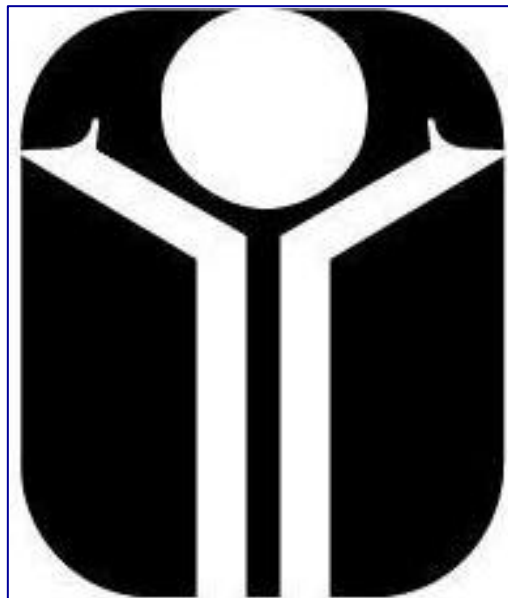


# **Georgia Department of Human Resources**



## **Employee Handbook**

*Welcome!*

**E**mployees of the Department of Human Resources (DHR) perform a variety of services for Georgia citizens. Regardless of the position, each employee's unique skills and talents are essential to accomplishing the mission of the Department. By working together, we can provide vital services to those in need.

If you are a new employee, we welcome you to DHR. If you are a career DHR employee, we thank you for your many contributions.

*Thanks!*

## INTRODUCTION

*This EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK has been prepared to provide general guidance to you about some of the privileges you have as an employee and the duties and responsibilities that we all share. It is not intended to be nor is it to be considered a contract of employment.*

*Information provided is current as of October 2000. Changes in Federal laws, State laws, rules or policies will take precedence over information provided in the HANDBOOK. The Department has the right to change information in this HANDBOOK at any time or for any reason without prior notice.*

*You are encouraged to read this HANDBOOK and keep it for easy reference. Questions should be directed to your supervisor, human resource/personnel representative or the Office of Human Resource Management (OHRM) – Employment Practices and Concerns Section at 404/656-6757 (or 1-800-362-0951 if outside of area codes 404, 678 and 770).*

*Although information in this HANDBOOK should answer many of your questions, you should refer to the DHR Human Resources/Personnel Policy Manual located at your facility for detailed policies and procedures regarding specific issues. These policies are also available on the Internet at:*

[www2.state.ga.us/departments/dhr/ohrmpol.html](http://www2.state.ga.us/departments/dhr/ohrmpol.html)

*If you need this HANDBOOK in alternative format, please contact the Office of Human Resource Management.*

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## I. EMPLOYMENT IN STATE SERVICE

The Department of Human Resources is an equal opportunity employer, and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, disability, age or religious or political opinions or affiliations. All forms of harassment prohibited by law, including sexual harassment, will not be tolerated by the Department.

As a DHR employee, your employment status will either be classified or unclassified.

### **Classified Employees**

Full-time and part-time employees who were hired in classified positions **before** July 1, 1996 will continue in the classified service unless they accept unclassified positions. Employees in the classified service are subject to the Rules of the State Personnel Board and may appeal some employment actions.

### **Unclassified Employees**

Georgia is an “at-will” State and, as such, employees in the unclassified service are hired and retained at the discretion of the Department. Unclassified employees are not covered by the Rules of the State Personnel Board and cannot appeal employment actions. New employees appointed **on or after** July 1, 1996 will be in the unclassified service. Employees hired into the unclassified service prior to that date remain unclassified.

### **Employment Status**

Classified employees who moved to another position in the classified service (promotion, demotion or transfer) remain classified employees. Classified employees who move to another position in the unclassified service become unclassified, and cannot regain their classified status at a later date. Unclassified employees who move to another position remain unclassified employees, regardless of the status of the position.

### **License, Certificate, Registration or Insurance**

All employees in positions which require a license (including a driver’s license), certificate or registration must maintain the appropriate valid documents. Failure to maintain such documents without justifiable cause will result in separation from employment.

Employees who are required to use personal vehicles to perform assigned duties are also responsible for ensuring that their vehicles are properly insured against loss. Employees are prohibited from transporting clients, patients, customers or other employees in uninsured personal vehicles while on duty.

## **Selective Service Registration**

The Military Selective Service Act requires all selected male applicants between the ages of 18 and 26 to present proof of having registered with the Selective Service System or to present proof of being exempt from registration. If proof is not provided by specified deadlines, the offer of employment will be withdrawn from applicants or employees will be separated.

## **Medical and Physical Examination Program**

All selected applicants must be certified for medical and physical fitness for their positions. Some job categories require applicants to get a medical and physical examination after receiving a job offer. This ensures that employees meet the medical and physical requirements of the job. The offer of employment is contingent upon satisfactory completion of the certification.

## **Criminal History Record Information**

The Department will make all reasonable efforts to provide a safe environment for clients, patients, customers and staff. Based on this objective, a review of criminal history record information will be completed on all applicants/employees selected for employment in jobs involving direct care, treatment and/or custodial responsibilities. Other positions may also require a review of criminal history record information based on responsibilities, duties, security and safety. Applicants/employees will be advised if criminal history record information will be sought.

## **Information Disclosure**

All applicants/employees are to provide factually accurate information on **EVERY** Application for Employment, State Security Questionnaire/Loyalty Oath Form and on all other documents. Any DHR employee who does not sign a State Security Questionnaire/Loyalty Oath Form is prohibited by Georgia Law from receiving a paycheck.

Applicants/employees are **required** to disclose criminal history information on Applications for Employment and State Security Questionnaire/Loyalty Oath Forms each time these documents are completed.

Falsification or misrepresentation of criminal history is **prohibited** and **may** result in an offer of employment being withdrawn or separation.

**Material** falsification or misrepresentation of any information **shall** result in an offer of employment being withdrawn or separation.

Note: "Material" refers to information which directly influences and/or impacts the hiring decision based on records, credentials and/or qualifications.



## Promotion

A promotion is the advancement of an employee from a job on a lower pay grade to a job on a higher pay grade. Employees must meet the minimum and any special qualifications established for the position in order to be eligible for a promotion.

Classified employees are placed on **working test** when promoted. Working test is a 12-month probationary period which begins the date of promotion. If classified employee successfully complete the working test period. They attain permanent status.

## Transfer

Transfer is the movement between positions within the same job, or movement from a position in one job to a position in a different job on the same pay grade. (See the **Employment Status** Section)

### Interdepartmental Transfer of Classified Employees

If a classified employee moves from one agency to another within State government an Acknowledgement Form is to be signed prior to starting work in the new position, and the transfer results in a new working test period.

