance, cleanliness, and safe operation of a County vehicle, both interior and exterior.

Employees are responsible for ensuring the vehicle is properly serviced and maintained mechanically. Only personnel authorized by Hall County shall operate a County vehicle. The operator of a County vehicle must be familiar with both the vehicle and its capabilities. The day-to-day condition of that vehicle is of paramount importance for safe operation, with the final responsibility for care resting on the employee who will operate the vehicle.

The proper working order of County vehicles is a fundamental principle in operating the vehicle in a safe manner. Proper working order of the following should be reported when observed to be deficient or questionable.

- A. Routine and regular vehicle inspections are necessary to operate vehicles safely. Employees who operate a vehicle shall perform the following vehicle inspection procedures:
 - 1. Check that the tires are in good condition and properly inflated.
 - 2. Check that the brakes, lights, windshield wipers and washers, horn, emergency equipment, and other electrical equipment are operating correctly.
 - 3. Check for any damage to the exterior and interior of the vehicle.
 - 4. Regularly check gauges to ensure that the vehicle is operating within the proper ranges.
 - 5. Check the spare tire to ensure it is inflated and in safe operating condition.
 - 6. Check oil and water levels.
 - 7. Check for any mechanical defects.
 - 8. Check trailer connections and any load being transported on the vehicle to ensure security.
 - 9. Ensure in-car mobile and/or audio video recording system is functioning properly, if applicable.

These conditions, or any of the above not readily corrected, shall immediately be reported to Fleet Management on duty and a vehicle maintenance report will be filed.

- B. Other Routine Inspections
 - 1. Authorized and/or Standard Equipment

The following equipment will be maintained (and/or authorized) by the Department for all patrol and emergency vehicles, if applicable. No equipment will be deleted, added, or deactivated by individual employees or deputies without the expressed written consent of the Fleet Manager or Sheriff.

- a. Emergency lights for all marked vehicles
- b. Siren
- c. Mobile radio transceiver
- d. Public address system - utilized to render information during natural disasters, inform crowds of police action and lawful orders, and make traffic stops with multiple occupants. The public address system will not be used in any fashion not related to police functions.
- e. Fire extinguisher
- f. Traffic specialists should ensure that their vehicle is equipped with the Accident Investigation Kit prescribed by the Fleet Maintenance Department.
- g. All cars which will be transporting prisoners or detaining suspicious persons should be equipped with a barrier utilized to separate prisoners from officers. The rear doors and windows of these cars should be inoperable from the interior of the vehicle.
- h. Accident and crime scene equipment
- i. Exterior spotlight (optional)
- j. Automatic Vehicle Locator (AVL)
- k. In-Car Mobile and Audio Video Recording System (L3)

2. Routine Inspection by Supervisor

Supervisors will inspect all vehicles periodically for the following:

- a. The vehicle is clean, and maintenance has been performed as scheduled.
- b. All required equipment is present.
- c. All required paperwork is present.
- d. No dangerous or unnecessary items are in the vehicle.
- e. All emergency equipment is operating correctly.

No Hall County employee shall operate a motor vehicle without completing a pre-trip and post-trip inspection.

C. Routine Maintenance

The Hall County Fleet Maintenance Facility or local vendors with County contracts will be used for all routine maintenance. Standard lube, oil, and filter changes should be completed every 4,000 miles for service vehicles and 5,000 for all others or as directed. Other maintenance schedules should be followed as indicated in the vehicle owner's manual.

D. Repairs

If a vehicle needs repairs not considered standard maintenance, a repair request form describing the nature of the complaint shall be completed by the employee and submitted to the Fleet Management Officer. He/she will ensure the repair is completed. Employees should not operate any vehicle determined or believed to be physically unsafe.

Vehicles from the Sheriff's Office shall comply with all County vehicle policies as explained above, with the only exceptions being. Sheriff's Office vehicles shall be assigned to specific individuals to facilitate the performance of their duties.

1. The purpose of providing specific vehicles to agency employees is to enhance the overall care of the vehicles themselves. By providing some degree of ownership, the goal is to encourage proper care of County equipment and to facilitate efficient response during major incidents.
 - a. Specific personnel, as determined by the Sheriff or his/her designee, are exempt from considering the need to recall them to duty status. Some examples are employees assigned to the SWAT Unit, K-9 Unit, Dive Team, and on-call Criminal Investigations personnel.
2. Employees who are assigned a vehicle will utilize this as their primary mode of transportation for duty related purposes. They shall operate the vehicle until it is no longer serviceable or until they transfer to an assignment that does not require an assigned vehicle.
3. New vehicles will be assigned according to needs, to replace a particular vehicle or based on decisions made by the Sheriff or his/her designee.
4. The individual deputy who is assigned a particular vehicle is also responsible for the upkeep and safe operation of all the equipment that comes with the vehicle.
5. Marked County vehicles will be operated only when the deputy is wearing an approved uniform. This will include carrying their County issued firearm.

Section 8.8: Accident and/or Incident Response

In the case of accident and/or incident involving a County vehicle or a personal vehicle driven on County business that results in personal injury or damage to County or private property, regardless of how insignificant the injury may appear, employees should immediately notify their immediate Supervisor and Human Resources. Such reports are necessary to comply with laws and initiate insurance and workers' compensation benefits procedures. Any accidents or damage to any vehicle shall be immediately reported to the employee's immediate Supervisor, Human Resources, and the appropriate jurisdiction authority.

- A. The following steps must be taken when an accident and/or incident occurs:
1. Call 911 and inform dispatch that you are a County employee and that you were involved in an accident.
 2. Call your immediate Supervisor and/or Department Director as soon as possible.
 3. Do not leave the scene of the accident before a County representative arrives and directs you to leave. Commercial Driver's License (CDL) drivers will not leave the scene until released by law enforcement.
 4. Do not accept or deny liability or make any statements that may imply the acceptance or denial of liability. Do not make any promises to the other party such as, "the County will take care of you." If questions arise on the scene regarding liability, refer them to Human Resources.
 5. Complete an Accident/Incident Report form fully describing how the incident happened. Use the back of the form for additional comments; be sure to list witnesses, if any. All claim documents should be forwarded to Human Resources.
 6. The employee involved may be subject to post-accident testing pursuant to the County's Substance Abuse/Drug-Free Workplace Policy, which may include being transported to the Hall County Family Health Center for a drug screen. If after hours, the employee may utilize the Emergency Room for drug screen only.

**If an employee is injured, refer to the Workers Comp Panel of Physicians for treatment options.*

B. Post-Accident Drug and Alcohol Tests:

Post-accident drug screens and breath alcohol tests may be administered pursuant to the County's Substance Abuse/Drug-Free Workplace Policy regardless of who was at fault, or the type of vehicle driven (i.e., County vehicle or personal vehicle for County business). Your Supervisor will ensure all post-accident drug and alcohol tests are performed.

1. CDL Drivers (operating CDL equipment at time of accident and/or incident): Supervisors will ensure CDL drivers are properly tested under the appropriate drug and alcohol testing program. (Refer to Post Accident Decision Tree flowchart)
2. Assignment and Use of Sheriff Vehicles: The Sheriff's Office is responsible for the policy and procedures concerning Sheriff's Office fleet maintenance, accident review, and vehicle usage.

Section 8.9: Telematics Policy

Hall County is dedicated to the health and safety of its employees, as well as the protection of its properties, both physical and intellectual. The use of telematics for tracking County vehicles aids in achieving these important aspects of security. Hall County's Telematics Policy establishes procedures for the tracking of County owned vehicles and/or equipment that are equipped with telematic monitoring devices. Hall County utilizes both GPS and cameras as a valuable tool to promote safer driving habits and alleviate risks associated with the use of County vehicles. These devices will be used to manage County vehicles more cost efficiently and effectively while

fostering safer operating practices. Employment with the County constitutes an express awareness of and consent to such tracking/monitoring through telematics.

County vehicles are to be used as necessary to conduct business for the County and its operations. All County Policies, as well as all State, Federal, and Local Laws shall be followed during the operation of County owned vehicles. The County's commitment to highway safety, employee welfare, and public wellbeing, are driving factors for the utilization of telematic systems.

Telematic devices will be used to monitor the driving habits, behaviors, and patterns of individuals operating County vehicles. Monitoring through these devices will be used for business purposes such as managing productivity, employee safety, asset management, assisting in quick responses, routing organizational traffic, ensuring promptness, and employee performance management.

Telematic devices will be used on County vehicles and equipment as necessary and will be capable of tracking multiple metrics, including location, speed acceleration, deceleration, seatbelt usage, cellphone usage, and other distractive driving features.

Employees should report any non-working telematic device to their supervisor, department director, or the Fleet Management Department as soon as they are made aware of the non-working device.

Section 8.10: Risk Management Committee and Safety Review Board

Hall County has established a Risk Management Committee (RMC) to serve as the County's Safety View Committee and Accident Review Board. This committee will serve to promote safety by holding individuals responsible for their actions and recommending corrective actions, as appropriate, to Department Directors.

The RMC shall be staffed by leaders appointed by Department Directors and shall review incidents which have or may compromise the safety of Hall County employees and/or the public. The RMC shall consist of a chairperson and six (6) voting members (three (3) general government and three (3) public safety), all from different individual departments.

The Office of Risk Management shall screen pending cases to determine whether an accident and/or incident is selected to appear before the RMC. An accident or incident that is determined during the screening process to have been non-preventable will not be sent to or the subject of further action from the RMC. Where an accident and/or incident is found to be preventable, the RMC will convene, review the circumstance surrounding the accident or incident and recommend any corrective action to be taken regarding the employee. The employee will be notified of the date and time of the hearing and may appear before the RMC to make statements and answer questions regarding the accident and/or incident. The Risk Manager and staff will attend all meetings and will be able to answer any questions the Committee has regarding the claim's investigation and mitigation.

If corrective action is recommended by the RMC, the employee may appeal this decision. Appeals from decisions of the RMC must be made in writing to Human Resources within 30 days of the committee's determination.

For more information regarding the RMC, please refer to the Risk Committee Policy.

Section 8.11: Motor Vehicle Record (MVR)

A Motor Vehicle Report (MVR) shall be completed by Human Resources on all authorized drivers on an annual basis, unless it is deemed appropriate to be conducted on some other frequency. The report will then be reviewed to determine if the employee (or applicant in the case of new hires) has maintained an acceptable driving record.

1. MVR Acceptability

All employees of Hall County shall be held to the same MVR standards. The MVR Acceptability Grid shall be the employer's guide to determining County vehicle privileges. County vehicle privileges may be altered based on the latest MVR and any new vehicular offenses. At any time, Hall County Administration retains the right to remove driving privileges from individual employees with or without reason.

Section 8.12: Workers' Compensation

Hall County provides a comprehensive Workers' Compensation Insurance Program at no cost to employees. This program covers any injury or illness sustained in the course of employment that requires medical, surgical, or hospital treatment. Subject to applicable legal requirements, workers' compensation insurance provides 66.66% (approximately 2/3) salary replacement benefits after a consecutive seven (7) calendar day waiting period from the date of injury or, if the employee is hospitalized, immediately. During the waiting period that is unpaid, employees must substitute available Vacation, Sick, Sick Reserves, PTO, and/or PTO Additional hours. If the employee is out for more than 21 consecutive days due to the injury, the employee will be reimbursed monetarily for any loss time sustained during the waiting period.

Workers' Compensation benefits may be supplemented with available Sick Reserve, Sick, Vacation or Paid Time Off (as applicable). The total of the Workers Comp benefit and supplemented time may not exceed 100% of the employee's base pay (hourly rate multiplied by scheduled hours).

Employees are required to use the Panel of Physicians to provide the workers' compensation medical treatment. The names, addresses, and phone numbers of the panel physicians are available to each employee and are posted on official County bulletin boards. If you have any questions regarding the Panel of Physicians, or would like additional copies of this panel, you can reach out to Human Resources. Time off under worker's compensation shall run concurrently with FMLA leave for eligible employees.

An employee who suffers an injury or illness should inform their Supervisor as soon as practicable after the employee realizes that he or she has suffered the injury or illness and

provide complete information on the forms provided by Human Resources, no matter how minor an on-the-job injury may appear. All reports are to be filed with Human Resources within 24 hours of the accident and/or incident.

If the injured employee requests medical treatment, they must choose a doctor from the approved posted Workers' Compensation Panel of Physicians. Hall County shall reserve the right to refuse payment of medical services for any employee examined by a physician not listed on the approved Workers' Compensation Panel of Physicians.

Failure to report a work-related injury or illness within three (3) days of the employee realizing that he or she has suffered the injury or illness is grounds for disciplinary action. A fraudulent claim is grounds for disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Georgia's Workers' Compensation Law provides employees with certain rights and responsibilities. These can be found on Georgia's State Board of Workers' Compensation Bill of Rights for the Injured Worker (O.C.G.A. 34-9-81.1).

Section 8.13: Workplace Violence Prevention

Hall County is committed to preventing workplace violence and to maintaining a safe work environment. Hall County has adopted the following guidelines to deal with intimidation, harassment, or other threats of violence that may occur during business hours or on its premises.

All employees, Elected Officials, members of the public and guests, should always be treated with courtesy and respect. Employees are expected to refrain from fighting, horseplay, or other conduct that may be dangerous to others.

The County specifically prohibits the possession of weapons by any employee while on County property unless your job requires that you carry a weapon in the normal course of business. Except where permitted by law (OCGA. §16-11-135 authorizes an individual to transport a firearm in their vehicle on public or private property so long as it is secured in a locked area within the vehicle and the person is a lawful weapons carrier; OCGA. §16-11-127 contains general prohibitions on carrying weapons by a licensed holder), this ban includes keeping or transporting a weapon in a vehicle in a parking area, whether public or private. Non-sworn employees are also prohibited from carrying a weapon while performing services within the County. Weapons include firearms, knives, propellants, explosives, and other items with the potential to inflict harm. Appropriate disciplinary action up to and including termination will be taken against any employee who violates this policy.

Examples of conduct that may be considered a threat, threatening behavior, act of violence, or related disruptive conduct prohibited by this policy include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Hitting or shoving an individual.
2. Threatening to harm an individual or his/her family, friends, associates, or their property.
3. The intentional destruction or threat of destruction of County property, resources, or equipment.
4. Harassing or threatening individuals through any form of verbal, written, or electronic communications.
5. Intimidating or attempting to coerce an employee to do wrongful acts that would affect the business interests of the County.
6. Harassing surveillance of another County employee or making a credible threat with intent to place the other person in reasonable fear of his or her safety.
7. Unlawful possession of firearms, weapons, or any other dangerous devices on County property.

All threats of actual violence, both direct and indirect, should be reported as soon as possible to your immediate Supervisor or any other member of Management (emergency situations should be reported to 911). This includes threats by employees, as well as threats by citizens, vendors, inmates, or other members of the public. When reporting a threat of violence, you should be as specific and detailed as possible.

Do not place yourself in danger. If you see or hear a commotion or disturbance near your workstation, do not try to intercede or see what is happening.

Anyone responsible for violence, or threats of violence, or other conduct that is in violation of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

Hall County encourages employees to bring their disputes or differences with other employees to the attention of their Supervisors or Human Resources before the situation escalates into potential violence. Hall County is eager to assist in the resolution of employee disputes and will not discipline employees for raising such concerns.

Section 8.14: Emergency Procedures and Evacuations

Hall County asks all employees to take responsibility for knowing the locations of alarms and emergency exits and understanding the emergency procedures so they may be able to assist themselves and other employees in an emergency.

A. Fire

All buildings are equipped with manual pull down alarms and sprinkler systems. When pulled, the alarms will automatically signal the Fire Department.