The Georgia law that covers interdepartmental transfers includes some exceptions to the above. The following information is provided to clarify these legal provisions.

1. A transfer between organizational units of DHR, including County Departments of Family and Children Services, **does not** constitute an interdepartmental transfer.
2. A transfer from any organizational unit of DHR to a County Board of Health, or vice versa, **does not** constitute an interdepartmental transfer.
3. A transfer from any organization unit of DHR to a Community Service Board, or vice versa, **does** constitute an interdepartmental transfer.

Classified employees begin a working test period on the effective date of an interdepartmental transfer.

1. Classified employees with fewer than five years of continuous State service, who do not satisfactorily complete the working test period, may be separated from employment.
2. Classified employees with at least five years of continuous State service, who do not satisfactorily complete the working test period, retain permanent status in the last job in which they held permanent status on a lower pay grade.
  - If the lower job is used by DHR, the employee may be demoted to that position.

- If the lower job is not used by DHR, the employee may be separated from employment.

### **Demotion**

A demotion is the movement of an employee to a position on a lower pay grade than the one which the employee currently occupies. Demotions may be voluntary or involuntary, dependent upon specific circumstances. Unless demotions directly benefit the Department and are specifically approved, demotions will result in a loss in pay. (See the **Employment Status** Section).

### **Position Level Reduction**

When the responsibilities and duties of a specific position have been permanently reduced to the extent that the position would be more appropriately assigned to a job on a lower pay grade, the position may be reallocated to the appropriate job. This action is considered a position level reduction.

A position level reduction is not considered a demotion, and shall not be used as a disciplinary action or as a substitute for such action. Current salary is not decreased as a result of a position level reduction.

For complete information, please see the DHR Human Resource/Personnel Policy Manual or contact the Office of Human Resource Management.

### **Employment of Relatives**

The Department prohibits or limits the employment or change in employment status of relatives when necessary or appropriate. Authorized officials have the responsibility to make appropriate decisions when relatives of current employees are being considered for employment; or, when current employees may be working with relatives in violation of the Department's policy.

**NOTE:** Relatives include but are not limited to parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, children, grandchildren, spouses, legal wards, guardians and immediate in-laws.

Relatives will not be employed or placed in positions or situations in which a superior-subordinate relationship will exist between the relatives in circumstances including, but not limited to the following:

- when the relatives work for the same DHR organizational unit at the same location, or
- when there are fewer than two levels of management separating the relatives.

Relatives will not be employed or placed in circumstances in which fiscal checks and balances are a part of the assigned duties and responsibilities of the positions involved.

Relatives will not be employed in a working relationship in which the nature of the responsibilities may contribute to personal or financial gain, fraud, collusion, other abuses of the positions or conflict of interest. Relatives should not be placed in direct co-worker relationship within the same organizational unit.

The employment of other relatives (aunt, nephew, cousin, etc.) must be carefully reviewed and may also be prohibited. Any situation involving the employment of relatives should be reviewed on a case by case basis.

## **II. EMPLOYEE BENEFITS**

### **Salary**

The most obvious benefit of working for the Department of Human Resources is receiving a salary. Your salary may be directly deposited into your account, or a check may be issued to you depending on your work location. Employees are encouraged to use direct deposit, if available.

### **Payroll Deductions**

There are several required payroll deductions which are applicable to most employees, such as Federal and State income taxes, social security and retirement. There are also optional payroll deductions, including health insurance, credit unions, charitable contributions, etc.

For complete information on payroll deductions, please contact your supervisor, human resource/personnel representative or the Office of Human Resource Management or refer to the DHR Human Resource/Personnel Policy Manual.

### **Holidays**

One of the most popular benefits of working for State government is the generous number of holidays. Georgia law provides for 12 holidays each year. The Governor declares the actual days on which holidays will be observed.

Holidays cannot be observed prior to the dates declared by the Governor. Two (2) State holidays (\*) which occur during the General Assembly are observed later in the calendar year. Employees who leave State government after the actual dates of these holidays, but prior to the dates they are observed, as declared by the Governor, are not eligible to be paid for the holidays.

Employees required to work on a holiday will be allowed equivalent time off (eight hours for full-time employees and pro rata time off for part-time employees). Employees unable to take equivalent time off within 120 days will be paid for the holiday in accordance with DHR policy.

To be eligible for holiday, employees must be in pay status for the full scheduled work shift either the calendar day before or the calendar day after the holiday.

The following holidays are observed:

- New Year's Day,
- Robert E. Lee's Birthday\*,
- Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday,
- George Washington's Birthday\*,
- Confederate Memorial Day,
- National Memorial Day,
- Independence Day,
- Labor Day,
- Columbus Day,
- Veterans' Day,
- Thanksgiving Day, and
- Christmas Day.

## Leave

Below is a brief synopsis of the leave benefits available to eligible employees. Eligible employees accrue annual and sick leave on a semi-monthly basis **at the end of each pay period**. Accrued leave will be available for use by employees at the beginning of the pay period after it is earned. Please refer to the DHR Human Resource/Personnel Policy Manual for complete information.

### *Annual Leave*

Eligible full-time employees earn annual leave depending on the length of continuous service at the following rates:

5 hours per pay period	0-60 months (inclusive) – semi-monthly
6 hours per pay period	60 ½ - 120 months (inclusive) – semi-monthly
7 hours per pay period	120 ½ months and greater – semi-monthly

Eligible employees begin accruing annual leave at the appropriate higher rate on the first day of the pay period after completing the required months of continuous service.

Part-time employees who are scheduled to work 20 hours or more per week and are otherwise eligible for leave benefits accrue annual leave at these rates prorated by the percentage of time worked. (NOTE: the percentage of time worked is determined by dividing the scheduled work hours per work week by 40.)

Employees must be in pay status for a minimum amount of time **each pay pe riod** in order to accrue annual leave for that pay period. Full-time employees must be in pay status for **at least 40 hours** . This minimum period is prorated for part-time employees by the percentage of time worked.

Employees may accumulate up to 360 hours of annual leave. Any annual leave over 360 hours is placed in a forfeited status, but may be restored in cases of illness or disability. In some cases, forfeited annual leave may be counted toward retirement.

Employees may use annual leave for vacations or any other time needed to attend to personal business. Employees must request to use accrued annual leave and receive prior approval from their supervisor, unless an emergency situation exists. In emergency situations, prior approval of quests will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

Employees are not required to give specific reasons for requesting annual leave, unless circumstances such as, but not limited to, the following exist: the leave is for an unscheduled/emergency absence, their DHR organizational unit is short staffed or has a major assignment pending which may require employees' attendance, or they are under the restrictions of an Attendance Plan.

It is the responsibility of employees to plan vacations well in advance and to notify their supervisors as soon as possible to assure uninterrupted work flow while employees are away. Supervisors must consider factors, including work loads, deadlines, priorities and leave requested by other employees prior to approving annual leave requests.

### *Sick Leave*

Eligible full-time employees accrue **5 hours** of sick leave at the end of each pay period during which they are in pay status for at least **40 hours** .

The amount of sick leave earned and the minimum time that employees must be in pay status each pay period to accrue sick leave are prorated for eligible part-time employees by the percentage of time worked.

Sick leave may be accumulated up to a total of 720 hours. Any sick leave over 720 hours is placed in a forfeited status, but may be restored in case of illness or disability. In some cases, forfeited sick leave may be counted toward retirement.

Upon receiving approval, an employee may use accrued sick leave for the following:

- absence due to personal illness or disability;
- absence needed because of exposure to contagious disease when attendance on duty would endanger the health of others;
- absence for dental or medical care: and
- absence due to dental or medical care, illness, accident or death in the immediate family which requires the employee's presence.

Immediate family means the employee's spouse, child, parent, brother and sister. Immediate family also includes any other person who resides in the employee's household and is recognized by law as a dependent of the employee.

Employees may be required to furnish evidence satisfactory to the supervisor to use sick leave. Employees cannot be required to provide evidence for the use of fewer than 17 hours of sick leave in any 30-day period, **unless** they have used excessive leave or abused their leave.

### ***Personal Leave***

Employees eligible for leave benefits who have accumulated more than 120 hours of sick leave as of November 30 of any year may convert up to 24 hours of the accumulation in excess of the 120 hours to personal leave. This conversion must be made no later than December 31 of that year for use in the following year.

Personal leave may be used by employees for any personal business upon receiving supervisory approval of the leave request. Normally, employees will need to provide at least 24-hours notice of intent to use personal leave. Every reasonable effort should be made to grant personal leave.

Employees are not required to give specific reasons for requesting personal leave, unless the leave is for an unscheduled/emergency absence (less than 24 hours notice), their DHR organizational unit is short staffed or has a major assignment pending which may require employees' attendance, or they are under the restrictions of an Attendance Plan.

Personal leave **will be forfeited and not restored** to the employee if not used by December 31 of the year in which the leave was available to the employee. Personal leave is also forfeited if the employee leaves State employment during the year. Once sick leave has been converted to personal leave, the change is final.

### ***Family and Medical Leave***

Federal law provides family and medical leave for eligible employees. Family and medical leave is job-protected leave from work for certain family and medical reasons. While on family and medical leave, eligible employees who have health insurance through the State Health Benefit Plan are entitled to maintain this health insurance coverage.

To be eligible for family and medical leave, employees must have been employed with State government for a minimum of 12 months, and have been **at work** for a minimum of 1,250 hours during the 12 months immediately before the beginning of family and medical leave. Up to 12 work weeks of family and medical leave is available each calendar year.

Employees may choose to use accrued leave to continue to receive a pay check during a period of family and medical leave, take leave without pay, or use a combination of both to cover the absence from work with supervisory approval. Any period of family and medical leave not covered by accrued leave will be without pay.

Please note that both male and female employees may be eligible for family and medical leave dependent upon the specific circumstances. The following reasons qualify for family and medical leave:

1. Pregnancy and birth of the employee's child;
2. Care of the employee's newborn child;
3. The placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care, and to care for the child after placement;
4. Care of the employee's child, spouse or parent who has a serious health condition; or
5. A serious health condition which makes the employee unable to perform the essential functions of the employee's position.

Pregnancy-related absences from work (e.g., morning sickness, prenatal examinations, birth, etc.) are to be charged to available family and medical leave. Eligible employees may use remaining family and medical leave to care for their newborn child. (NOTE: Sick leave may only be used for reasons that qualify for sick leave as stated in the DHR Human Resource/Personnel Policy Manual.)

Eligible employees may use available family and medical leave to care for a child placed with them for adoption or foster care during the twelve month period following the date of placement. Family and medical leave may be used prior to the actual date of placement if absence from work is needed for the placement to proceed.

Family and medical leave for a serious health condition is limited to the time determined to be medically necessary by the health care provider.

**NOTICE:**

- Employees must give their supervisors adequate notice (usually 30 calendars days) when family and medical leave is foreseeable.
- If 30 calendar days notice is not possible, notice must be given by employees as soon as they become aware that family and medical leave is necessary.

NOTE: Family and medical leave may be delayed when adequate notice is not provided.

**RESPONSE:**

Supervisors are to respond to requests for family and medical leave in writing.

- Denial notices must include the reason(s) for denial.
- Approval notices must outline the specific terms and conditions of the family and medical leave as described in the DHR Human Resource/Personnel Policy Manual.

## RETURN:

- Employees who have complied with the terms in the family and medical leave approval notice are entitled to return to the same position, or an equivalent position with equivalent pay, benefits and comparable working conditions, at the expirations of family and medical leave.

NOTE: Employees do not retain this entitlement if at the expiration of family and medical leave, they are unable to perform the essential functions of the position due to physical or mental conditions.

- Employees returning from family and medical leave due to their own serious health condition may be required to submit a statement from their health care provider that certifies that the essential functions of the position can be performed with or without reasonable accommodations.

Employees may be placed on family and medical leave without requests from employees if absences qualify for family and medical leave.

Although employees may qualify for family and medical leave, it does not provide job protection to employees who have employment action taken against them for work-related reasons other than absence from work during the period of family and medical leave.

Since the above references only general provisions, please contact your supervisor, human resource/personnel representative or the Office of Human Resource Management – Employment Practices and Concerns Section or Operations and Benefits Section for complete information regarding family and medical leave.

### ***Leave Donation***

Eligible DHR employees (recipients) may under certain circumstances request leave donations from other DHR employees (donors). Donors may donate accrued annual, sick or personal leave directly to recipients. All donated leave is credited to recipients' **sick** leave balances. Leave donations can only be used for sick leave related reasons as described in the DHR Human Resource/Personnel Policy Manual.

Recipients may be eligible to receive donated leave after using all accrued and forfeited leave, all available compensatory time, and after being on authorized leave without pay for at least 80 consecutive hours.

Please contact your supervisor, human resource/personnel representative or the Office of Human Resource Management – Employment Practices and Concerns Section or Operations and Benefits Sections, or refer to the DHR Human Resource/Personnel Policy Manual for additional information and restrictions.



### ***Court Leave***

Court leave may be used by employees on all days summoned for jury duty, subpoenaed or otherwise ordered to attend a judicial proceeding. Employees are required to provide a copy of the summons, subpoena or other judicial order as soon as possible. Court leave is with pay and includes the time actually required by the judicial proceeding and any reasonable time needed to prepare for or recuperate from the ordered duty. Employees are expected to report for work whenever the judicial proceeding schedule permits.