If the fire alarm sounds:

1. EVACUATE THE BUILDING IMMEDIATELY in an orderly fashion through the nearest emergency exit or stairwells. Evacuation routes are posted on bulletin boards throughout the County. DO NOT USE ELEVATORS.

2. Once outside, proceed away from the building staying clear of emergency vehicles and at a distance away from the building that would reasonably be considered a safe distance.
3. If you notice an employee is missing, inform emergency personnel immediately.
4. Employees may not leave the grounds at any time during an alarm unless specifically ordered to do so by emergency personnel, or unless given permission by their leader to accurately account for all employees
5. Do not reenter the building until you are instructed to do so by emergency personnel.

B. Tornado

All buildings are equipped with designated tornado shelters. When notified of an impending tornado, all employees should proceed to the applicable location.

If you notice an employee is missing, inform emergency personnel immediately.

Employees should not leave the grounds at any time during a tornado unless specifically ordered to do so by emergency personnel, or unless given permission by their leader to accurately account for all employees.

C. Power Outage

In the event of a power outage, temporary emergency backup lights will go on in all buildings.

If you are in the elevator during a power outage, use the phone in the elevator to call for help.

D. Other Emergencies

For all other emergencies, please consult with your department's safety protocol.

E. Emergency Closures

At times, normal County operations may be interrupted because of inclement weather or other unforeseen emergencies. An interruption or suspension of normal business operations may involve closing early, delayed opening or, closing for the duration of normal business hours (Monday-Friday; 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.). The County Administrator, or their designee, shall be the individual responsible for making such a determination.

Until a determination has been made and communicated, when weather conditions make it unduly hazardous for an employee to report to their place of work or the employee arrives late or leaves early, the employee must use available vacation time or paid time off

(PTO) to cover time missed from work. If the employee does not have enough vacation time or paid time off (PTO) to cover the time missed from work, the leave will be unpaid for non-exempt employees. In the event of closing, employees shall be compensated for the number of hours equal to the amount of time that normal business operations were interrupted, suspended, or halted. Information regarding pay will be provided to the necessary individuals at the appropriate time.

When unable to report to work due to weather conditions, employees shall notify their Supervisor as soon as possible. Employees who are on approved leave or vacation at the time of the closing are not eligible for additional time off or additional pay under this policy.

Certain public safety positions require mandatory coverage because they provide a critical County service such as Fire, Sheriff's and Public Works Departments and other designated departments and individuals. The Department Manager may provide transportation to and from work to ensure proper staffing of services. Mandatory staffing may be a result of a weather or other emergency event, or subsequent work related to the event (for example, cleanup and/or debris removal).

In the event of an inclement weather event, time shall be recorded as follows on the individual timecards using the following pay codes:

1. Inclement Weather: Used for non-emergency, non-essential staff. This pay code reflects the normal work hours lost when the County ceases normal operation. This applies only to non-exempt staff who are sent home or told not to report to work due to conditions.
2. Inclement Weather Worked: Used for essential non-exempt staff who work during a weather event. The rate of pay is straight time for all hours worked and accumulates toward overtime. Additionally, essential hourly staff who work during an inclement weather event will also receive pay for inclement weather for the corresponding number of hours that the County ceased normal operations.
 - a. For example: The County closes for a full business day of eight (8) hours. Essential personnel who worked during the inclement weather event will be paid for time worked PLUS the eight (8) hours of inclement weather when County operations were closed.
3. Inclement Weather – Exempt: Used for exempt staff who work during a weather event. This is used for record keeping purposes only and does not alter the salary arrangement with the employee. Exempt employees will be paid in compliance with the Fair Labor Standards Act.

4. Sleep time: At times during a declared emergency or closure, essential staff may be required, as directed by their Supervisor, to remain on site to ensure adequate staffing and functional business operations. Non-exempt, non-management salaried employees who are required to remain on site will be paid minimum wage for the time that they are sleeping and/or resting or otherwise not engaged in productive work. Any premium pay, including but not limited to Paramedic differential or Sheriff's Office Night Shift differential will not apply to Sleep Time. Supervisors are responsible for maintaining accurate records of sleep time for inclusion on the affected employee's timecard. Managers, Division Directors, Department Directors, and County Administration are not eligible for Sleep Time Pay.
5. On Call: If staff are placed on call for the possibility of being called to report to work, the On Call Pay Code shall be used to record on call hours. While on call, staff who are called into work shall use the Call Back Worked Pay Code to record hours worked. Call Back Worked hours shall accumulate toward overtime.

SECTION 9:

WORKPLACE CONDUCT AND EXPECTATIONS

Section 9.1: Job Performance

Communication between employees and Supervisors or Managers is very important. Discussions regarding job performance are ongoing and often informal. Employees should initiate conversations with their Supervisors if they feel additional ongoing feedback is needed.

Generally, formal performance reviews are conducted annually. These reviews include a written performance appraisal and discussion between the employee and the Supervisor about job performance and expectations for the coming year.

Section 9.2: Employee Conduct

If department policies conflict with County policies, County policies supersede. Exceptions may apply for the Sheriff's Office, as well as Offices of Constitutional Officers and Elected Officials where County policies are not applicable.

A. Work Standards

These rules and regulations are designed to express what Hall County expects from each employee. In brief, your employer depends on you to do your best and to be on the job on a regular basis for the duration of your shift. The County, as your employer, and fellow employees expect you to be responsive and to cooperate with others in a spirit of teamwork.

All employees are expected to work in a cooperative manner with Elected Officials, Administration, Management, Supervisors, coworkers, customers, and vendors. Each

employee is expected to abide by County and/or department policies and to fully cooperate in any investigation that the County may undertake.

Violations of established work standards, depending on frequency and severity, may result in such disciplinary actions as a verbal or written reprimand, suspension, demotion, and/or termination. Work standards violations requiring Supervisor intervention and possible disciplinary action include, but are not limited to, violation of the policies outlined in this manual and:

1. Performance

Unsatisfactory job performance resulting in unacceptable work quality or production of work, inefficiency or ineffectiveness; inability to meet the standards of the position; unsatisfactory and/or unsafe work practices or procedures; lack of cooperation with instructions and/or directives from Supervisors; negligence in carrying out duties; disregard for safety or security rules; and job abandonment.

2. Personal Conduct

Examples of inappropriate conduct include, but are not limited to:

- a. Insubordination
- b. Conflict of interest
- c. Using, selling, possessing, or reporting to work, or working under the influence of drugs, illegal substances and/or alcohol
- d. Theft of property
- e. Gambling or engaging in other games of lottery on County time or premises
- f. Falsifying records or documents
- g. Sabotage
- h. Deliberate damage to County property
- i. Acceptance of a bribe
- j. Mishandling cash or other County property
- k. False, fraudulent, or malicious statements or actions
- l. Destroying, tampering, altering, defacing, vandalizing, modifying beyond the intended use of, interfering with or misuse of County property or the property of others
- m. Unauthorized dealing with the media and/or press if not authorized to do so in an official capacity
- n. Violation of any County policy or procedure
- o. Threatened or actual physical violence, assault, fighting, violent actions, or verbal intimidation
- p. Unauthorized use, disclosure, or removal of confidential information
- q. Fraud or deception in the course of work
- r. Commission of an act which constitutes a criminal offense, and which arises from or relates to work for the County

- s. Violation of the County Code of Ethics as defined in Chapter 2.110 of the Official Code of Hall County.
- t. Violations of Peace Officer Standards Training (P.O.S.T) Council Certification Requirements
- u. Violations of Georgia Firefighter Standards and Training Rules and Regulations
- v. Unsatisfactory work performance or failure to maintain reasonable standards of performance, production, or professionalism
- w. Violations of the County's mission and objectives or those acts which might damage the reputation of Hall County
- x. Failure to maintain acceptable standards of quality or quantity of work
- y. Failure to follow established work methods and procedures
- z. Attendance problems, including but not limited to: excessive absences or tardies, leaving work without permission, failure to return from an authorized leave of absence or vacation at the designated time, failing, or refusing, to report for overtime work when scheduled
- aa. Violation of local, state or federal law, rule or regulation
- bb. Conduct or language that could be interpreted as sexual, racial, religious, or other types of harassment, including but not limited to rude, discourteous, obscene, abusive, or offensive conduct toward others
- cc. Failure to communicate in a timely or acceptable manner with department personnel
- dd. Possession of, or storage of, inappropriate material in the workplace, County property, or any County vehicle
- ee. Making direct or indirect disrespectful, rude, unprofessional, harmful, threatening, disparaging, humiliating, insulting, or degrading comments (whether verbal or written) toward others
- ff. Engaging in any behavior that is disruptive, distracting, or unsettling to orderly operations
- gg. Sleeping while on duty unless specifically authorized by the appropriate authority; loitering, or loafing on the job
- hh. Engaging in unprofessional conduct
- ii. Interfering with the job performance of fellow employees
- jj. Engaging in bullying behavior, horseplay, or practical jokes that endanger or disrupt employees or County property
- kk. Malicious, negligent, or intentional destruction, damage, defacement, or willful neglect of property of the County or another person or organization
- ll. Failing to maintain proper grooming, dress, cleanliness, or hygiene
- mm. Violation of a crime of moral turpitude, conviction of a felony or a misdemeanor that would adversely affect the performance of duties,

- or any entry of a plea of no contest either of demonstrated acts that reflect a lack of judgement or breach of trust
- nn. Abuse of County property
- oo. Neglect of or willful carelessness of duties
- pp. Intentionally withholding information from any Supervisor or Official which an employee has a reasonable responsibility to disclose
- qq. Acting in, or creating, unsafe or hazardous working conditions

B. Attitude and Behavior

County employees are expected to conduct themselves in a courteous and professional manner in interactions with the public and fellow employees. Hall County expects that employees maintain 'harmonious relationships' in the workplace and uphold basic standards of 'civility.'

Hall County depends on you to do your best and to regularly be on the job. Your employer and fellow employees expect you to be responsive and cooperate with others in a spirit of teamwork and good customer service.

The County has adopted Basic Employment Standards of behavior for its employees. Every employee is expected to adhere to these Basic Employment Standards:

1. Honesty and Integrity
2. Have Regular and Prompt Attendance
3. Display a Positive Attitude
4. Be Courteous
5. Be Productive
6. Respect Yourself and Each Other
7. Be Safe
8. Work Smart
9. Be Accountable
10. Be Committed

These Basic Employment Standards will always apply to all employees. Failure to follow these standards may result in disciplinary action in accordance with established policy up to and including termination of employment.

An employee's compliance with the Basic Employment Standards will be considered during annual performance evaluations, transfers, and promotional decisions, and all other matters relating to performance and behavior issues.

C. Insubordination

Insubordination includes, but is not limited to, failure to follow lawful rules, policies, ordinances, professional practices, and willful failure to follow lawful directives by Supervisors or Management. Any employee who demonstrates unresponsiveness, either

verbal or physical, towards a Department Director or Supervisor in authority may be subject to immediate disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Section 9.3: Outside Employment

Employees generally are permitted to work a second job if it does not interfere with their job performance or create a conflict of interest with Hall County.

Employees with a second job are expected to work their assigned schedules with Hall County. A second job will not be considered an excuse for poor job performance, absenteeism, tardiness, leaving early, refusal to travel, or refusal to work overtime or different hours. In addition, employees who have accepted outside employment may not use paid sick time to work on the outside job.

County employees are strictly prohibited from pursuing outside business activity on County time. County time and/or property are not to be used for personal gain of any kind, in order to avoid any appearance of impropriety.

Section 9.4: Dress and Appearance

First impressions are important. Ensuring that our first impression conveys the appropriate County image is the foundation of our Dress and Appearance Policy.

Dress, grooming, and personal cleanliness standards contribute to the morale of all employees and affect the business image Hall County presents to customers and visitors. While we respect each person's right to personal expression, the County reserves the right to expect that tattoos, body piercings and body modification do not negatively affect the County's image and reputation. As a result, staff who have any of the above may be required, in certain circumstances, to remove piercings or body modifiers and/or cover tattoos.

The County Administrator has authorized the implementation of a business casual policy for office staff of Hall County. The expectation of this policy is that each employee looks appropriate for their job and their expected duties and meetings for the day. Casual business attire encompasses many looks. However, for purposes of this policy, casual business attire means clothing that allows employees to feel comfortable at work yet is appropriate for a professional office environment. Casual business attire includes, but is not limited to:

A. Standards for Employees

1. Pants or slacks in khaki, twill, corduroy, gabardine, wool blends, flannel, cotton, and silks
2. Dresses and/or skirts should be no shorter than 2" above the knee
3. Collared and non-collared shirts
4. Casual jackets, pullover sweaters, cardigan sweaters, woven, or knit vests.
5. Dress or casual business shoes
6. Beards, mustaches, and other facial hair should be neatly maintained in a well-groomed manner

7. Exception: It is expected that all staff will dress appropriately for meetings that may require more professional attire including, but not limited to, meetings of the County Commission.

B. Unacceptable Attire

The following items will not be acceptable during working hours:

1. Baseball style and other non-professional hats that are not part of a uniform
2. Warm-up suits, sweatsuits, or any other workout attire
3. Shorts and cut-off shorts (unless part of uniform)
4. Spandex
5. Lounge wear or pajamas
6. T-shirts that aren't part of a uniform
7. Visible spaghetti straps, halters, or tank tops
8. Bare midriffs, sheer clothing, or clothing that is otherwise revealing, distracting, or provocative
9. Flip-flops, Crocs, bedroom shoes, slippers
10. Any clothing that is not neat, clean, and free from holes, rips, or tears
11. Blouses, dresses, or shirts that show exposed areas of the stomach, chest, sides, or back; all shirts must reach the waist and cover the shoulders
12. Jewelry that can cause a safety hazard

Special attire exceptions to the dress code policy may be allowed when the job necessitates.

The County will reasonably accommodate employees' covered disabilities and sincerely held religious practices with regard to dress and grooming in accordance with applicable law, unless such accommodation would cause the County an undue hardship. Employees desiring such an accommodation must submit a request in writing to the Human Resources Director for consideration. Appropriate documentation of the need and basis for an accommodation may be required in connection with such a request. Please see our related policy on Equal Employment Opportunity, which is contained in this Manual. Any individual believing that a reasonable accommodation relating to personal appearance has not been provided or who otherwise feels he or she has been discriminated against on account of a request for accommodation relating to personal appearance must follow the County's Employee Complaint Procedure, which is contained in this Manual.

Section 9.5: Pets in the Workplace

Hall County is responsible for assuring the health and safety of all employees. In keeping with this objective, employees are not permitted to bring their domesticated and/or household animals and/or pets to work or transport them in a County vehicle. Animals may pose a threat of infection and may cause allergic reactions in other employees. Some employees may feel threatened or distracted by the presence of animals. In addition, Hall County wishes to prevent pets from fouling the office space or damaging County property.

An employee who requires the help of a service animal as defined under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) will be permitted to bring a service animal to the office, provided that the animal's presence does not create a danger to others and does not impose an undue hardship upon the County. Accommodation related to service animals in the workplace must have prior approval by Human Resources.

A. Types of Animals

1. Service Animals.

Service animals, also known as "assistance animals," are trained to perform quantifiable tasks that directly ease the challenges associated with their owner's physical, psychiatric, sensory, and/or developmental disability. The most common types of service dogs include guide, hearing, medical alert, mobility, autism service, and psychiatric service dogs. Having a service animal provides handlers with greater independence, as well as enriched confidence to leave their home, foster social relationships, and enter or re-enter the workforce. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) protects the rights of people with disabilities to bring their service dogs with them to most public places. Currently, there are no nationally or legally recognized service animal training, certification, or identification standards, and both professional trainers and/or organizations and laypersons may train and provide service animals. At a minimum, service animals should be individually trained in essential tasks that a person could not otherwise perform due to his/her disability (such as alerting a person with epilepsy when he/she shows signs of an impending seizure).