Court leave is not available to employees when they are litigants, defendants or other principal parties or have any other personal or familial interest in the proceedings. Employees may, however, request to use accrued leave to cover these absences from work.

### ***Military Leave***

Military leave is a leave of absence from work while engaged in the performance of ordered military duty and while going to and returning from such duty. Military leave may also be used by members of the U.S. Armed Forces, any reserve force or reserve component of the U.S. Armed Forces or any force of the organized militia to attend service schools, for active duty, active duty for training, inactive duty training and examination purposes. DHR employees, who are not employed on a temporary basis, are eligible for military leave.

1. Employees ordered to military duty **without personal consent** will be paid for up to 18 work days in a Federal fiscal year (October 1 through September 30).
2. Employees ordered to military duty **with personal consent** will be paid for up to 18 work days, as indicated in #1 above, if the period of ordered duty does not exceed 30 calendar days.
3. Employees ordered to military duty **with personal consent** exceeding 30 calendar days will be placed on leave without pay **for the entire period of absence** unless the absence is charged to accrued annual and /or personal leave.
4. Employees ordered to active State service in the National Guard due to an emergency declared by the Governor **will be paid** for up to 30 work days in a Federal fiscal year.

Other absences from work while on military leave will be without pay, unless the employee requests to use accrued annual and/or personal leave.

In order to be eligible for re-employment following military leave, there are specific deadlines for employees to report for work or submit notice for re-employment.

Please refer to the DHR Human Resource/Personnel Policy Manual for specific information.

### ***Disaster Volunteer Leave***

Qualified employees may be eligible for disaster volunteer leave with pay for up to 15 work days in a 12 month period to participate in specialized disaster relief. Employees absent for this purpose will not be charged leave. In order to qualify for disaster volunteer leave.

1. Employees must be certified disaster service volunteers of the American Red Cross.
2. There must be a disaster declared by the President or a State Governor of either Georgia or a neighboring state with a reciprocal agreement; and
3. The Red Cross must request the employee' services.

Employees are to submit their requests for disaster volunteer leave to their supervisors. Requests will be reviewed and either approved or denied by supervisors on a case-by-case basis.

### ***Kidney Donation***

Employees who want to donate a kidney for a kidney transplant will be granted 30 calendar days of leave with pay. Employees absent for this purpose will not be charged leave.

Employees requesting leave to donate a kidney must provide a statement from the health care provider performing the transplant or from the hospital administrator. If the kidney donation does not take place, employees will be charged leave or leave without pay if absent for this purpose.

### ***Blood Donation***

Employees may be granted leave with pay for up to two hours to donate blood, up to four times per year. Employees who donate blood platelets (the part of the blood that helps clotting) or granulocytes (white blood cells) may be granted leave with pay for up to four hours per donation, up to four times per year.

Employees are to request permission from their supervisors to be away from their work area to donate blood. Blood donation time covers the absence from work for the sole purpose of donating blood, platelets or granulocytes.

### ***Voting Time***

Leave with pay for up to two hours for voting may be granted **only** if the polls are not open two hours before or two hours after scheduled work hours. If necessary, employees who do not qualify for voting time with pay may be permitted to take annual or personal leave, compensatory time or leave without pay for voting purposes.

## **Leave of Absence Without Pay**

### ***Authorized (Regular) and Contingent Leaves of Absence Without Pay***

Employees may submit a written request for either an authorized (regular) or contingent leave of absence without pay. Requests will be reviewed and determinations made based on the following:

- reasons for the leave of absence;
- amount of time requested;

- documented work performance, behavior and attendance records;
- needs of the organization, and
- length of service.

If granted, leaves of absence without pay are normally for **short periods** of time, unless there are unusual circumstances.

Leaves of absence without pay are generally approved for **medical reasons**. They should not be granted for extended periods or for reasons such as attending school (unless attendance is short-term AND directly benefits the Department), relocation, incarceration or accepting another job.

If an **authorized (regular)** leave of absence without pay is approved, the notice of approval should identify the location and job(s), which will be available for the employee's return. If the employee returns to work within the terms and conditions outlined in the notice of approval, the employee **will be reinstated** to the previous position or comparable position without any loss of rights.

If a **contingent** leave of absence without pay is approved, the employee may be returned to the location and job(s) identified in the notice of approval. An employee will be allowed to return to work only if a suitable vacancy is available, as specified in the notice of approval. A position is not held for the employee's return.

#### ***Short-term/Other Leave Without Pay***

Employees who are absent **without approval** are to be placed in non-pay status during the absence and may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including separation.

Employees who are absent with approval, but do not have accrued leave to cover the absence or choose not to use accrued leave to cover the absence, are to be placed in non-pay status during the period of absence.

Short-term/other leave without pay cannot continue for more than 12 calendar days in a continuous period of absence.

## **Retirement**

Employees, who are scheduled to work at least 35 hours per week on positions with duties that are expected to continue for at least nine months, are generally required to be members of the Employees' Retirement System (ERS).

**NOTE: Employees who are 60 years of age or older at the time of employment may elect not to participate in the Employees' Retirement System.**

Employees on positions set up for retirement benefits may remain contributing members if their scheduled work hours fall below 35 hours per week if they remain on the same ERS eligible position or move to another ERS eligible position and there is no break in continuous employment. Employees, who move to positions set up for fewer than 35 hours per week, may not be able to retain membership in ERS. Prior to these actions, employees should discuss

potential effects on retirement with their human resource/personnel representative or the Office of Human Resource Management.

Employees become vested in the Employees' Retirement System for service retirement after ten years of creditable service.

Employees may request a refund of contributions if they separate from State Employment prior to retirement.

### ***Disability Retirement***

Employees, under age 60, with at least 13 years and four months of creditable service may qualify for disability retirement benefits in the event of permanent disability from further performance of assigned job duties.

### ***Group Term Life Insurance***

Members of the Employees' Retirement System are covered by a group term life insurance plan. The premium is included in the payroll deduction for retirement. Employees are generally covered for 18 times the current monthly salary until reaching the age of 60, at which time the salary for life insurance computation is frozen.

For more information on retirement, the Office of Human Resource Management – Operations and Benefits Section or the Employees' Retirement System may be contacted.

## **III. OTHER AVAILABLE BENEFITS**

The Flexible Benefits Program provides a variety of benefits options. Many benefits can be purchased with pre-tax dollars. Since the cost of many of the flexible benefits is deducted prior to determining taxable pay, income taxes may be reduced.