Additionally, service animals should be well-behaved and under control in the community. Service animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless these devices interfere with the service animal's work or the individual's disability prevents them from using these devices. In that case, the individual must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls. Service animals are allowed to accompany people with disabilities in all areas of campus where the public is normally allowed to go.

2. Certified Working Animals.

Certified working animals, such as law enforcement canines, are intended to be included in this policy. K9s must be well behaved and under control in the community. Service animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless these devices interfere with the service animal's work or the individual's disability prevents them from using these devices. In that case, the individual must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls.

3. Emotional Support Animals.

Emotional support animals are companion animals who help their owners cope with the challenges associated with emotional and mental health conditions (such as depression and anxiety) by providing comfort with their presence. Unlike service and therapy animals, emotional support animals are not expected to perform specific tasks related to

their owner's condition, nor must they adhere to any behavior standards or training. Their presence alone is what is thought to provide their owner with solace and therapeutic benefit. Emotional support animals are not allowed in public places or in Hall County government buildings.

4. Therapy Animals.

Therapy animals together with their owners are certified or registered to visit hospitals, long-term care facilities, treatment centers, schools, and other settings to benefit people in need. While typically trained in basic obedience skills, therapy dogs (or "comfort dogs") are not required to perform essential tasks for those they serve or specialize in any area of service. Therapy animals do not have public access rights under the ADA and are only allowed in facilities by an invitation agreement. Additionally, they serve people other than their owners (also known as handlers), and their role is often to complement more traditional modes of treatment or therapy through comforting, supportive, calming, and engaging interactions. This is frequently done through the work of volunteer therapy dog- handler teams, but professionals (such as psychotherapists and social workers) may also incorporate a therapy animal into their practice with clients. While many types of animals can be therapy animals (such as horses and cats), dogs are by far the most common species, and any canine breed is eligible. Therapy dogs are not allowed in public places or in Hall County government buildings.

Section 9.6: Visitors and Children in the Workplace

Maintaining the safety and health of Hall County employees, staff, guests, and visitors relies upon the control of hazardous conditions and prevention of unsafe behaviors. Bringing children into the workplace in lieu of childcare and/or school is prohibited.

This policy is established to avoid disruptions in job duties of the employee and co-workers, reduce property liability, and help maintain a professional work environment. Any exception, limited to emergency situations only, to this policy must be reviewed and approved by Human Resources in advance.

Section 9.7: Bulletin Boards

Departments will implement an employee bulletin board or bulletin area. It should be accessible to all employees withing the department. Departments working out of several areas are encouraged to construct multiple bulletin boards and/or areas to ensure dissemination of employee information. The bulletin board and/or area will be divided into two (2) sections:

- A. Permanent Items: Required posting under Federal and State Law. Examples include, but are not limited to notices of rights under the Fair Labor Standards Act; the Americans with Disabilities Act; Workers Compensation Panel of Physicians and Employee's Bill of Rights; and County or Department policies
- B. Temporary Items: Safety reminders and department announcements

All bulletin boards will be kept in a neat and orderly appearance.

Nothing in this policy is meant to, nor should it be interpreted to, in any way limit your rights under any applicable federal, state, or local laws, including your rights under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) to engage in protected concerted activities with other employees to improve or discuss terms and conditions of employment, such as wages, working conditions, and benefits. Employees have the right to engage in or refrain from such activities.

Section 9.8: Solicitation

Solicitation generally refers to the act of requesting or seeking to obtain something from someone. Employees should be able to work in an environment that is free from unnecessary annoyances and interference with their work. To protect our employees and visitors, solicitation by employees is strictly prohibited while either the employee being solicited or the employee doing the soliciting is on working time. “Working time” is defined as time during which an employee is not at a meal, on break, or on the premises immediately before or after a shift. To ensure a productive and harmonious work environment, people not employed by Hall County may not solicit or distribute literature in the workplace at any time for any purpose.

As a representative of Hall County, it is important for all employees to remain impartial towards outside causes; therefore, employees are:

- A. Prohibited from soliciting funds for any purpose from the public or from other County employees while on duty or during work hours, except such charitable causes as are approved in advance by the County Administrator or authorized Elected Official.
- B. Employees are also prohibited from soliciting funds from the public at any time while wearing a County uniform except such causes specifically approved in advance by the County Administrator or authorized Elected Official.
- C. Employees may not engage in the solicitation or distribution of handbills in the workplace

Section 9.9: Disciplinary Procedure

This disciplinary policy is intended to provide general guidance regarding the types of conduct that may lead to disciplinary action. It outlines examples of behavior that may be considered inappropriate or inconsistent with the expectations of the County. However, because it is not possible to anticipate every situation that may arise, this policy does not—and cannot—address every form of conduct or circumstance that may result in discipline.

Nothing in this policy should be construed as creating a promise or guarantee of progressive discipline. The County retains full discretion to determine what constitutes inappropriate conduct and to decide, in its sole judgment, the appropriate disciplinary response under the circumstances. Disciplinary measures may vary depending on the nature and severity of the issue and are not required to follow any specific order or sequence.

A. Standards Of Conduct

The level of discipline used, such as reprimand, suspension, or termination, will be determined by the County in its sole judgment based on the circumstances, including, for instance, the frequency and/or severity of the violation and other circumstances and instances in the employee's record.

Examples of misconduct or inappropriate behavior that may result in disciplinary action include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Falsification of documents, including but not limited to providing false or misleading information to take advantage of County benefits or procedures or to gain employment, or other similar conduct.
2. Violence or threat of violence, including but not limited to conduct that causes or could cause a reasonable person to fear physical harm or damage to property, or other similar conduct.
3. Conduct that poses a serious risk of harm to people or resources.
4. Violation of County policies against discrimination, sexual harassment, or retaliation.
5. Use, being under the influence or possession of alcohol or drugs in violation of the County's related policies; or illegal use of drugs and/or being under the influence of illegal drugs while on County property, using County equipment, or when engaged in County business and when such conduct poses a serious threat of harm to people, property, and/or resources of the County.
6. Drug diversion or other similar conduct.
7. Any conduct that threatens safety and/or welfare of others.
8. Theft including but not limited to theft of services or resources; theft or unauthorized possession or use of County property, theft of time (falsifying time to receive pay for time not worked), or other similar conduct.
9. An arrest, conviction of, a plea in abeyance (until expunged), or a plea of guilty or no contest to any crime that adversely impacts the County or disqualifies an employee from performing their job.
10. Unauthorized and intentional access to or disclosure of confidential, proprietary, privileged, or controlled information or records, or any similar conduct.
11. Violation of applicable statutory requirements, policies, or procedures that protect the environment and the health and safety of others, or any similar conduct.
12. Intentionally using position and/or affiliation with the County for personal gain or in a manner that brings disrepute to the institution or otherwise adversely impacts the course of business and/or operations of the County.

These examples are not all-inclusive. Because this list does not cover every action for which you may be disciplined, you are also expected to use common sense and conduct yourself in a reasonable and professional manner. We emphasize that discipline and discharge decisions may be based on an assessment of all relevant factors, including the severity of the infraction and the employee's work record, as determined by the County.

B. Suspension from Duty with Pay and Without Prejudice

A Department Director may, in his or her discretion, suspend an employee with pay and without prejudice, pending an investigation into inappropriate behavior, misconduct, or

other circumstances that may warrant disciplinary action. The Department Director should confer with Human Resources before action is taken, if possible, but in all cases will notify Human Resources as soon as possible.

All Civil Service employees being suspended will be provided with a written notice of suspension and shall be advised of their right of appeal by their Supervisor.

C. Potential Forms of Disciplinary Action

The following are descriptions of types of disciplinary action that may be imposed by the County in its discretion. However, it is not intended to be an exhaustive list, and the County retains discretion to choose the appropriate form(s) of discipline in any particular circumstance.

1. Verbal Warning

When a verbal is given then, as a best practice, the Supervisor should document when a verbal warning has occurred. Documentation should include an explanation of the infraction or performance problem, other counseling measures that have previously been attempted, and details of the verbal warning. The Supervisor should provide a signed copy to Human Resources and maintain a copy of the verbal warning.

2. Written Warning

When a written warning is given, the Supervisor should provide the employee with a written warning which outlines the infraction or performance problem, previously attempted corrective measures, and a description of corrective measures that should be taken to address the issue. The Supervisor should provide a signed copy to Human Resources and maintain a copy of the written warning and maintain accurate documentation supporting this step of the disciplinary process.

3. Suspension

Suspension is an unpaid action. Employees may not substitute vacation or sick pay in lieu of the lost regular pay due to the suspension. Additionally, an employee who is suspended may not work in any capacity for Hall County during the suspension period. The Supervisor should consult with Human Resources in determining the necessity, and length of time of the suspension.

For employees under Civil Service the following additional steps will be taken for Suspension:

a. Pre-suspension Procedure:

- i. Determine reason for suspension
- ii. Review previous documentation including counseling and warning statements.
- iii. Review with Department Director and Human Resources
- iv. Provide pre-suspension notice to employee

- v. Employees are given an opportunity to respond to Supervisor's reasons for suspension prior to being suspended.

b. Suspension Procedure:

- i. Provide suspension notice to employee
- ii. Advise employee of appeal rights.

4. Termination

When an employee is terminated, the Department Director will give notice in writing to the employee stating the cause(s) for dismissal. Prior to dismissal, the employee will be advised in writing of the County's intention to terminate employment and for what reasons.

For employees under Civil Service the following additional steps will be taken for Termination:

a. Pre-termination Procedure:

- i. Determine reason for termination
- ii. Review previous documentation including counseling, warnings, and suspensions
- iii. Review with Department Director and the Department of Human Resources
- iv. Provide pre-termination notice to employee
- v. Employees are given an opportunity to respond to Supervisor's reasons for termination prior to being discharged.

b. Termination Procedure:

- i. Provide termination notice to employee.
- ii. Advise employee of appeal rights.

Some offenses may be so egregious that the formal steps of progressive discipline may be negated in lieu of immediate dismissal.

Section 9.10: Internal Administrative Investigations

At times, it may be necessary for a department or Human Resources to conduct an internal administrative investigation to ascertain whether misconduct has occurred, and to determine if disciplinary action is warranted, to resolve issues between employees, for policy violation or complaints.

Section 9.11: Workplace Searches

The County reserves the right to search an employee's possessions kept in County offices, vehicles, desks, or lockers for appropriate reasons. Employees shall have no right of privacy and should have no expectation of privacy with respect to County facilities, equipment, e-mails, and other communications, including any electronic data or communication of any kind transmitted

through or using any County network, computer, telephone, cell phone, or other electronic device. Reasons may include, but are not limited to, searches for:

- A. County documents
- B. Missing or stolen articles
- C. Alcohol or drugs
- D. Firearms or weapons

A Department Director, the County Administrator, the Assistant County Administrator, or designee may approve such a search when reasonable suspicion or investigatory procedure warrants.

It is the intent of Hall County to assign personal workspace to each of its employees. Employees are permitted to bring items of a personal nature to be left in their workspace provided the items do not interfere with the employee's work performance or do not create a hostile or offensive work environment for other employees.

The workspace of employees remains the property of Hall County and therefore is subject to search by Human Resources, Officers, and leaders of the County if a reasonable cause exists to do so. The search will be conducted with the employees and a member of Human Resources present. Hall County will make its searches for workspaces non-discriminatory and as non-intrusive as possible. Reasonable cause includes but is not limited to suspicion of misuse of drugs or alcohol, weapons, theft, safety violations, other inappropriate materials, or any other bona fide business reasons.

Employees are expected to cooperate with property searches. If an employee refuses to cooperate, that employee will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

SECTION 10:

COMMUNICATIONS

Section 10.1: Social Media Policy

In general, the County views social networking websites (e.g., Facebook, X, Instagram), personal websites, and blogs positively and respects the right of employees to use them as a medium of self-expression. However, the use of these types of websites can impact both the County and employees alike. Therefore, the County has created this policy to establish its expectations for employee use of these types of websites.

A. Applicability

This policy is meant to apply to social networking sites, personal websites, blogs, photo sharing sites, video sharing sites, podcasts, as well as bulletin boards and comments posted on other websites. For ease of reference, this policy refers to all of these types of websites generically as “social media websites.” The absence of an explicit reference to a specific website is not meant to limit the application of this policy. Where no policy or guideline exists, employees should use their professional judgment and take the most prudent action possible. You should consult with your manager or supervisor if you are uncertain about any of your activities on a social media website.

B. No Interference with Job Duties

The County’s Internet and computer resources are provided to employees to allow them to complete their job duties and should be used for business purposes only. As such, the County does not allow personal use of social media websites during work time.

C. Limits on Privacy and Speech

No user shall have any expectation of privacy in any message, file, image, or data that has been created, sent, retrieved, received, or posted utilizing County electronic communications tools and/or devices. All messages, files, images, and data that have been created, sent, or retrieved over the internet or by any user in the transaction of public business are subject to the Georgia Open Records Act unless specifically exempted from disclosure under the law. The County has a right to monitor all aspects of its information infrastructure, including but not limited to:

1. Social media visited by users
2. Material downloaded or uploaded by users
3. Posts or blog entries by users
4. Photo sharing or video sharing files downloaded or uploaded by users
5. Emails sent or received by users

Such monitoring of County equipment may occur at any time, without notice, and without the user’s permission. In addition, except for exemptions under the Georgia Open Records Act, electronic records, including any message, file, image, or data that

has been created, sent, retrieved, received, or posted utilizing Hall County electronic communication tools and/or devices, may be subject to Open Records Requests and therefore, it may be available for public dissemination.

Employees should not assume or pretend to assume the role of official spokesperson for the County, their department, or division, unless authorized to do so as provided in this Manual.

Hall County accounts should not share content from other entities, businesses, or private citizens unless said content directly involves Hall County and brings value to Hall County's message. Hall County accounts should not "like" or "favorite" citizen comments or posts or post anything that could be construed as political endorsement of candidates, ballot issues, current events, or sensitive information. Hall County accounts should not share content from other entities containing advertising, solicitation, links to other sites, or fundraising content.

D. Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Communications Department to act as the County's official spokesperson and maintain the County's official web presence via social media, networking, and the internet.

It is the responsibility of the Management Information Systems (MIS) Department to administer security and monitor measures that support this policy.

It is the responsibility of County departments and employees who engage in social media and networking in an official capacity for their department or division to coordinate this activity with the Communications Department and MIS.

The responsibility for assuring complete compliance with the provisions of this policy lies with the Department Director, Supervisors, and the individual employee involved.

It is the responsibility of social media users and those engaged in social networking to stay informed regarding County policies related to this activity.

E. Requirements for County-Sponsored Social Media

County employees wanting to create and maintain department specific social media platforms separate from the County's main page must obtain approval from the Department Director, the Communications Manager and the County Administrator. Departments must provide specific reasons for the need to have separate social media applications and how those social media applications will be maintained and monitored. If approved, the Department Director and Communications Manager will periodically review each application. Those that do not meet the County's intended goals and objectives may be removed at any time.

Departmental social media pages must provide administrative access to the pages to the County Communications Department, including the Communications and Strategic Engagement Manager, Public Information Officer, and Digital Media Specialist.

All Hall County related social media sites must adhere to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and policies, including all MIS and County Records Management policies and other applicable County policies.

The Georgia Open Records Act and First Amendment laws and policies apply to social media content, and therefore, content must be able to be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with these laws.

Each County social media site must identify the County name, state, and department. Where possible, department social networking sites should link back to the official Hall County website for forms, documents, and other information.

The Department Director, Division Director, or designee are responsible for the management, posting, and monitoring the specific department's public social media presence.

F. Operation of County-Sponsored Social Media

Employees representing Hall County via its social media platforms should conduct themselves as representatives of the County and in accordance with Human Resources policies. Any employee maintaining or posting on County social media sites must adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Refrain from conducting political activities or private business from County social media platforms.
2. Refrain from making statements or posts about current or pending County investigations and transmitting or otherwise disseminating confidential information.
3. Refrain from "liking" and/or engaging with commenters in a way that could be construed as favoritism on behalf of the County.

The purpose of using social media platforms is to provide news and information on County services, County business, or County sponsored or produced events and to use the public forums for community outreach and engagement. Examples of how County social media platforms are to be used include, but are not limited to:

1. Road closures
2. Public safety and weather emergencies
3. Community development
4. Community services
5. Employee recruitment

G. Personal Use Outside of Work

Employees may use social media websites during their personal time outside of work. Employees must be aware, however, that information they display on the Internet not only reflects on themselves but could be associated with the County as well. Therefore, employees are expected to follow these guidelines when using any social media website:

1. No employee may use his or her work email address to register on any social media website for personal use.
2. Any social media posting by an employee must be consistent with the County's policies including, but not limited to, the County's EEO policy against harassment and discrimination, as well as the County's policies regarding confidentiality of information. Inappropriate postings may include discriminatory remarks, harassment, threats of violence, intimidation, bullying, defamatory statements, false statements, disclosure of confidential information not otherwise subject to disclosure to the public by law, and similar inappropriate or unlawful conduct.
3. If an employee identifies himself as an employee of the County, or if the County is referred to in or is the subject of a social media posting, the employee must be clear and open about the fact that all opinions or views expressed are those of the employee and not the County. (For example: "The views and comments stated herein are personal and do not necessarily reflect the views of my employer.")
4. An employee must be honest and accurate when posting information or news and if a mistake is made, the employee must promptly correct it. An employee may not post any information or rumors that he knows to be false about the County, its clients or customers, or people working on behalf of the County.
5. Employees are responsible for reading, knowing, and complying with the Terms of Service of the social media websites they use.
6. Employees are always expected to comply with the law in regard to copyright, trademark, and plagiarism. Posting of someone else's work without permission is not allowed.
7. The County encourages all employees to keep in mind the speed and manner in which information posted on a blog, web page or social networking site can be relayed and often misunderstood by the reader. Employees must use their best judgment and also comply with the policies set forth in this Manual.

H. Other County Policies

All other policies in this Handbook apply with equal force to employee use of social media websites. Employees are expected to follow the County's Equal Opportunity and Commitment to Diversity policy contained in this Manual when participating in social media websites. The County considers behavior that is inappropriate in the workplace to be inappropriate on the Internet as well, including that the County's Equal Opportunity and Commitment to Diversity policy concerning discrimination, harassment, and retaliation applies equally to the treatment of employees in the workplace or on the Internet.

I. Business-Related Social Media Use

An employee is not permitted to visit social media websites during work hours, unless specifically authorized to do so for business-related purposes, either: (1) by virtue of the employee's job duties; or (2) with express authorization as specified below. Those employees who do have authorization and post messages on County websites or social media accounts should understand that they are posting on behalf of the County and must adhere to the County's professional standards, values, policies, and applicable laws at all times.

Employees who have job responsibilities that include posting information to County-maintained websites or social media accounts understand and agree that the content and followers of the blog or other website belong exclusively to the County and that, upon request, the employee must provide the County with any information necessary to log in to the website or social media account. No employee may create an official County account or change a password, as this is solely the responsibility of the County's IT department. Further, employees must comply with all copyright, trademark, and other applicable laws when posting material to a County website or social media website.

Employees who do not have job responsibilities that include the posting of information to County-maintained websites and/or social media accounts on behalf of the County or in a manner that could reasonably be attributed to the County must obtain express written authorization from the County Administrator before posting any material to a County website or social media website.

All employees authorized to post on the County social media accounts should identify themselves and their affiliation with the County. Any content posted should be current and accurate. If you do make an error, take responsibility for it and correct it quickly. Do not post any information that is obscene, defamatory, libelous, threatening, harassing, or intimidating to another person or entity. Examples of such conduct might include offensive posts meant to intentionally harm someone's reputation or posts that could contribute to a hostile work environment on the basis of any characteristic protected by law or County policy.

J. Employment Representations

Following the end of your employment relationship with the County, you must take prompt affirmative steps to ensure that no social media website represents you to be a current employee of the County.

K. Disciplinary Action

While the County respects the right of employees to use social media websites, it has established this policy for the benefit and protection of the County and its employees. Any employee witnessing or who believes a violation of this policy has

occurred must utilize the County's Complaint Procedure, which is contained in this Manual. The County takes the expectations explained above very seriously. As such, employees are advised that violating this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Section 10.2: Hall County Branding Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure any item with the Hall County brand or logo is in adherence with Hall County's Brand Identity Standards.

A. Brand Standards as Part of the Bid Process

Hall County's Brand Identity Standards, which can be found in the Inform Library, should be included in the bid process for any item that would ultimately display Hall County's logo or brand, including, but not limited to, uniform bids and bids for promotional items.

Constitutional offices that have their own brand identity (i.e., Sheriff's Office, Fire Rescue Department, and/or Tax Commissioner) are exempt from this policy.

Furthermore, any item ordered by an employee, division, or department of Hall County that includes the Hall County logo and/or brand must be ordered utilizing vendors already contracted for such uses by Hall County's Purchasing Department.

Should an item with the Hall County logo and/or brand fall beneath the threshold by which any type of bid process is necessary, the item's design should still be approved by the Hall County Communications Department prior to its order.

Printed logo and/or branding:

1. A standard template for printed items (business cards, letterheads, envelopes, etc.) must be adhered to, as exemplified on page 11 of Hall County's Brand Identity Standards. Specific guidelines as to when to include the Hall County tagline on printed items must be followed as outlined on page 10 of the Brand Identity Standards.
2. Any deviation from Hall County's Brand Identity Standards must be approved by the Hall County Communications Department.
3. Furthermore, any printed item, including the Hall County logo and/or brand that is not already templated with a vendor through Hall County's Purchasing Department, must be approved by the Communications Department prior to its order.
4. Any item currently not adhering to Hall County's Branding Identity Standards, such as uniforms, business cards, letterheads, etc., should be phased out through attrition or by the end of the current fiscal year, whichever occurs first.
5. In regard to uniforms, embroidery for the logo is preferred; however, in order to reduce costs, the logo may be affixed to uniforms by heat seal or screenprint. It is

recommended that management level uniforms be embroidered as appropriate in relation to the Manager's specific job duties and the wear that may be incurred on the uniform as a result of their job duties.

B. Hall County Vehicle Signage Standards

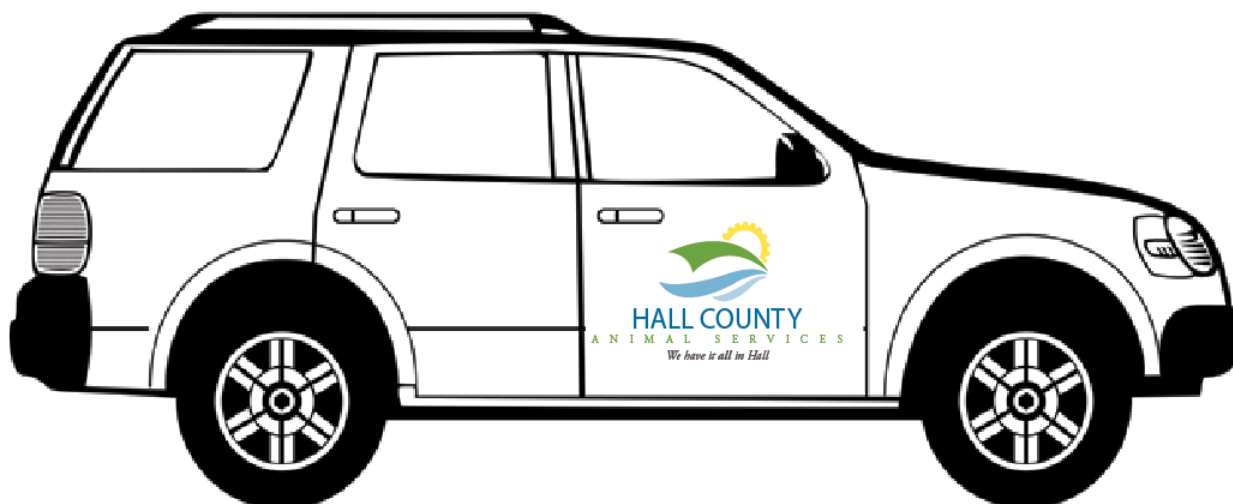
To ensure that institutional vehicle identification is clear and consistent, uniform guidelines for vehicles have been established. The only vehicles that are exempt from displaying the Hall County logo are those in Fire Rescue, Sheriff's Department, and Correctional Institution; however, vehicles in those three (3) departments must be clearly marked using the same design, colors, and logos of their respective departments (for example, fire vehicles should contain the HCFR emblem with red and black markings and text if needed). Any others seeking a variation from these standards must receive written approval from Hall County Administration via the Communications Department.

Any vehicle that is required to be unmarked for any reason must also receive written approval from Hall County Administration with the exception of Hall County Sheriff's Office vehicles, which may be approved by the Sheriff.

All County vehicles will have the official County logo displayed on both the driver and passenger side doors, centered—vertically and horizontally- on each door. Some adjustments to the placement of the logo may be required to accommodate different vehicle makes and models.

The logo featuring the lettering "Georgia" will be replaced with the name of each specific department unless a vehicle is shared by multiple departments. In that case, the lettering "Georgia" will remain.

Below is an example of the specifications for the County vehicle decal.



All white County vehicles should be branded with the multi-colored logo. Any other colored vehicle should have a white version of the County logo and corresponding text.

County vehicles purchased with Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) funds may also be required to display a SPLOST decal (to be received and applied by Fleet Maintenance) on their exterior to highlight the SPLOST program. These should typically be placed on the back corner of each vehicle.

Other items of note:

1. Vehicles requiring “Sworn Police Officer” text or any other additional lettering must receive approval from Fleet Maintenance. Such text should appear in the same font and/or size as the text in the County logo.
2. All vehicles must contain their County vehicle ID number, which will be designed using the same font as the text in the Hall County logo.
3. Flashing lights inside or outside of vehicles are only permissible by approval from Fleet Maintenance.
4. Hall County machinery (excavators, skid steers, etc.) will continue to use the round white logo stickers currently in existence with the newest version of the Hall County logo—*not* the old green sticker featuring the State of Georgia emblem.
5. Any County employee who removes any element of the fleet maintenance logos and/or identifiable branding and/or license plate markings may be subject to disciplinary action.

For more information regarding vehicle decals and their installation, contact the County’s Fleet Maintenance Department at 770-531-7082 or the Communications Department at 770-533-7858.

Section 10.3: Open Records Law

Per the Hall County Board of Commissioners’ Resolution effective January 1, 2019, the Directors of the following Agencies and/or Departments, or their designee, are hereby designated as the County’s Records Officers for the purposes of handling requests for records over which their respective Agencies and/or Departments have custody and control: Animal Services, Board of County Commissioners, Department of Corrections and Maintenance, Courts, E-911, Elections, Environmental Health, Financial Services, Fire Rescue Services, Human Resources, Parks and Leisure, Public Works and Utilities, Planning and Development, Sheriff’s Office, Tax Assessor, and Tax Commissioner. Open Records Requests to Hall County shall be made upon the Records Officer(s) responsible for the particular subject matter of the request.

No records shall be released by the County regarding pending investigations or prosecutions of criminal activity without proper notification and approval of the District Attorney (or Solicitor where the case is in State Court.)

County employees, by virtue of their position, may at times have access to or knowledge of confidential or privileged information. Employees are prohibited from unauthorized disclosure or release of confidential information they have learned as a result of their position, without specific approval of their Department Director or the County Administrator. Should an employee receive an Open Records Request, the request should be forwarded to the Department Director or designated appointee, by the end of the business day.

Noncompliance with the confidentiality obligation is grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination. This policy is not intended to preclude employees from discussing the terms and conditions of their employment.

SECTION 11:

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) POLICIES and GUIDELINES

Section 11.1: Technology Use and Security

This policy establishes standards for the acceptable and secure use of technology systems, networks, and data by employees, contractors, and other authorized users of the County. It is designed to protect the integrity, confidentiality, and availability of County systems and data, ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations, and promote responsible and professional use of County technology resources.

A. Scope

This policy applies to all employees, elected officials, contractors, consultants, temporary workers, and any other individuals who access or use County technology resources, whether on-site or remotely.

B. Acceptable Use

Technology resources provided by the County, including but not limited to computers, mobile devices, software, email, internet access, and network infrastructure, are to be used primarily for official County business. Acceptable uses include:

- Performing job-related duties and responsibilities;
- Communicating with other government entities and the public in furtherance of County business;
- Accessing systems and data necessary to perform assigned tasks;
- Participating in authorized training or professional development activities;
- Incidental personal use is permitted if it does not interfere with official duties, incur additional costs to the County, or violate any part of this policy.

C. Prohibited Use

Users of County technology resources are strictly prohibited from engaging in the following activities:

- Accessing, creating, transmitting, or storing illegal, obscene, harassing, discriminatory, or otherwise inappropriate material;
- Using County resources for political campaigning, private business activities, or personal financial gain;
- Installing unauthorized hardware or software;
- Circumventing security controls, including attempting to gain unauthorized access to systems or data;
- Sharing login credentials or allowing unauthorized individuals to access County systems;
- Engaging in phishing, hacking, or other malicious activity;
- Using County email or internet services to engage in personal solicitation or mass mailings not related to County business;
- Storing County data on unauthorized cloud services or personal devices unless explicitly permitted.

D. Security Safeguards

To maintain the security and integrity of County systems and information, all users are required to:

- Use complex passwords and update them regularly in accordance with County guidelines;
- Lock screens or log off when leaving workstations unattended;
- Report lost or stolen devices immediately to the IT Department;
- Not download files or click on links from unknown or suspicious sources;
- Keep software and systems updated as directed by the IT Department;
- Store sensitive or confidential data only in authorized locations;
- Use encryption and secure connections (e.g., VPN) when accessing systems remotely;
- Participate in regular cybersecurity awareness training, as required.

E. Compliance and Enforcement

All users are expected to comply with this policy and applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations, including but not limited to public records laws, and data privacy laws.

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment, revocation of access privileges, legal action, and/or referral to appropriate law enforcement authorities.

The County reserves the right to monitor, audit, and review the use of its technology resources to ensure compliance with this policy. Users should have no expectation of privacy when using County systems, devices, or networks.

Section 11.2: Mandatory Cybersecurity Training

All employees are required to complete each assigned cybersecurity training session. These sessions are provided regularly to ensure employees stay informed about current cybersecurity threats and best practices. Completion of assigned training is mandatory to maintain access to county systems.

Failure to complete cybersecurity training may result in the loss of network and system access. Repeated noncompliance may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Section 11.3: Physical Security of IT Resources

- A. Employees must take precautions to prevent theft or unauthorized access to County-owned technology.
- B. Laptops and mobile devices must be secured when not in use, and employees should use locking mechanisms where available.
- C. Computer screens should be positioned to prevent unauthorized viewing of sensitive information.
- D. Unauthorized removal of County IT equipment from premises is prohibited.