Once enrolled in the Flexible Benefits Program, employees are given an opportunity to change coverage or change options during the open enrollment period in April and May of each year. Changes that are made during this time are effective July 1. Employees may be eligible to make changes to coverage at times other than open enrollment for events such as marriage, childbirth or divorce.

### **Deferred Compensation**

Deferred Compensation is a unique way for employees to save money for the future and not pay income taxes on such savings at the present time. Employees may voluntarily defer a portion of their salary into 401(k) or 457 Plans until they leave employment. The deferred salary is invested in one or more of the investment options offered under the program plans.

If you are interested in deferred compensation, please contact your human resource/personnel representative or the Office of Human Resource Management – Operations and Benefits Section.

## **Spending Accounts**

Employees may establish spending accounts to pay anticipated health care and child (dependent) care expenses. Contributions transferred from paychecks to spending accounts are pre-tax dollars.

Employees who are interested in this program should contact their human resource/personnel representative or the Office of Human Resource Management – Operations and Benefits Section.

## **Insurance Programs**

The following insurance programs are also offered:

- *Health Insurance.*
- *Dental Insurance,*
- *Vision Plan,*
- *Employee and Dependent Life Insurance,*
- *Accidental Death and Dismemberment Insurance,*
- *Short-term and Long-term Disability Insurance,*
- *Legal Insurance, and*
- *Long-term Care Insurance*

Please see your human resource/personnel representative or contact the Office of Human Resource Management – Operations and Benefits Section for specific information on available insurance benefits.

## **COBRA**

Employees are allowed to continue their health insurance coverage under the State's health plan in some classes when coverage would normally be lost. The Federal Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) may entitle employees and their qualified dependents to a temporary extension of coverage for certain qualifying events. These events include resignation, leave of absence without pay, or reduction in work hours. Employees' dependent children may also extend coverage if employees' coverage ends or if the dependent children's coverage ends.

Under COBRA, employees or dependents must pay the full cost of coverage at the State's group rate. An administrative fee must also be paid. The State Health Benefit Plan provides employees with written notice describing right under COBRA when loss of eligibility is reported. The notice contains important information about rights and obligations.

For more detailed information, please contact your human resource/personnel representative, the Office of Human Resource Management – Operations and Benefits Section or refer to your State Health Benefit Plan material.

### **III. EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES**

Employees are required to observe high moral and ethical standards in official relationships and conduct while on the job. Written guidelines, which cover all phases of employees' conduct, are not possible. This handbook provides general guidance, which establishes a framework of principles to assist employees in performing their job in an effective and professional manner.

NOTE: The Department may decline to appoint or promote applicants/employees, reassign employees and/or take other appropriate action in order to avoid or eliminate the appearance of conflict of interest based on employee/employee or employee/customer relationships.

#### **Personal Appearance During Work Hours**

While the Department does not specify a Department-wide dress code, employees are expected to be clean and neat in appearance during work hours. As representatives of the State, employees should present a business-like professional image. Dress code policies may be established by DHR organizational units. In certain types of jobs, employees may be required to wear uniforms.

DHR organizational units may designate specific days as "casual days". Dress on casual days may be less formal, but should always be clean, neat and suitable for the work place.

If lettered or illustrated clothing is worn, it should not promote a particular political, moral, religious, personal or other opinion. Clothing which is obscene, vulgar, offensive or inflammatory is prohibited. Employees may be required to change inappropriate dress or instructed not to wear the same or similar clothing in the future. Employees who do not comply with established dress code standards may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including separation.

#### **Activities and Conduct During Work Hours**

The following list is intended to give examples of expected performance and/or behavior while on duty or at work. The list does not include all expectations.

- ✓ Maintain professional and business-like relationships with co-workers and supervisors,
- ✓ Behave in a courteous and professional manner in the presence of clients, patients, customers, the general public and other employees;
- ✓ Use appropriate telephone courtesy;
- ✓ Seek, accept and accurately complete assignments within deadlines;
- ✓ Report to work on time;
- ✓ Use appropriate reporting procedures for tardiness and/or absence;

- ✓ Observe policies on signing-in, signing-out, breaks and lunch;
- ✓ Use work time for work-related activity;
- ✓ Appropriately request and use leave;
- ✓ Observe policies on health, safety, security and sanitation (including notifying supervisors of potential health and/or safety hazards);
- ✓ Report to work free of alcohol and illegal drugs;
- ✓ Cooperate and provide assistance, when appropriate, with any type of investigation regarding alleged criminal or administrative misconduct (including cooperating in interviews, producing requested documents and polygraph examinations).

The following examples of inappropriate activities and/or behavior **are prohibited** while on duty or at work. The list does not include all prohibitions.

- ✗ Acts or threatened acts of violence;
- ✗ Threatening, abusive, vulgar or profane language or written material;
- ✗ Violations or disregard of any policy, procedure, rule or Federal, State or local laws affecting the Department or employment;
- ✗ Insubordination, including refusing or intentional failure to follow directions of the immediate supervisor or other designated member of management;
- ✗ Misconduct or behavior, which may have a negative effect on the Department's reputation and/or community standing;
- ✗ Abusing, misusing or stealing State property or other individuals' property or equipment;
- ✗ Argumentative behavior,
- ✗ Fighting, horseplay, disorderly or disruptive behavior;
- ✗ Unprofessional behavior, including but not limited to: sexual conversations, inappropriate touching of another employee (e.g., kissing, hugging, massaging, sitting in laps), racial or ethnic jokes/slurs, and other offensive verbal or physical conduct;
- ✗ Activities other than official business during work hours, such as conducting an outside business while on duty by any means of communication (e.g., wearing beepers, using the fax, copier or telephone, etc.);
- ✗ Excessive absenteeism or tardiness, including failure to report for and remain at work without justifiable cause;
- ✗ Leaving the work area without authorization;

- ✘ Conduct or behavior that could endanger oneself, other employees, clients, patients or customers;
- ✘ Gambling, soliciting, lending or borrowing money (occasional voluntary loans of nominal value may be acceptable);
- ✘ Being on call for other employment;
- ✘ Tape recording conversations at work, unless work-related and specifically approved by management;
- ✘ Falsifying documents (e.g., time sheets, client records, employment applications, loyalty oaths);
- ✘ Disclosing confidential information without authorization;
- ✘ Carrying weapons of any kind (knives, firearms, explosives), unless job-related and specifically required as a condition of employment;
- ✘ Using or selling alcohol or illegal drugs or reporting for work with the presence of alcohol or illegal drugs;
- ✘ Extended visits in the work place by individuals not conducting business with the Department;
- ✘ Babysitting children while on duty.

Employees who engage in prohibited acts similar to those described above are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including separation.