Section 11.4: Copyrights and Software License Agreements

- A. Employees must comply with the Federal Copyright Act and all software license agreements.
- B. Unauthorized duplication of software is prohibited and may subject employees and the County to legal penalties.
- C. All software installations must be approved and performed by MIS to ensure compliance with licensing and security requirements.

Section 11.5: Email and Electronic Communications

- A. The County email system is for business purposes only. Employees should maintain professionalism in all email communications.
- B. Employees have no expectation of privacy when using County email; all emails are subject to monitoring and Open Records Requests.
- C. Auto forwarding of County emails to external accounts is prohibited.
- D. Employees must not use personal email accounts (e.g., Gmail, Yahoo) for County business.
- E. Users must be cautious about merging personal and work email accounts on their devices. They must take particular care to ensure that Hall County data is only sent through the Hall County email system. If a user suspects that Hall County data has been sent from a personal email account, either in the body text or as an attachment, they must notify the Hall County MIS Department immediately.

Section 11.6: Access Codes and Passwords

- A. Employees must use strong passwords and enable multi-factor authentication (MFA) where required.
- B. Supervisors must notify the MIS Helpdesk immediately whenever an employee leaves the County or transfers to another department so that access can be revoked.
- C. Employees must not share passwords or store them outside of an MIS-approved encrypted password manager.
- D. MIS conducts periodic access reviews to ensure proper authorization.

Section 11.7: IT Support and Work Orders

- A. All IT support requests must be submitted through the Hall County MIS Helpdesk.
- B. Employees must include clear details when requesting support and respond to follow-up questions.

Section 11.8: Technology Equipment and Procurement

- A. All IT hardware and software purchases must be approved by the MIS Department.
- B. Employees are prohibited from purchasing or installing software without MIS approval.
- C. County technology resources including, but not limited to desktops, laptops, mobile devices, internet, and email, must be used for official business only.
- D. Lost or stolen devices must be reported to the employee's supervisor and MIS immediately.

Section 11.9: Remote Access and Security

- A. Employees must use only MIS-approved remote access tools to connect to County systems.
- B. Public Wi-Fi networks are not to be used.
- C. Employees working remotely must follow all cybersecurity guidelines and protect County issued devices from unauthorized access.
- D. Personally owned computer systems must not be used to remotely connect to the Hall County network.

Section 11.10: Data Protection and Confidentiality

- A. Sensitive or confidential information must be stored on County-approved systems, not on local hard drives or removable media.
- B. Removable media (e.g., USB drives) must be County-issued and used only for business purposes. Removable media must not be used for backups or to store sensitive or confidential information.
- C. Employees must comply with data retention and disposal policies to protect County records and sensitive data.
- D. Employees must take caution to ensure that sensitive or confidential information is not included in any video recordings, photography, or other media content.

Section 11.11 Artificial Intelligence (AI)

I. Summary

This document outlines the security protocols and acceptable use guidelines for artificial intelligence (AI) tools within Hall County Government. The use of AI technologies introduces risk to the safety, privacy, and intellectual property of the County. These tools must be used responsibly and in compliance with cybersecurity, data privacy, and operational standards. This policy ensures that all employees understand the appropriate and inappropriate use of AI technologies on County systems.

II. Applicability

This policy applies to all users of Hall County-owned IT devices, systems, networks, and data. This includes, but is not limited to, all Hall County Government officials, employees, contractors, subcontractors, vendors, partners, or other individuals who use or access County-owned devices, systems, networks, or data.

III. Definitions

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** Technology that enables machines to simulate human intelligence, including tasks such as learning, reasoning, and content generation.
- **Generative AI:** A subset of AI that can create new content, such as text, images, or code, often through models trained on vast datasets.
- **Microsoft Copilot:** An AI-powered assistant integrated into Microsoft 365, governed and secured under Hall County's Microsoft tenant, and the only approved generative AI platform for use.
- **PII (Personally Identifiable Information):** Any information that can identify an individual, including Social Security numbers, birthdates, addresses, and financial data.
- **CJI (Criminal Justice Information):** Information derived from criminal justice systems that are protected under CJIS guidelines.
- **PHI (Protected Health Information):** Individually identifiable health information covered under HIPAA.
- **Hallucination:** When an AI system generates output that is factually incorrect, misleading, or fabricated.

IV. Policy

1. Purpose:

- a. The purpose of Hall County Government's AI usage policy is to guide the appropriate use of generative AI technologies while protecting sensitive information, upholding privacy, and minimizing risk.

2. AI Tools:

- a. Use of any generative AI tool not formally approved is prohibited on County devices, networks, or systems. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - 1. ChatGPT (OpenAI)
 - 2. Google Gemini (formerly Bard)
 - 3. Anthropic Claude
 - 4. Perplexity
 - 5. DeepSeek
- b. Once available, Microsoft Copilot will be the only approved AI platform for generative tasks, as it is part of the Microsoft 365 government cloud environment governed by Hall County's security policies.

3. Data Protection and Content Risk:

- a. The following types of data **must not** be entered into AI tools, regardless of the platform:
 - 1. PII, such as:
 - Social Security numbers
 - Credit card or banking information
 - Full names with identifying details like date of birth or address
 - 2. CJ, such as:
 - Arrest records, warrants, and court dispositions
 - NCIC (National Crime Information Center) entries or queries
 - Suspect names, case numbers, or incident details
 - 3. PHI, such as:
 - Medical diagnoses or treatment information that can be tied to an individual
 - Health insurance information that includes policy numbers or coverage details
 - Appointment dates, medications, or lab results that can be tied to an individual
 - 4. Confidential or internal-use-only government data
 - 5. If you are unsure whether certain information is prohibited by this policy, do not include it in any AI tool without verifying first.
- b. Employees should be aware that:
 - 1. Information input into AI platforms may be stored or used to train models, resulting in potential data leaks.
 - 2. AI-generated content is susceptible to hallucination, which may be inaccurate or misleading, and should not be relied upon without human verification.
 - 3. Outputs may contain or be based on copyrighted or sensitive material.

4. Examples of AI Use Risk Levels:

- a. Low Risk Examples (permitted):
 - 1. "Suggest fun activities for a team-building exercise."

2. "Summarize this email that does not contain sensitive data."
 3. "Draft a thank-you message to my team."
 - b. High Risk Examples (not permitted):
 1. "Summarize this article that includes sensitive vendor history."
 2. "Write performance feedback for an employee review."
 3. "Provide narrative content for a legal or contractual report."
5. Policy Compliance
 - a. All users of Hall County-owned IT devices, systems, networks, or data must abide by security policies, procedures, and standards.
 - b. Questions, comments, and concerns regarding the contents of security policies, procedures, and standards are to be addressed to the Cybersecurity team or MIS Director.
 - c. Violations of policies, procedures, and standards may result in disciplinary actions up to and including revocation of computer accounts and access to networks and/or termination of employment.

VI. Revision History

Section 11.12: Policy Violations and Enforcement

- A. Violations of IT policies may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
- B. Unauthorized access, data breaches, or security violations may be referred to law enforcement.
- C. Employees are responsible for understanding and following all IT policies to ensure the security and integrity of County systems.

SECTION 12:

TIME OFF AND LEAVES OF ABSENCES

Section 12.1: Holidays

Hall County will grant holiday time off to all full-time employees on the holidays listed below:

- New Year's Day (January 1st)
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (third Monday in January)
- Memorial Day (last Monday in May)
- Independence Day (July 4th)
- Labor Day (first Monday in September)
- Veteran's Day
- Thanksgiving (fourth Thursday in November)
- Day after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Eve (December 24th)
- Christmas (December 25th)

When a holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday, the County may designate the preceding Friday or following Monday as the holiday. In order to qualify for holiday pay, non-exempt full-time employees are required to be actively at work as a regularly scheduled workday the day before and the day after a holiday. Holidays that occur during an approved vacation, personal leave, or family medical leave, shall not be charged against PTO, sick leave, sick reserve, or vacation. Holidays that occur while the employee is on medical leave, workers' compensation, or personal leave of more than 30 calendar days, are not paid as holidays.

A full-time employee who is required to work or called in to work during a paid holiday shall receive payment for the eight (8) hours of holiday pay, plus the regular rate of pay for hours actually worked. Holiday hours are not considered time worked for overtime purposes. Part-time and temporary employees are not eligible for paid holidays.

Section 12.2: Religious Observances

Employees who need time off to observe religious practices or holidays not already scheduled by the County should speak with the Director of Human Resources. The County will, on request, seek to reasonably accommodate individuals' religious observances unless doing so creates an undue hardship in the County's business. For more information, please refer to the County's Equal Opportunity and Commitment to Diversity policy contained in this Manual.

Section 12.3: Paid Time Off (PTO) (Effective January 1, 2019)

The purpose of Paid Time Off (PTO) is to provide employees with flexible paid time off from work that can be used for such needs as vacation, personal or family sick time (for the

employee's own illness, injury, or for caring for eligible family members), doctor appointments, school, volunteerism, and other activities of the employee's choice.

Under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) policy, all accrued PTO time is taken before the start of the unpaid FMLA time. An employee may not elect to take time off as unpaid when the employee has an available balance of PTO time unless the employee is being paid on Short Term or Long-Term Disability or Worker's Compensation.

Employees should follow their department procedures when requesting time off. Approval to change the normal work schedule must meet the needs of the Department and be approved in advance by the employee's Supervisor.

An employee may use PTO for personal illness, doctors' appointments, or provide care for their spouse or their dependent child in need of continuous short-term care, or to provide care for an immediate family member as defined by the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). The employee shall report an illness prior to his/her scheduled work time providing as much notice as reasonably possible. If that is not possible, the employee must report the tardiness or absence within 30 minutes after the time he/she is scheduled to have reported to work.

An employee may not elect to take time off as unpaid when the employee has an available balance of PTO time.

Nonexempt (hourly) employees are allowed to take PTO in less than one (1)-hour increments. Exempt (salaried) employees must use PTO in one (1)-hour increments. For exempt employees, time off for less than one (1) hour shall not be charged.

Exempt employees who have exhausted their allotted PTO leave amounts, may not have their pay reduced for partial day absences.

Departments are responsible for establishing call out procedures, communicating these procedures to all employees, and monitoring PTO usage and accruals.

A. Eligibility

All full-time, regular employees are entitled to accrue PTO leave. Part-time and/or temporary employees are not eligible for PTO leave under these policies.

The PTO program applies only to:

1. All new hires hired on or after January 1, 2019
2. All status changes from a non-eligible position to a full-time position on or after January 1, 2019, regardless of the original hire date
3. All rehires hired on or after January 1, 2019

All other full-time regular employees participate in the separate sick leave and vacation program which was in effect prior to January 1, 2019. These programs are described elsewhere in this manual and remain active for those employees.

B. Rate of Accrual

An employee's PTO bank will accrue each pay period at a rate based on the employee's years of service.

Years of service applicable to PTO accruals only include service earned as a full-time, benefits eligible employee and does not include any credit for service performed while in a part-time or temporary status. Employees who are rehired to a part-time position will not be eligible to have previous service counted towards PTO upon hire or at any point thereafter. Employees accrue a specified number of hours per pay period, based on length of service, pro-rated against the applicable annual accrual shown in the table below.

C. PTO Accrual

For All Employees (Excluding Firefighters) Annual Bank Maximum Hours – 300

For Firefighters Annual Bank Maximum Hours – 432

Annual accruals are the maximum that can be earned in a year beginning on the date of hire.

The PTO plan is a Use It or Lose It plan. The maximum number of hours that can remain in the PTO bank at the beginning of each calendar year (January 1) is shown in the table below.

PTO ACCRUAL FOR ALL EMPLOYEES (EXCLUDING FIREFIGHTERS)

Years of Service	ANNUAL MAXIMUM		Accrual Each Pay Period	Bank Maximum
	DAYS	HOURS		
Less than 1	10	80	3.07	300
1 – 4	18	144	5.53	
5 – 9	23	184	7.07	
10 or More	28	225	8.62	

PTO ACCRUAL FOR FIREFIGHTERS

Years of Service	ANNUAL MAXIMUM		Accrual Each Pay Period	Bank Maximum
	SHIFTS	HOURS		
Less than 1	6	144	5.53	432
1 – 4	12	288	11.07	
5 – 9	15	360	13.84	
10 or More	18	432	16.61	

D. Payment of Unused PTO at Termination of Employment

Except as provided below, upon termination of employment or the death of an employee, the former employee or his or her estate, or next of kin will be paid for accumulated accrued but unused PTO, provided all equipment issued to the employee by the County has been returned and no outstanding liabilities or debts remain.

E. Emergencies While out on PTO

Employees on PTO leave, for reasons other than sickness or approved FMLA leave, are subject to recall in case of emergency.

Section 12.4: Vacation Leave Benefits

Applies to full-time benefits eligible employees prior to January 1, 2019.

The purpose of vacation leave is to provide paid time away from work.

A. Eligibility

All full-time, regular employees hired prior to January 1, 2019, are entitled to accrue leave. Part-time and/or temporary employees are not eligible for leave under these policies.

B. Rate of Accrual

An employee's vacation bank will accrue each pay period at a rate based on the employee's years of service and begin accruing from date of hire. Years of service include only that service earned as full-time benefit eligible and do not normally include any credit for service performed while in a part-time or temporary status.

VACATION ACCRUAL FOR ALL EMPLOYEES (EXCLUDING FIREFIGHTERS)

Years of Service	ANNUAL MAXIMUM		Accrual Each Pay Period	Bank Maximum
	DAYS	HOURS		
Less than 1	5	40	1.53	300
1 – 4	15	120	4.61	
5 – 9	20	160	6.15	
10 or More	25	200	7.69	

VACATION ACCRUAL FOR FIREFIGHTERS

Years of Service	ANNUAL MAXIMUM		Accrual Each Pay Period	Bank Maximum
	SHIFTS	HOURS		
Less than 1	4.5	108	4.15	432
1 – 4	9	216	8.30	
5 – 9	12	288	11.07	
10 or More	15	360	13.84	

An employee may not accrue additional vacation after he/she has accumulated either the Annual Maximum Hours or the Bank Maximum Hours for the applicable vacation level. Vacation accruals over the Bank Maximum will be converted to sick leave.

C. Request for Vacation Leave

A request for leave shall be submitted to an employee's immediate Supervisor. Generally, leave may be taken only after an employee has completed six (6) months of full-time service and received approval from the Department Director.

Nonexempt (hourly) employees are allowed to take vacation in less than one (1)-hour increments.

Exempt (salaried) employees must use vacation in one (1)-hour increments. For exempt employees, time off for less than one (1) hour shall not be charged.

Exempt employees who exhaust their allotted vacation leave amounts, may not have their pay reduced for partial day absences after paid vacation leave has been exhausted. However, the employee may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

D. Payment of Unused Vacation Leave

Termination of employment or the death of an employee, the former employee, next of kin, or his or her estate, will be paid for accumulated accrued but unused vacation time, provided all equipment issued to the employee by the County has been returned and no outstanding liabilities or debts remain.

E. Emergencies While Out on Vacation Leave

Employees on vacation leave are subject to recall in case of emergency.

F. Re-Employment

Former full-time employees who are rehired into a full-time benefits eligible position within one (1) year of termination of employment may have their prior years of service counted towards paid time off accrual, provided the reinstatement is requested by the employee's Department Director to Human Resources. Employees who are rehired into a part-time position will not be eligible to receive their prior PTO accrual rate. Upon rehire full-time employees will accrue PTO in place of Vacation and/or Sick Time.

Employees may not take paid vacation or paid time off until they actually have earned or accrued the leave time. New employees accrue paid time off at the start of employment.

Generally, employees should submit vacation requests to their Supervisor at least two (2) weeks in advance of the requested vacation date. Managers have the right to designate when time off may be taken.

Employees whose employment terminates will be paid for unused vacation time that has accrued during the calendar year of the termination.

Section 12.5: Sick Leave

Applies to full-time benefits eligible employees prior to January 1, 2019.

An employee may use accrued sick leave for their own personal illness and/or doctors' appointments, or to take leave for when the employee is unable to work because of a serious health condition, or to provide care for an immediate family member as defined by Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Sick leave benefits work in conjunction with short term disability and workers compensation benefits to supplement the benefits paid under those plans. The employee shall report an illness prior to his/her scheduled work time providing as much notice as reasonably possible. If that is not possible, he/she must report the tardiness or absence within 30 minutes after the time he/she is scheduled to have reported to work. The direct Supervisor must also be contacted each day to say that the employee is absent from work unless on an approved leave of absence.

A. Rate of Accrual

Full-time employees earn annual sick leave at the rate of 80 hours (or a total of 112 hours for firefighters) per year. Sick time will be accrued and earned each pay-period at the rate of 3.077 hours (4.308 hours per pay-period for firefighters) in the same manner

that vacation time is accrued and earned. Certain Defined Benefits participants will continue to receive five (5) sick leave days annually, based on previous elections.

B. Maximum Allowable Accumulation to Sick Reserve

Sick leave may accumulate up to a maximum of 720 hours. Additional accrued sick leave hours beyond the 720 hours are maintained in a separate sick reserve bank that may be used to supplement short term or workers compensation benefits or used during an approved leave as defined by the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Sick reserve hours may only be used after available sick leave hours have been exhausted. It shall be the employee's responsibility to work through Human Resources when sick reserve hours are used. Human Resources will be responsible to update the employee's timecard to reflect the use of sick reserve hours.

C. Chargeable Sick Leave

Employees are charged with sick leave for absences only on days which they would otherwise work and receive pay. No charge is made against sick leave for absence on holidays or other non-workdays unless the employee is scheduled to work. In the event that an employee has exhausted all available sick leave, available vacation time will be substituted in its place. An employee may not elect to take sick time off as unpaid when the employee has an available balance of vacation time.

Exempt employees who exhaust their allotted sick leave amounts, may not have their pay reduced for partial day absences after paid sick leave has been exhausted.

D. Forfeiture of Sick Leave and No Reinstatement

An employee who separates employment from the County shall forfeit all unused sick leave. No employee, regardless of the circumstances, shall be compensated for unused sick leave. The County does not reinstate sick leave for employees who are rehired after separating with the County.

- E. Nonexempt (hourly) employees are allowed to take sick leave in less than one (1)-hour increments. Exempt (salaried) employees must use sick leave in one (1)-hour increments. For exempt employees, time off for less than one (1) hour shall not be charged.

Section 12.6: Medical Emergency Donated Leave Program

The purpose of the donated leave program is to allow employees to donate sick leave, vacation leave, or PTO, as applicable, to benefit an employee with a medical emergency who has already exhausted his or her available paid sick, vacation or PTO leave, as applicable. A medical emergency is a medical condition of the employee or an immediate family member, as defined by the FMLA, that will require the prolonged absence of the employee from duty of at least seven (7) consecutive working days and will result in a substantial loss of income to the employee because the employee has exhausted all of his or her paid leave. The normal process for FMLA shall apply to the donated leave program.

A medical emergency is a major illness or other medical condition (i.e., heart attack, surgery, cancer, etc.) of the employee or an immediate family member of the employee, that will require the prolonged absence of the employee from duty of at least seven (7) working days and will result in a substantial loss of income to the employee because the employee has exhausted all of his or her paid leave (sick and vacation or PTO).

A medical emergency shall also include the need to provide care for an immediate family member who is incapacitated as a result of physical or mental illness, injury, pregnancy or childbirth, and bereavement by reason of the death of a spouse, child, or parent of the leave recipient.

- A. The medical emergency terminates at the earliest of:
1. When the leave recipient's employment is terminated;
 2. At the end of the biweekly pay period in which the leave recipient notifies the department that the medical emergency is over;
 3. At the end of the biweekly pay-period in which the leave recipient employee returns to work;
 4. At the end of the biweekly pay period in which the department determines that the medical emergency is over;
 5. At the end of the biweekly pay period in which the department receives notice that the leave recipient has been approved for disability benefits from any source; or
 6. At the end of the pay-period following the death of the leave recipient or affected family member of the leave recipient.

B. Objective

The primary objective of this plan is to coordinate existing benefits to ensure that an employee with a medical emergency, as defined above, is able to maintain a level of income replacement to avoid severe financial hardship to the employee and his or her family during the medical emergency. This program is intended to be a medical emergency leave-sharing plan as described in Revenue Ruling 90-29 issued by the Internal Revenue Service. The intended tax effect of the program is that the employees who donate leave under the program will not pay income tax on the donated leave, but the recipient of the donated leave will be taxed on receipt of the donated leave.

C. Eligibility

Prior to receiving donated leave, the employee in need must have exhausted all available sick, sick reserve, vacation or PTO, as applicable. All requests for donated leave awards must be made through the employee's Department Director. The Director should be able to show that the employee has a "medical emergency" as defined above and be able to provide an estimate of the number of hours which need to be donated by other employees in order to alleviate the medical emergency.

D. Usage

Donated hours of leave will be credited on an hour for hour basis to the employee having the medical emergency. Donated sick, vacation or PTO shall be credited to the leave recipient as Sick Additional, PTO Additional or Vacation Additional. Note: Sick Reserve hours are not eligible to be donated under this policy.

Donated leave time shall be deducted from the donating employee(s) and credited to the leave recipient on a per pay-period basis.

Sources of donated leave time shall begin with employees of the home department and move to employees from other departments in order based on the list provided by the department.

E. Approval

The Department Director will submit to Human Resources a letter that summarizes the employee's need, the basis for the Director's conclusion that there is a medical emergency, as defined above, the number of donated leave hours requested and the names of the employees who are willing to donate sick, vacation, or PTO leave, as applicable, and the amount of leave each such employee is willing to donate. All proposed leave donations will be submitted at one (1) time. The Director will make a recommendation in a letter and Human Resources will review the letter and recommendation and, if appropriate, give its approval.

F. Maximum Donation by Employee

An employee may donate no more than 80 sick, vacation, or PTO hours, as applicable.

Section 12.7: Federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 ("FMLA") provides unpaid, job-protected leave to eligible employees for certain family and medical reasons, without loss of health insurance benefits. The existence of this Policy shall not alter or expand the statutory requirements of the FMLA, and application of this Policy is correspondingly limited to those employers and employees who are protected based on the provisions of the FMLA.

In addition to the information on the Notice following this Policy (identified as Your Employee Rights under the Family and Medical Leave Act), the following information is provided to explain the employee's rights and obligations when requesting a family or medical leave:

A. Eligibility for Leave and Amount of Leave

To be eligible for leave under this Policy, an employee must have been employed for a total of twelve (12) months, must have worked at least 1,250 hours during the 12-month

period preceding the commencement of the leave, and must work at a facility with 50 or more employees within a 75-mile radius of this worksite.

An eligible employee may take FMLA leave for up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave for one or more of the following reasons: (1) the birth of the employee's child; (2) placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care; (3) to care for the employee's child, spouse, or parent who has a serious health condition; (4) the employee's own serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the functions of his or her job, or (5) because of a qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that the employee's spouse, child, or parent is a member of the National Guard or Reserves who has been deployed to a foreign country under a call or order to active duty (or has been notified of an impending call or order to active duty) or is a member of the regular Armed Forces who has been deployed to a foreign country. An employee may take a total of 12 workweeks of unpaid leave for the reasons specified above during a rolling 12-month period measured backward from the date an employee uses any FMLA leave.

If you and your spouse are both employed by the County, the two of you together are entitled to a combined total of 12 weeks of FMLA leave for the birth, adoption, or placement of a child, or to care for a covered family member with a serious health condition. The right to FMLA leave for the birth, adoption, or placement of a child expires 12 months after the date of the birth, adoption or placement.

An eligible employee may take up to twenty-six (26) weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave in a single 12-month period (measured beginning on the date the leave begins) to care for a spouse, child, or parent who is a covered servicemember. The term "covered servicemember" means: (i) a servicemember (including in the Regular Armed Forces, the National Guard, and the Reserves) who has a serious injury or illness that was incurred or aggravated in the line of duty while on active duty for which he or she is undergoing treatment, recuperation, or therapy, is otherwise in outpatient status, or is otherwise on the temporary disability retired list, or (ii) a veteran undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy for a qualifying serious injury or illness that was incurred or aggravated in the line of duty while on active duty and who was a member of the Armed Forces (including in the National Guard or the Reserves) within five (5) years preceding the date the veteran undergoes that treatment, recuperation, or therapy.

FMLA to care for a seriously ill or injured servicemember runs concurrently with other leave entitlements provided under federal, state, and local law. Leave that qualifies as both leave to care for a covered servicemember and leave to care for a family member with a serious health condition during a single 12-month period may not be designated

and counted as both types of leave. Such leave will be designated first as leave to care for a covered servicemember.

Unless otherwise required by law, no employee will be entitled to more than a combined total of 26 weeks of leave in a single 12-month period for any FMLA-qualifying reason.

The FMLA permits eligible employees to take leave intermittently or on a reduced-schedule leave when medically necessary for the serious health condition of the employee or the employee's family member or to care for a covered servicemember with a serious injury or illness. In the case of planned medical treatment, the employee must attempt to schedule the intermittent or reduced schedule leave so as not to unduly disrupt the County's operations. Intermittent leave is not available for the birth, adoption or placement of a child unless agreed to by the County. The County may transfer the employee temporarily to an alternative position with equal pay and benefits that better accommodates any recurring periods of intermittent leave.

If an employee is entitled to paid leave under another benefit plan or policy (such as PTO, sick, personal or vacation leave), the employee must use such paid leave concurrently with the FMLA leave. Such available paid leave will be counted against the unpaid FMLA leave entitlement. The employee is required to satisfy any procedural requirements for receiving payment under paid leave as provided in this Manual when substituting paid leave for FMLA leave. If you are receiving short-term disability or workers' compensation benefits during a personal medical leave, you will not be required to utilize these benefits. However, you may elect to utilize accrued benefits to supplement these benefits.

B. Request for and Designation of Leave

To request FMLA leave, the employee must complete and sign a Request for Family and Medical Leave form and submit it to the Hall County Benefits Administration. When the need for FMLA leave is foreseeable, the employee must provide notice and submit the Request for Family and Medical Leave form at least thirty (30) calendar days in advance of the effective date of the leave. If 30 days' notice is not practicable (such as if the employee is uncertain as to when the leave will begin or in the case of a medical emergency), the employee must provide notice as soon as practicable. If the need for leave is not foreseeable or in the case of a qualifying exigency, the employee must give the County notice of the need for FMLA leave as soon as practicable under the particular circumstances.

An employee must provide notice sufficient for the County to determine that the leave is for an FMLA-qualifying event. In the case of unforeseeable leave, calling in "sick" without providing any additional information is not sufficient. When an employee seeks FMLA leave for a qualifying reason for which the County previously granted FMLA-protected leave, the employee must specifically reference the qualifying reason for leave

or the need for FMLA leave. If the employee fails to provide the County with the reason for leave, leave may be denied.

The employee will be notified within five (5) business days of his or her request for FMLA leave whether the employee is eligible for FMLA leave, absent extenuating circumstances. At that time, employees will be provided with written notice of their rights and responsibilities and the consequences for failure to meet these obligations. When the County has sufficient information to determine whether the leave is for an FMLA-qualifying event, the employee will be notified within five (5) business days whether the leave will be designated and counted as FMLA leave, absent extenuating circumstances.

When scheduling planned medical treatment, the employee must consult with the County in advance to ensure that the County's operations are not unduly disrupted by the employee's absence(s).

Employees should understand that, for any absence, whether covered by the FMLA or not, it is imperative to follow the County's usual and customary internal notice and procedural requirements for requesting leave, as outlined in the Manual. If an employee fails to comply with the County's internal notice and procedural requirements and no unusual circumstances justify such failure, FMLA-protected leave may be delayed or denied.

C. Certification and Recertification of Leave

The County requires that an employee provides a complete and sufficient certification of a serious health condition of the employee or the employee's family member, of a qualifying exigency, or of the need to care for a covered servicemember with a serious injury or illness. Certification forms are available from the County's Human Resources Department. The employee must submit the completed certification form to the County within fifteen (15) calendar days, unless it is not practicable to do so under the particular circumstances. Failure to provide such certification may result in the delay or denial of FMLA leave.

If the County has reason to doubt the validity of a medical certification, the County, at its own expense, may require a second medical opinion from a physician it chooses. If the first and second opinions differ, the County, at its own expense, may require the opinion of a third health care provider that is approved jointly by the County and the employee. The third opinion will be considered final and binding.

Where the employee's need for leave due to the serious health condition of the employee or the employee's covered family member lasts beyond a single leave year,

the County requires the employee to provide a new medical certification in each year the employee subsequently takes leave.

Where leave is taken for the serious health condition of the employee or the employee's covered family member, the County may require recertification of the leave every six (6) months, or on a more frequent basis in certain circumstances.

Employees returning from an approved FMLA leave due to their own serious health condition (except if you are taking intermittent leave) will be required to present a fitness-for-duty certification from their health care provider indicating that they are medically able to resume work. This certification specifically must address the employee's ability to perform the essential functions of his or her job. The County may delay returning the employee to work until this certification is received. Failure to provide this certification may subject the employee to termination.

In the case of intermittent FMLA leave for an employee's own serious health condition, employees are required to present a fitness-for-duty certification every thirty (30) days if the County determines that reasonable safety concerns exist regarding the employee's ability to perform his or her duties because of the employee's serious health condition.

D. Employee Responsibilities While on Leave

During an approved FMLA leave, employees are entitled to the same health insurance they had before the leave began. Employees who pay some or all of their health insurance premium will be required to continue to pay the premiums in order to continue benefit coverage during the leave period. The employee is responsible for making arrangements to pay any premiums due during the leave period. Employees who do not return to work following FMLA leave will be liable for the payment of any health insurance premiums paid by the employer during unpaid FMLA leave, unless the failure to return to work was due to the continuation, recurrence, or onset of a serious health condition or for other circumstances beyond the employee's control.

Employees will be required to periodically advise the County of their status and intent to return to work at the conclusion of the FMLA leave. Employees also must provide notice to the County at least two (2) business days prior to their return to work. If an employee unequivocally indicates his or her intent not to return to work after taking FMLA leave, the employee is subject to termination.

While on leave, the employee may not be eligible for bonuses or other payments based on attendance or job-related performance goals, in the County's discretion, where the employee has not met that goal due to FMLA leave.

Outside employment during an employee's leave period without written County approval is prohibited and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Further, engaging in deceptive or misleading conduct as a

part of an employee's leave (including lying about the reason or need for such leave) may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

E. Return from Leave

Employees returning from FMLA leave will be restored to the same or an equivalent job. The FMLA does not entitle a restored employee to any right, benefit, or position of employment other than any right, benefit, or position to which the employee would not have been entitled had the employee not taken leave.

A request to substitute paid leave for unpaid FMLA leave or a request for any leave not covered by the FMLA may be subject to additional approval, certification, and reinstatement requirements. In addition, employees requesting to substitute paid leave for unpaid FMLA leave or requesting other approved leave will be required to complete all applicable forms.