### **Use of State Property**

State property is to be used for work-related reasons only. Employees are not to use, misuse or permit the use of State property for other than work-related reasons. State property includes, but is not limited to: computers, telephones, fax machines, copiers or other equipment, supplies, vehicles, work areas and furniture.

The department reserves the right to conduct reasonable searches on any type of state property, including but not limited to, desks, lockers, work areas, state vehicles, etc. Permission to search must be authorized by the Office of Human Resource Management prior to any search being conducted.

Use of computers, which includes E-mail, Internet and other computer searches and communications, should be professional and for work-related reasons only. The display or transmission of sexually explicit images, messages or cartoons is prohibited. Other prohibited activity includes ethnic slurs, racial comments, off-color jokes, or anything that may be considered harassment or showing disrespect for others.



Employees are not to use computers for playing games, conducting inappropriate searches, conducting personal business or otherwise performing other employment activities.

Employees are prohibited from making or charging long-distance telephone calls to the Department, unless work-related. The receiving and making of local telephone calls of infrequent, short duration are permitted. These privileges may, however, be withdrawn if abused. Voice mail messages should be professional, business-like and communicate accurate information.

If approved, employees may have personal items if suitable for the work area and reasonable. These items must not be offensive or inflammatory, or otherwise inconsistent with the Department's work setting. Employees may be required to remove items determined to be inappropriate from work areas at any time.

Employees are responsible for reporting misuse of State property to their supervisors, human resource/personnel representatives or other appropriate officials. Misuse of State property may result in disciplinary action, up to and including separation from employment.

### **Use of Privileged or Confidential Information**

Many employees are exposed to privileged or confidential information, which may be of significant interest to the public. Privileged or confidential information must not be used by employees to gain advantage for themselves, relatives, friends or acquaintances.

Privileged or confidential information may only be released by authorized DHR officials.

Use of computers to obtain information concerning clients, patients, customers, other employees or other third parties for non-work-related reason is prohibited.

### **Activities and Relationships with Non-DHR Employees**

Employees must be alert in conducting business with non-employees to avoid even the appearance of misconduct, personal or financial gain or conflict of interest.

Employees must report ownership or partial ownership of a company if the company in which the employee is owner or part owner is doing business, or seeks a business relationship with DHR.

Employees are prohibited from membership on the Board of Directors of any private or private non-profit agency with the Department of Human Resources contract.

Employees are prohibited from accepting personal favors or benefits under circumstances, which may influence or give the appearance of influencing their official activities. Such favors and benefits may not be accepted by employees on behalf of other individuals.

Employees are prohibited from involvement in official activities in which a client, patient or customer is a relative or in-law. Employees are prohibited from involvement in official activities in which a client, patient or customer is a personal acquaintance when the relationship creates a conflict or perception of conflict of interest.

- Employees are required to report such circumstances to their supervisors to avoid the appearance of giving unjustified preference or conflict of interest.
- Employees are encouraged to discuss the above circumstances with their supervisors if there are any questions concerning relatives, in-laws or personal acquaintances.

Misconduct or abuse involving clients, patients or customers in any form is a matter of serious concern and will not be tolerated. Prohibited activities include, but are not limited to:

- ✘ Obtaining alcohol or illegal drugs for or from clients, patients or customers;
- ✘ Receiving gifts or favors from clients, patients or customers or from their relatives, friends or personal acquaintances;
- ✘ Gambling, buying, selling, trading, borrowing or lending goods or money with clients, patients or customer;
- ✘ Engaging in rude, argumentative, hostile or otherwise unprofessional behavior toward clients, patients or customers;
- ✘ Using relationships with, or clinical information obtained on, current or former clients, patients or customers to take unfair advantage of them, their relatives, friends, or personal acquaintances; and
- ✘ Engaging in sexual relationship, physical sexual conduct, or inappropriate verbal sexual conduct with clients, patients or customers, or otherwise taking sexual advantage of them.

### **Arrest and Convictions**

Employees are **required** to notify their supervisors, appropriate human resource/personnel representative or other authorized official of any arrests and/or convictions **within five calendar days** of the date of arrest or conviction. A determination of appropriate action will be made on a case-by-case basis.

## **V. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PROCESS**

The Performance Management Process establishes a common salary increase eligibility date of *October 1* each year. Generally, the review period is *July 1* through *June 30* of each year.

### ***Performance Management Plans***

DHR employees eligible to be considered for performance-based salary increases are to receive Performance Management Plans for each new performance review period or when placed in a new position. Performance Management Plans include:

- job and individual responsibilities,

- statewide responsibilities,
- performance expectations, and
- terms and conditions of employment.

Supervisors have the authority to assign job duties and responsibilities, take from, add to, eliminate entirely, or otherwise change the duties and responsibilities of employees, or to direct and control their work. Based on the needs of the Department, the assignment of duties and responsibilities may be temporary or permanent. When significant changes are made during a review period, Performance Management Plans should be modified accordingly.

### ***Interim Reviews***

Evaluating supervisors must meet with employees **at least once** during the performance review period to conduct an interim review of the employees' work performance and compliance with terms and conditions of employment. Notes of such meetings should be placed in the supervisory file. A Management Review Form may be used to record the meeting but is not required.

Classified employees on working test due to promotion or interdepartmental transfer are to be provided a Management Review Form within ten calendar days of completing half of the working test period or as near to such date as is practicable. The Management Review Form should include an evaluation of the employees' progress and recommendations, if any, for corrective action.

### ***Performance Management Evaluations***

Performance Management Evaluations are completed by evaluating supervisors to rate performance and adherence to terms and conditions of employment of employees eligible to be considered for performance-based salary increases. Based on these evaluations, salary increase determinations are made.

For specific information concerning the Performance Management Process, please contact your supervisor, human resource/personnel representative or the Office of Human Resource Management.

## **VI. HOURS OF WORK & CLOSURES**

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

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) applies to all employees of the Department except those that are specifically exempted because their work assignment falls into one of the following categories:

- Executive
- Professional
- Administrative

Employees who are subject to the FLSA are considered "non-exempt."

### *Work Time, Meals and Breaks*

Both exempt and non-exempt employees have a defined work period, which is a fixed period of seven consecutive days, unless paid under the FLSA provisions covering fire protection and law enforcement employees. The work period should be in writing and indicate the time of day and the day of the week when the work period begins and ends.

FLSA requires that complete and accurate records of actual time worked by non-exempt employees be maintained. Non-exempt employees must; therefore, precisely sign-in and sign-out (listing the time to the exact minute) to reflect their work hours. Under FLSA, work hours include all time employees are required to be on duty at prescribed work places and all times during which employees are permitted to work.

Based on the above, non-exempt employees are not allowed to be in their work areas before their scheduled workday begins, during meal periods and after their workday ends.

While the Department is not required by FLSA to provide meal periods, meal periods are to be provided unless there are specific work-related reasons for not allowing meal periods. Meal periods should be regularly scheduled and are not considered work time if:

- at least 30 minutes long, and
- employees are completely relieved of work responsibilities during that time.

Short break periods are counted as work time. The Department is not required by FLSA to provide break periods; however, up to two 15-minute break periods per day may be authorized. Employees **may** not lengthen a meal period, report late for work, or leave early by “working through” a break period.

### *Overtime*

Non-exempt employees are not authorized to work more than 40 hours in a work period, unless prior approval is received from supervisors. Emergency situations in which prior approval was not possible will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Whenever possible, non-exempt employees who have met their established work hours in a designated work period should have work hours adjusted during the work period to avoid overtime accrual. Non-exempt employees earn overtime at a rate of time and one-half for time WORKED beyond 40 hours in a work period. Overtime will be granted as compensatory time, or in unique situations, employees will receive overtime pay.

Exempt employees are not entitled to overtime for time worked beyond 40 hours in a work period. In unusual circumstances when exempt employees are required to work an extraordinary number of hours, supervisors may grant some time off within a reasonable period of time. Time off for exempt employees should not be on an hour for hour basis.

If you have questions about FLSA, please contact your supervisor, human resource/personnel representative or the Office of Human Resources Management.

## **Official Work Hours and Work Schedules**

The official work hours of the Department are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday (except for 24-hour facilities). During this time all offices and facilities should be open for business, unless not possible due to administrative or programmatic needs. All offices and facilities are to be adequately staffed to transact business during those hours necessary and appropriate for their service and administrative functions.

Work Schedules may vary depending upon the type of job and work location. Some DHR organizational units operate 24 hours a day, seven (7) days a week. In such operations, employees may work various shifts. In other operations, work hours may vary by Units, Sections, Office or Divisions.

The work hours of employees must be scheduled based on the needs of the organization. Supervisors have the authority to assign hours of work and arrange the work schedules of employees as necessary to meet the needs of the Department.

Managers may allow employees to work their desired hours if it does not negatively impact the Department or the workload of other employees. Provisions for adequate supervision of employees working modified hours must be made, and written records of such employees' work hours must be maintained.

In order to comply with efforts to improve air quality, supervisors may adjust employees' work schedules to accommodate alternative commute options.

## **Office Closures**

There may be times when offices are closed because of severe weather or other temporary emergencies. Generally, the Governor will determine when State offices in the Metro Atlanta area will be closed. The DHR Commissioner has the authority to close any DHR organizational unit because of severe weather or other temporary emergencies. The authority to close an office outside of the Metro Atlanta area is delegated by the DHR Commissioner to the Division/Office Directors, who may delegate the same authority to other appropriate staff.

Employees who are scheduled to work during a period when their office has been administratively closed, are not required to report for work and the absence is not charged to accrued leave.

Employees who are not scheduled to work during the time that an office has been administratively closed, or whose office is not directly affected by the conditions that warrant the closing of some offices, are not entitled to the absence from work or compensation that is authorized for employees who are directly affected.

If the authorized official determines that the severe weather/temporary emergency did not warrant the closing of offices and employees are absent, the following options are available to account for the lost time:

- permit the employees to make up the time absent from work, provided that the time is made up during the same FLSA work period as the absence;
- permit the employees to charge the absence to accrued annual leave, personal leave, compensatory time, or
- place the employees on leave without pay.

## **VII. SAFETY & WORK-RELATED INJURY, ILLNESS OR EXPOSURE TO OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE**

### **Observing Safety Regulations**

Safety is a shared responsibility between employees and supervisors. It is important for employees to be “safety conscious” and take precautions to avoid injury, illness and exposure to occupational disease while performing official duties. Employees are to follow all safety rules and regulations applicable to an assignment. Employees are to bring potentially unsafe or unhealthful working conditions and/or potential exposure to hazardous chemicals to the attention of their supervisors for review and appropriate action.

Work-related injuries, illnesses and exposures to occupational disease may occur regardless of the best efforts to prevent them. In the event of work related injuries, illness or exposures to occupational disease employees and supervisors should be prepared to act quickly. All work-related injuries, illnesses and exposures should be immediately reported to the supervisor. In emergency situations, treatment should be sought from the nearest facility. In all other situations, employees should seek treatment from a physician listed on the Workers’ Compensation OFFICIAL NOTICE posted at the work location.

### **Workers’ Compensation**

Employees incurring work-related injuries, illnesses or exposures to occupational disease are eligible for Workers’ compensation benefits. Employees pay no premium for this coverage.

As indicated above, employees should immediately report work-related injuries, illnesses and exposures to occupational disease. If an incident is not reported within 30 calendar days, Workers’ Compensation coverage may be jeopardized.

Supervisors or designees are to report all work-related injuries, illnesses and exposures to occupational disease that require medical treatment or result in time lost from work (see DHR Human Resource/ Personnel Policy Manual). The report should be made immediately if possible. If immediate reporting is not possible, the report is to be made within 24 hours from the time supervisors or designees have knowledge of injuries, illnesses or exposures to occupational disease.

The Workers’ Compensation OFFICIAL NOTICE posted in each work location has the names, addresses and telephone numbers of physicians from whom employees must seek non-emergency

initial treatment and follow-up treatment. Employees who do not seek non-emergency treatment from a physician of the OFFICIAL NOTICE may jeopardize Workers' Compensation benefits.

If a claim is approved by the Workers' Compensation Program, medical expenses for the work-related injury, illness or exposure to occupational disease are covered. These include hospital bills, prescribed drugs, ambulance, physicians' and other medical expenses.

If a work-related injury, illness or exposure to occupational disease causes lost work time, employees have the option of using accrued leave or receiving Workers' Compensation benefits for the loss of wages. Workers' Compensation wage loss benefits begin after seven calendar days of disability. Employees cannot receive Workers' Compensation wage loss benefits at the same time as salary by using accrued leave.

Employees must complete the SELECTION OF PAYMENT OPTION Form to choose either use of accrued leave or placement on leave without pay in order to receive Workers' Compensation wage loss benefits during the period of disability. This completed form must be given to their supervisors, human resource/personnel representative and the DOAS Workers' Compensation Program.

NOTE: Absence due to a work-related injury, illness or exposure to occupational disease which qualifies as a serious health condition under the family and medical leave law, will be charged to family and medical leave if available and as determined appropriate.

When work-related injuries, illnesses or exposures to occupational disease occur, employees will be returned to work in accordance with the DHR Return-to-Work Program, whenever feasible, as quickly and safely as possible.