F. Coordination of FMLA Leave with Other Leave Policies

The FMLA does not affect any federal, state or local law prohibiting discrimination, or supersede any state or local law that provides greater family or medical leave rights. For additional information concerning leave entitlements and obligations that might arise when FMLA leave is either not available or exhausted, please consult the County's other

leave policies as applicable or exhausted, please consult the County's other leave policies as applicable or contact the Human Resources Department.

G. Employee Complaint Procedure

If you believe you have been denied any right under the FMLA or otherwise discriminated against because of your use of FMLA leave, please utilize the County's Employee Complaint Procedure, which is contained in the Manual.

Your Employee Rights Under the Family and Medical Leave Act

What is FMLA leave?

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) is a federal law that provides eligible employees with **job-protected leave** for qualifying family and medical reasons. The U.S. Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division (WHD) enforces the FMLA for most employees.

Eligible employees can take **up to 12 workweeks** of FMLA leave in a 12-month period for:

- The birth, adoption or foster placement of a child with you,
- Your serious mental or physical health condition that makes you unable to work,
- To care for your spouse, child or parent with a serious mental or physical health condition, and
- Certain qualifying reasons related to the foreign deployment of your spouse, child or parent who is a military servicemember.

An eligible employee who is the spouse, child, parent or next of kin of a covered servicemember with a serious injury or illness **may take up to 26 workweeks** of FMLA leave in a single 12-month period to care for the servicemember.

You have the right to use FMLA leave in **one block of time**. When it is medically necessary or otherwise permitted, you may take FMLA leave **intermittently in separate blocks of time, or on a reduced schedule** by working less hours each day or week. Read Fact Sheet #28M(c) for more information.

FMLA leave is **not paid leave**, but you may choose, or be required by your employer, to use any employer-provided paid leave if your employer's paid leave policy covers the reason for which you need FMLA leave.

Am I eligible to take FMLA leave?

You are an **eligible employee** if **all** of the following apply:

- You work for a covered employer,
- You have worked for your employer at least 12 months,
- You have at least 1,250 hours of service for your employer during the 12 months before your leave, and
- Your employer has at least 50 employees within 75 miles of your work location.

Airline flight crew employees have different "hours of service" requirements.

You work for a **covered employer** if **one** of the following applies:

- You work for a private employer that had at least 50 employees during at least 20 workweeks in the current or previous calendar year,
- You work for an elementary or public or private secondary school, or
- You work for a public agency, such as a local, state or federal government agency. Most federal employees are covered by Title II of the FMLA, administered by the Office of Personnel Management.

How do I request FMLA leave?

Generally, **to request FMLA leave you must:**

- Follow your employer's normal policies for requesting leave,
- Give notice at least 30 days before your need for FMLA leave, or
- If advance notice is not possible, give notice as soon as possible.

You **do not have to share a medical diagnosis** but must provide enough information to your employer so they can determine whether the leave qualifies for FMLA protection. You **must also inform your employer if FMLA leave was previously taken** or approved for the same reason when requesting additional leave.

Your **employer may request certification** from a health care provider to verify medical leave and may request certification of a qualifying exigency.

The FMLA does not affect any federal or state law prohibiting discrimination or supersede any state or local law or collective bargaining agreement that provides greater family or medical leave rights.

State employees may be subject to certain limitations in pursuit of direct lawsuits regarding leave for their own serious health conditions. Most federal and certain congressional employees are also covered by the law but are subject to the jurisdiction of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management or Congress.

What does my employer need to do?

If you are eligible for FMLA leave, your **employer must:**

- Allow you to take job-protected time off work for a qualifying reason,
- Continue your group health plan coverage while you are on leave on the same basis as if you had not taken leave, and
- Allow you to return to the same job, or a virtually identical job with the same pay, benefits and other working conditions, including shift and location, at the end of your leave.

Your **employer cannot interfere with your FMLA rights** or threaten or punish you for exercising your rights under the law. For example, your employer cannot retaliate against you for requesting FMLA leave or cooperating with a WHD investigation.

After becoming aware that your need for leave is for a reason that may qualify under the FMLA, your **employer must confirm whether you are eligible** or not eligible for FMLA leave. If your employer determines that you are eligible, your **employer must notify you in writing:**

- About your FMLA rights and responsibilities, and
- How much of your requested leave, if any, will be FMLA-protected leave.

Where can I find more information?

Call **1-866-487-9243** or visit dol.gov/fmla to learn more.

If you believe your rights under the FMLA have been violated, you may file a complaint with WHD or file a private lawsuit against your employer in court. **Scan the QR code to learn about our WHD complaint process.**



WAGE AND HOUR DIVISION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

SCAN ME



Section 12.8: Military Leave

The County will comply with its obligations for those employees who serve in any branch of the United States uniformed military services, including providing any necessary time off, in accordance with federal, state, and local law. Accrued PTO (if any) may be used for this leave if the employee chooses, but the County will not require the employee to use PTO. The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 ("FMLA") and the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act ("USERRA") contain provisions regarding certain types of military leave. The FMLA's provisions regarding military leave are addressed in detail in the Family and Medical Leave Policy in this Handbook. Employees who are eligible to take military leave must comply with all applicable requirements. Questions regarding the County's military leave policy should be directed to the Human Resources Director. If you believe you have been denied leave to which you are entitled or otherwise discriminated against because of your use of military leave, please utilize the County's Employee Complaint Procedure, which is contained in this Manual.

A. Reserve Duty

The County provides the employee with reservist time off if activated to reserve duty and scheduled to work on a day when he/she is called up for reserve training.

Every employee shall be paid the appropriate salary or other compensation for all periods of absence while engaged in the performance of ordered military reserve duty and while going to and returning from such duty, not exceeding a total of thirty (30) days in any one (1) calendar year and not exceeding 30 days in any one (1) continuous period for such absence. For firefighters, this represents 10 24-hour shifts of paid military leave time annually.

B. Active Duty

The County provides the employee with time off if ordered to active military service in accordance with law and the following provisions.

Upon return from military leave, employees will retain certain rights with respect to reinstatement, seniority, layoffs, compensation, length of service promotions, and length of service pay increases, as required by applicable federal or state law. Failure to report for work within the prescribed time after completion of military service will be considered a voluntary termination.

All employees who enter military service may accumulate a total absence of five (5) years and still retain employment rights.

A. Job

If an employee's active service does not exceed five (5) years, they may return to their current job or an equivalent job if Hall County is notified within 90 days following discharge from active service.

B. Health Insurance

1. Health and Dental Insurance
2. These benefits will stop at the time the leave-of-absence for active duty begins but will become effective again when the employee returns to work. Through payroll deductions, Hall County will continue to pay for family coverage through the first of the month following 30 days of leave. The family is eligible for COBRA extension to continue current health insurance coverage. Deductions for this insurance may be made from the pay received from Hall County. All military employees and family are also eligible for coverage through Tricare following 30 days of service.

C. Life Insurance

Coverage under this Plan will be suspended at the start of active duty military leave.

D. Leave Accrual

Accruals for vacation and sick leave will stop for an employee while he/she is on active duty military leave. The employee's leave balances at the time of call up to active duty will remain intact. While on active duty, an employee may utilize available vacation or PTO.

E. Re-Employment

Upon completion of ordered active duty, the employee shall be entitled to the same or comparable position including seniority, status, and pay, provided written notification of the employee's desire to return to work is submitted to Human Resources within 90 days from completion of ordered duty. The returning employee shall also be entitled to any increase in salary or any advancement in grade, which would normally be accorded to the incumbent of the position, with the exception of any increase or advance in grade, which would normally be dependent on meritorious performance of duties of the position.

An employee returning from Military Leave will be afforded the opportunity to make up any missed contribution within a period of three (3) times the length of their military service or five (5) years, whichever comes first. The County will provide matching contributions if applicable. All time away will be considered as continuous service for retirement purposes, providing the employee with vesting credit.

Section 12.9: Pregnant Worker's Fairness Act (PWFA) of 2024

As required by the Federal Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA), Hall County will provide reasonable accommodations to employees and applicants with limitations related to pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions, unless the accommodation will cause undue hardship

to Hall County's operations. For more information regarding this Act, please see the County's Equal Opportunity and Commitment to Diversity Policy contained in this Manual.

Hall County prohibits any retaliation, harassment or adverse action due to an individual's request for accommodation under this policy or for reporting or participating in an investigation of unlawful discrimination under this policy.

Section 12.10: Providing Urgent Maternal Protections for Nursing Mothers Act (Pump Act) of 2023

The County complies with applicable provisions of the Providing Urgent Maternal Protections (PUMP) for Nursing Mothers Act. Consistent with this statute, the County provides all nursing mothers with reasonable break time to express breast milk for the nursing of a child, as frequently as needed by the nursing mother, for one year following the birth of a child. In addition, the County will provide a private place other than a bathroom where a nursing mother may express breast milk. These breaks will be unpaid for non-exempt employees, unless the break time otherwise would be paid by the County or the employee is not completely relieved of duty for the entire break period. Exempt employees will be paid their full salary during all nursing break times, as required under the FLSA or other applicable wage and hour law. Please direct all requests regarding this policy to the Director of Human Resources.

If any state, local, or other applicable law provides additional protections for nursing mothers, the County will comply with such law.

If you believe you have been denied any entitlement provided to nursing mothers, been discriminated or retaliated against for exercising any right under this policy, or otherwise have any complaint regarding this Policy, please utilize the County's Employee Complaint Procedure, which is contained in this Manual.

Section 12.11: Personal Leave of Absence (other than FMLA or State-Mandated Leave)

Hall County recognizes that unavoidable circumstances, either personal or medical, may require an employee to be absent for a prolonged period.

The County will review personal leave of absence requests based on business conditions and operating requirements and reserves the right to deny such requests. If leave is approved, the County cannot guarantee that a position will be available at the conclusion of the leave. All requests for personal leaves of absence must be submitted to the employee's Supervisor in advance. All requests for personal leave of absence are subject to and are contingent upon approval by the employees' Manager and Department Director.

Group insurance benefits will continue for the first 30 calendar days of the leave, and the employee must continue to pay insurance premiums. An employee who has been granted unpaid leave beyond 30 calendar days will be given the option of continuing insurance. The employee must do this at their expense under the terms and conditions of COBRA.

An employee's accruals will continue for the first 30 calendar days. After 30 calendar days of personal leave, the employee will cease accruing any leave time until they return to work.

It is the employee's responsibility to return to work on the date the personal leave of absence expires. Should the employee fail to return and fail to notify the employee's Manager and Department Director of a request for an extension, the County will consider the employee to have voluntarily resigned from employment. A request for extension of a leave of absence must be in writing and must be received at least five (5) working days prior to the expiration of leave.

Unless pre-approved in writing by an authorized representative of the County, engaging in other gainful employment during any leave of absence is prohibited

Section 12.12: Bereavement Leave

Bereavement leave of up to three (3) workdays with a maximum of 24 work hours will be granted with pay for an employee absent from work as a result of the death of a member of the employee's family: spouse, parent or guardian, child, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, cousin, grandparent, grandchild, stepmother, stepfather, stepchild, stepsister, stepbrother, or other relative living in the employee's household.

Bereavement leave shall be granted for in-law relationships for mother in-law, father in-law, brother in-law, and sister in-law. In all cases, bereavement leave must be approved in advance.

Only regular full-time employees are eligible to receive Bereavement Leave.

Section 12.13: Educational Leave

An employee may be granted an unpaid personal leave-of-absence for educational purposes under certain circumstances. The request must be made in writing and approved, using the standard approval procedure for leaves of absence.

Section 12.14: Jury and Witness Leave

Jury Duty, Court Appearance, Depositions, and/or Subpoenas

An employee called for jury duty or subpoenaed as a witness will be excused from work upon presentation of a court notice to his/her immediate Supervisor. The employee will be paid his/her normal pay provided he/she submits evidence of the amount received from the court to the Payroll Department. The jury duty stipend is not deducted from the employee's pay. (For further information regarding Jury Duty see O.C.G.A. 15-12-1 et seq.).

Employees must show the jury duty summons, subpoena, or other court order documents to their Supervisor as soon as possible so that the Supervisor may make arrangements to accommodate their absence. Of course, employees are expected to report for work whenever the court schedule permits.

Section 12.15: Voting Leave

Hall County recognizes that voting is a right and privilege of being a citizen of the United States and encourages employees to exercise their right to vote. In almost all cases, you will have sufficient time outside working hours to vote. If for any reason you think this won't be the case, contact your Supervisor to discuss scheduling accommodations. If the hours of work commence at least two (2) hours after the opening of the polls or end at least two (2) hours prior to the closing of the polls, however, the time off for voting is not available. (Georgia Code 21-2-404)

Section 12.16: Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Reasonable Accommodation

Please see the County's Equal Opportunity and Commitment to Diversity Policy contained in this Manual.

Hall County is committed to the fair and equal employment of individuals with disabilities under the ADA. It is Hall County's policy to provide reasonable accommodation to qualified individuals with disabilities unless the accommodation would impose an undue hardship on the County. Hall County prohibits any harassment of, or discriminatory treatment of, employees or applicants based on a disability or because an employee has requested a reasonable accommodation.

SECTION 13:
EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

This section is intended to provide a general overview of employee benefits. All plan participants will have access to detailed information regarding health care, life, disability, and other supplemental benefits. Plan summaries and required annual notices are located in the form's library at inform.hallcounty.org. Employees who prefer a printed copy of the plan summaries and/or required annual notices should contact Human Resources.

More information is available in the Benefits Summary and the relevant plan description documents for the insurance and retirement plans. These additional documents are available through Human Resources.

Hall County recognizes the value of benefits to employees and their families. The County supports employees by offering a comprehensive and competitive benefits program. Hall County provides eligible employees and their dependents access to medical, dental, vision, disability, life and supplemental life, and insurance benefits. Additional benefits may be offered and can be found in the annual Employee Benefits Guide.

Section 13.1: Benefits Eligibility and Elections

Regular full-time employees and retirees are eligible for benefits coverage, such as medical, dental, vision, and life insurance. Eligible employees and retirees may participate in the County's benefit plans subject to all terms and conditions of the agreement between Hall County and the insurance carrier. For more information regarding insurance benefit programs,

please refer to the Hall County Benefits Guide or Summary Plan Descriptions (SPD). The Benefits Guide and SPDs can be found on the County's intranet. For additional information or to obtain copies of plan documents, employees may contact Human Resources. To the extent the information provided in this policy manual conflicts with the SPD or full plan document, the full plan document will control.

For new hires, benefits are effective the first of the month following thirty (30) days of continuous employment. New employees have thirty days from their date of hire to enroll. Employees who do not enroll within the thirty-day period may not enroll until the next open enrollment or until they experience a qualifying life event.

For existing employees who change status to full-time and become benefit eligible, benefits are effective the first of the month following thirty days of full-time employment. Upon becoming benefit eligible, employees have thirty days from the date of the status change to full time to enroll.

Employees who do not enroll within the thirty-day period may not enroll until the next open enrollment or until they experience a qualifying life event.

A qualifying life event (QLE) is a significant change in an employee's life, allowing an enrollment or election change to their benefits, creating a special enrollment period (SPE). Per the IRS Section 125 Rules, a qualifying life event can be any of the following:

- A. Change in legal marital status due to marriage, death of a spouse, divorce, annulment, or legal separation;
- B. Change in number of dependents due to birth, adoption, placement for adoption, or death of a dependent;
- C. Change in employment status of employee, spouse, or dependent due to termination or start of employment, strike, lockout, beginning or end of unpaid leave of absence, including under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), or change in worksite;
- D. Change in employment status of employee, spouse, or dependent resulting in eligibility or ineligibility for coverage;
- E. Change in residence of employee, spouse, or dependent to a location outside of the Employer's network service area; and
- F. Changes which cause a dependent to become eligible or ineligible for coverage.

Section 13.2: Benefits Enrollment

Hall County's open enrollment period for employee benefits takes place each year between October and November. Open enrollment periods may be passive or active. Certain benefits such as Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA), or Dependent Care FSA require active enrollment each year. Passive enrollment means that most benefit elections will carry over from one (1) year to the next unless the employee changes or makes a new election. When changes are made to the County's benefit plans, open enrollment will generally be active. If an employee

does not wish to participate in the various insurance plans, coverage should be declined. Failure to make an election will be considered as declining coverage.

Section 13.3: Types of Benefits

A. Health Insurance

Hall County's health insurance plan provides eligible employees, retirees, and their dependents access to medical, vision, and dental insurance benefits. Participation in the health plan is subject to all terms and conditions of the agreement between Hall County and the insurance carrier.

Details on the available health insurance plan options, including cost and coverage options, will be provided in advance of the enrollment deadline. Plan details are described in the applicable Summary Plan Description (SPD).

B. Health Care Saving Accounts Options

Employees enrolled in a medical plan have the option to elect a healthcare savings account associated with their plan. These accounts allow employees to set aside pre-tax dollars from their salary to cover eligible out-of-pocket medical expenses. This reduces taxable income without lowering actual earnings, helping employees keep more of what they earn. Healthcare savings accounts can typically be used for both employees and eligible dependents; however, it's important to review account-specific guidelines and contribution limits. For additional information please refer to the annual Employee Benefits Guide or contact Human Resources.

1. Flexible Spending Account (FSA)

A Flexible Spending Account (FSA) is a healthcare savings account typically associated with a traditional (copay) medical plan. Participation is optional and must be elected annually for the next plan year. Employees who enroll choose their contribution amount based on anticipated expenses, up to the IRS maximum (that can change yearly). Contribution amounts cannot be changed during the year unless a qualifying life event occurs. Since unused funds do not roll over, it is important to plan contributions carefully to avoid forfeiture.

2. Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account (DCFSA)

A Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account (DCFSA) is a savings account designed to cover eligible expenses for dependents under the age of 13, disabled dependents, or dependents receiving eldercare. Participation is optional and must be elected annually for the next plan year. Employees can enroll in a DCFSA alongside either the traditional (copay) or high-deductible health plan. If elected, employees choose their contribution amount based on anticipated expenses, up to the IRS maximum. Contribution amounts cannot be changed during the year unless a qualifying life event occurs. Since unused funds do not roll over, it is important to plan contributions carefully to avoid forfeiture.

3. Health Saving Account (HSA)

A Health Savings Account (HSA) is a medical savings account associated with a high-deductible health plan. Hall County contributes a set amount to employees' HSAs based on their coverage level. These contributions are made each year by the Board of Commissioners and are distributed quarterly. Employees who participate will automatically receive Hall County's contributions and can choose to contribute additional funds, up to the IRS maximum. HSAs offer flexibility, allowing employees to adjust their contributions throughout the year. All contributions are deposited into a personal bank account and will roll over into the next plan year.

C. Disability Insurance

There are two (2) types of disability insurance.

1. Short term Disability (STD)

Hall County provides short-term disability (STD) insurance to all eligible employees after the completion of one (1) year of service, at no additional cost. This coverage replaces a portion of the employee's income if they cannot work due to a qualifying disability. This benefit will continue for up to 26 weeks provided the employee remains disabled.

Employees may supplement their STD benefits with available Sick Reserve, Sick Leave, Vacation, or Paid Time Off (as applicable). The combined STD benefit and supplemental pay cannot exceed 100% of the employee's regular earnings. For details on benefit amounts, payment schedules, limitations, and exclusions, please refer to the plan document.

2. Long term Disability (LTD)

Hall County offers long-term disability (LTD) insurance as an optional benefit. This coverage provides income replacement until the employee returns to work or reaches retirement age. LTD benefits begin only after short-term disability benefits have been fully exhausted.

If an employee transitions to long-term disability, Hall County may be unable to continue their employment, which could result in formal separation from service.

For details on benefit amounts, payment schedules, limitations, and exclusions, please refer to the applicable plan document.

D. Group Life Insurance

Hall County provides a basic life insurance plan at no cost to all eligible employees. Employees also have the option to purchase additional coverage for themselves and their covered dependents.

E. Group Accidental Death and Dismemberment Insurance (AD&D)

In conjunction with our group life insurance, Hall County provides a basic AD&D insurance plan at no cost to all eligible employees. Employees also have the option to purchase additional coverage for themselves and their covered dependents.

For details on benefit amounts, payment schedules, limitations, and exclusions, please refer to the applicable Certificate of Insurance or contact Human Resources.

F. Supplemental Benefits

Hall County may provide additional supplemental benefits. Specific plans will be announced each year during the annual open enrollment period.

G. Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Hall County values the health and well-being of its employees and understands that personal challenges can affect both work and home life. Through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), Hall County provides confidential access to professional counseling services for various personal challenges, including but not limited to substance abuse, family and marital difficulties, financial or legal concerns, and emotional distress. The EAP is available to all Hall County employees and their immediate family members, offering problem assessments, short-term counseling, and referrals to appropriate community and private resources.

The EAP is strictly confidential, ensuring employees' privacy and rights. Information shared with an EAP counselor is only released with written consent. No record of EAP participation is kept in personnel files.

Employees can consult with an EAP counselor at no cost up to a specified number of visits. If additional counseling is needed, the counselor will provide information on available services and whether any costs are covered by the employee's health insurance plan.

H. Benefits Continuation (COBRA)

Under the Hall County Health and Welfare Benefit Plan, employees and/or their eligible dependents who lose health, dental, and/or vision coverage, or eligibility of coverage due to termination of employment, death, divorce, or other qualifying life events may continue the coverage for themselves and/or their families for a limited period of time under the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA).

The type of life event will determine who the qualified beneficiaries are and the amount of time that the plan must offer coverage to them under COBRA. A life event is defined as a qualifying event that would cause an individual to lose health coverage.

1. Qualifying life events for employees:
 - a. Voluntary or involuntary termination of employment for reasons other than gross misconduct
 - b. Reduction in the number of hours of employment that would result in the loss of coverage
 - c. Becoming entitled to Medicare

2. Qualifying life events for spouses are:
 - a. Voluntary or involuntary termination of the covered employee's employment for any reason other than gross misconduct
 - b. Reduction in the hours worked by the covered employee's employment that would result in the loss of coverage
 - c. Covered employee's becoming entitled to Medicare
 - d. Divorce or legal separation from the covered employee
 - e. Death of the covered employee
3. Qualifying life events for dependent children are the same as for spouses with one (1) addition:
 - a. Loss of dependent child status under the plan rules.

4. Period of Coverage

Qualifying Events	Beneficiary	Coverage
Termination Reduced Hours Becoming entitled to Medicare	Employee Spouse Dependent Child	18 months
Becoming disabled during the first 60 days of COBRA continuation coverage due to the covered employee's termination or reduction of hours if the qualified beneficiary has provided notice of determination by the Social Security Administration with the first 18 months of coverage.	Disabled Beneficiary	29 months
Employee entitled to Medicare Divorce or legal separation Death of covered employee	Spouse Dependent Child	36 months
Loss of dependent child status	Dependent Child	36 months

General COBRA rights are described in the summary plan and descriptions that are available to all participants. Employees and eligible dependents will also receive a notice of rights and an election form upon termination of employment or qualifying event.

A qualified beneficiary must notify Human Resources of a qualifying event within 60 days after divorce or legal separation or a child's ceasing to be covered as a dependent under plan rules.

The premiums for COBRA are the responsibility of the covered person, and Hall County may discontinue coverage if payment is not received timely.

This benefit will be in compliance with Federal COBRA as well as state insurance continuation laws where applicable.

Under COBRA, the employee or dependent pays the full cost of coverage at Hall County's group rates plus an administration fee. Hall County provides each eligible employee and/or dependent with a written notice describing rights granted under COBRA when the employee or dependents becomes eligible for coverage under Hall County's health insurance plan. The notice contains important information about the employee's rights and obligations.

Per the resolution adopted in July 2019, in the event that a full-time employee dies or is killed in the line of duty, as defined by the Workers Compensation Law of Georgia, Hall County will fund the health, dental and/or vision premiums for the employee's dependents for 36 months, if the dependents were enrolled in an applicable plan at the time of the employee's death.

I. Tuition Reimbursement Program

Hall County supports employees who wish to continue their education to secure increased responsibility and growth within their professional careers. To encourage the professional and personal development of Hall County employees, reimbursement for qualified educational expenses and successful completion of undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate courses in accredited colleges or universities may be available.

In keeping with this philosophy, Hall County has established a reimbursement program for expenses incurred through approved institutions of continuing education through an accredited program that either offers growth in an area related to his or her current position or might lead to promotional opportunities.

Full-time employees are eligible for educational assistance of up to \$1,000 per calendar year in accordance with this policy upon completion of six (6) months of continuous employment prior to the time of course enrollment and provided that the employee is enrolled in courses which are part of a degree program. All applications for tuition assistance must be approved by the employee's Department Director and Human Resources prior to beginning any course work. Failure to seek prior approval prior to the commencement of classes could result in a denial of your tuition reimbursement application. Reimbursement will be based on grades received for each course. Additionally, the reimbursement program will be based on the County's budgeted funds and a first come basis. Once the budgeted funds have been depleted, reimbursements will not be funded until the next fiscal year.

J. Retirement Plans

The County offers a 401(a) Money Purchase Plan and a 457(b) Deferred Compensation Plan for your future retirement needs. You are eligible to participate if you are a regular

full-time employee with the County. State employees can contribute to the 457(b) Deferred Compensation Plan but are not eligible to receive discretionary or matching contributions to the 401(a). Superior Court Judges, serving on the bench as of June 26, 2025, are eligible to receive 401(a) County contributions, and defer into the 457(b) plan with the applicable match.

Upon approval by the Board of Commissioners, the County may contribute to the Plan, or match funds contributed by the employee. The Board of Commissioners reserves the right to modify, suspend, or revoke contributions and/or matching funds. For information about County contributions or matching funds, please contact Human Resources.

Hall County may contribute a percentage of your salary into your 401(a) plan regardless of your contributions.

Additionally, Hall County may contribute matching funds into your 401(a) plan at the rate approved by the Board of Commissioners.

All contributions made by Hall County are deposited directly into your 401(a) Plan. All contributions made by the employee are deposited directly into your 457(b) Deferred Compensation Plan. You may contribute up to 100% of your salary into the 457(b) Deferred Compensation Plan, up to the maximum contribution amount allowed by the IRS. All of the money that is contributed to your 457(b) account is tax deferred.

Participation begins at the first of the month following 30 days of continuous employment, and you are fully vested in the County's contributions after five (5) years of service.

1. 3 years of service: 50% vested
2. 4 years of service: 75% vested
3. 5 years of service: 100% vested

You can choose how to invest your money by selecting from the available funds or you can choose to "enroll" in one (1) of the model portfolios, which are based on risk tolerance. If no election is made, you will automatically be invested into a personalized portfolio. An investment Advisor may also be available to assist you with your retirement planning.

SECTION 14:

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

1. **Acting Capacity Status:** When an employee is temporarily assigned to a different position, an employee may serve in an acting capacity only in a position that has been duly established and is vacant or temporarily vacant.
2. **Active Enrollment:** refers to a process where an individual is required to actively participate in making selections for benefits, programs, or coverage options
3. **The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):** is a U.S. federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination based on disability.
4. **Beneficiary:** is a person or entity designated to receive the benefits of a financial product, such as life insurance proceeds, retirement account funds, or assets from a will, upon the death of the account or policy owner.
5. **Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA):** A federal law that allows certain individuals to temporarily maintain their employer-sponsored health insurance coverage after leaving their job or experiencing a qualifying life event.
6. **Copay:** Copay or copayment is a fixed amount you pay for a covered healthcare service, like a doctor's visit or prescription, at the time you receive the service. It's a form of cost-sharing between you and your insurance company.
7. **Deductible:** The amount of money you are responsible for paying out-of-pocket for covered expenses before your insurance policy starts covering the costs.
8. **Disability:** Refers to a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one (1) or more major life activities past or present, physical or mental condition, a record of such impairment, or being regarded as having such impairment.
9. **Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC):** A federal agency in the United States that enforces laws prohibiting workplace discrimination.
10. **Exempt Employees:** Are typically paid on a salary basis and are not eligible to receive overtime pay.

11. **The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA):** A federal law that sets minimum wage, overtime pay, record keeping, and child labor standards for employees.
12. **Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA):** A US federal law that allows eligible employees to take unpaid, job-protected leave for specific family and medical reasons.
13. **Non-exempt Employees:** Are paid on an hourly basis and are eligible to receive overtime pay for overtime hours worked.
14. **Paid Time Off (PTO):** A type of leave granted to Hall County Government employees that may be used for sick and vacation purposes.
15. **Panel of Physicians:** A list of doctors pre-approved by an employer or their insurance company for treating employees injured on the job, ensuring access to appropriate medical care and compliance with state regulations.
16. **Premium:** An amount to be paid for an insurance policy by the employee.
17. **Probationary Period:** A trial period at the start of employment where an employer assesses a new employee's performance and suitability for the role. Hall County has a one (1) year probationary period for civil service employees.
18. **Qualifying Life Event (QLE):** Refers to a significant life change that allows individuals to enroll in or make changes to their health insurance outside of the standard open enrollment period.
19. **Span of Influence:** The range of people and situations that an individual can impact or influence, even if they don't have direct authority over them.
20. **Vested (Retirement Plan):** In a retirement plan for an employee, vesting means ownership of a portion, or all, of their employer contributed funds.

SECTION 15:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I hereby acknowledge receipt of the Hall County Employee Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual of Hall County (“Manual”). I understand and agree that it is my responsibility to read and comply with the policies in the Manual and become familiar with its contents. I understand that this Manual consists of general guidelines that may or may not be applied or followed in specific cases. This copy may not be the most current version. I acknowledge that a copy of the most current version of the Manual is available from the County’s Director of HR. The current version maintained by the Director of HR is the official Manual.

Purpose

The information contained in this Manual is designed as an advisory guide to assist the County and our supervisors with the effective management of personnel and is not meant to address every conceivable situation or issue that arises in the workplace. The provisions and guidelines contained in this Manual are not binding on the County and may be changed, interpreted, modified, revoked, suspended, terminated, or added to by the County, in whole or in part, at any time, at the County’s sole option, and without prior notice to employees. This Manual is not intended to cover every situation which may arise or to create specific policy to be applied in every instance. Instead, this Manual is intended only to provide general guidelines concerning personnel decisions. This Manual and any practice or policy of the County will be applied consistently with all applicable laws and regulations.

Interpretation

Interpretation of the policies and procedures contained in this Manual is governed by, and is the responsibility of, the County Administrator. Whenever clarification or assistance in interpretation is required, please contact the County Administrator.

Employment-At-Will

Nothing contained in this Manual is intended to create, comprise, or define, nor should it be construed to constitute, any type of oral or written employment contract, promise, or guarantee, express or implied, between the County and any one or all of its employees. Nothing in the Manual is intended to provide any assurance of continued employment. In the absence of a specific agreement to the contrary, authorized in writing by the County Administrator, employment with and compensation from the County are for no definite period of County and may be terminated by the County or the employee at any time, for any reason, with or without cause, and with or without notice. Any written or oral statements or promises to the contrary are hereby expressly disavowed and should not be relied upon by prospective or existing employees. I further understand that the County’s policies and procedures, including those described in any publication, letter, poster, handout, or other communication, are subject to suspension, modification, or elimination at any time, without notice.

Employee's Name in Print

Signature of Employee

Date Signed by Employee