### **Special Injury**

Eligible employees who are physically disabled as a result of a physical injury which occurred in the line of duty and caused by a willful act of violence committed by someone other than a fellow employee are entitled to a leave of absence with regular salary for the period of time that they are physically unable to perform their job duties. Special injury benefits are provided for up to a maximum of 180 workdays for injuries resulting from a single incident.

For more information on safety and work-related injuries/illnesses/exposures please contact your supervisor or human resource/personnel representative.

## **VIII. OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES**

In general, the Department is not concerned as an employer with the non-work time of employees. Off-duty conduct becomes a legitimate concern, however, when it affects departmental operations or reflects negatively on State Government. Such off-duty conduct may result in appropriate disciplinary action being taken.

## **Other Employment**

In addition to their DHR jobs, employees may have other employment if it:

1. Does not violate any Federal or State law, Rules of the State Personnel Board or DHR policy;
2. Does not create a conflict of interest with Departmental employment; and
3. Does not interfere or conflict with their ability to effectively perform assigned duties and responsibilities with the Department. In this regard, employees' jobs with DHR must be considered primary.

Prior to beginning other employment, employees must submit the appropriate REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF OTHER EMPLOYMENT Form to their immediate supervisors. Requests involving part-time employment of DHR employees by any other State department, agency, commission, authority, and other instrumentality of the State of Georgia or University System of Georgia may require special approval.

After receiving approval, employees may begin the other employment. Employees are prohibited from engaging in other employment activities, including being on call for other employment, during work hours.

For more information regarding other employment, please see your supervisor or human resource/personnel representative, or refer to the DHR Human Resources/Personnel Policy Manual.

## **Political Activity**

DHR employees are protected from undue political pressure, influence or coercion by Federal and State laws, as well as Department policy. These same laws and policy limit political activity while assuring that the rights to participate in the political process is preserved.

### ***Political Activity that IS allowed:***

- ✓ Registering and voting in any election.
- ✓ Promoting and encouraging other persons to exercise their right to vote.
- ✓ Expressing a personal opinion privately and publicly on political candidates and issues, provided that any public expression does not conflict with any laws or policy and is not under color of office or position.
- ✓ Displaying a political bumper sticker on a privately owned vehicle upon which the state is not paying transportation mileage.



- ✓ Offering for and holding any elective or appointive office of a political subdivision of the state, political party, or political organization provided that office is not full-time, does not conflict with the performance of the employee's official duties, and is not otherwise prohibited by law.
- ✓ Participating in the non-partisan activities of a civic, community, social, professional, employee or similar organization.
- ✓ Being a member of a political party or other political organization and participating in its activities to the extent permitted by Federal and State law and/or policy.
- ✓ Attending partisan and non-partisan political meetings and rallies as a **spectator**.
- ✓ Being active in connection with such questions as constitutional amendments, referenda, approval of municipal ordinances or other questions or issues of a similar character.
- ✓ Signing a petition for specific legislative action or to place a candidate's name on an election ballot.
- ✓ Serving as a non-partisan paid worker at the polls in an election.
- ✓ Writing a personal letter to a newspaper or other publication expressing a personal view on public issues.
- ✓ Participating fully in public affairs in a matter, which does not materially compromise efficiency or integrity as an employee, or the neutrality, efficiency or integrity of the employee's agency.
- ✓ Contributing to a governmental program for financing Federal, State or local elections as permitted by Federal or State law.
- ✓ Directing, managing, controlling, participating in, contributing to and accepting contributions for an employee's own campaign for any office permitted by laws and policy.

***Political Activity that IS NOT allowed:***

- ✗ Being a candidate for nomination, election or appointment to any:
  - full-time elective public office of a political subdivision of this state or any other state;
  - full-time elective office of a political party or political organization;
  - elective state office of this state or any other state;
  - elective civil office of the Federal government.
- ✗ Directing, managing, controlling or participating in a political campaign except as permitted by laws and policy.
- ✗ Circulating a recall petition

- ✘ Seeking, using or attempting to use, any coercive political pressure to secure for oneself or any other person an appointment, promotion, increase in pay or any other advantage in employment in a position in the Department.
- ✘ Using or promising to use, directly or indirectly, any official authority or influence, whether possessed or anticipated, to influence the political action of any other person or to affect the results of a nomination, campaign or election to any public office, political party office, or an office of a political organization.
- ✘ Paying or promising to pay any assessment, subscription or contribution for any political organization or purpose, or soliciting or taking any part in soliciting any such assessment, subscription or contribution except as permitted by laws and policy.
- ✘ Directly or indirectly coercing, attempting to coerce, commanding or advising any Department employee to pay, lend or otherwise contribute anything of value to any person, party, committee, organization or agency for political purposes.
- ✘ Participating in any form of political activity while on duty or under color of office or position.
- ✘ Engaging in any political activity in violation of Federal or State law.
- ✘ Personally and knowingly endorsing candidates other than oneself or opposing candidates other than the employee's opponents in elections for public office or political party office in a political advertisement, broadcast, campaign literature or similar means of mass communication.
- ✘ Addressing a convention, caucus, rally or similar gathering in support of candidates other than oneself or in opposition to candidates other than the employee's opponents for public office or political party office.
- ✘ Serving as a watcher, challenger or similar partisan worker at the polls in any election.
- ✘ Transporting any political campaign literature of matter, or engaging in soliciting votes, or transporting any person or persons soliciting votes in any election or primary while traveling in a vehicle upon which the state is paying transportation mileage.

### ***Federal Hatch Act***

Public employees whose principal employment is in connection with an activity, which is financed in whole or in part by loans or grants, made by the United States or a Federal agency are covered by the Federal Hatch Political Activities Act. As a matter of Federal law, such employees are **NOT** allowed to:

- ✘ Use official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election or nomination for office.
- ✘ Directly or indirectly coerce, attempt to coerce, command or advise a state or local officer or employee to pay, lend, or contribute anything of value to a party, committee, organization, agency or person for political purposes.

- ✘ Be a candidate for public elective office in a partisan election (which may include some part-time offices of local subdivisions of the state).

DHR Employees are personally responsible for understanding the limitations of political activity and for determining if they are eligible for appointment or election to a public office, political party office or an office of apolitical organization.

Questions about political activity should be directed to your supervisor, human resources/personnel representative or the Office of Human Resource Management – Employment Practices and Concerns Section.

## **IX. ALCOHOL AND DRUG POLICIES**

### **Drug-Free Workplace**

In accordance with Federal and State laws, the Department of Human Resources is omitted to providing a drug-free workplace. Employees are prohibited from illegally engaging in the manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession or use of illegal drugs **at any time or place including the workplace.**

As part of the terms and conditional of employment, employees are to be free of illegal drugs while at work or on duty. Also, employees are not to report for work while impaired by over-the-counter drugs. Since it is against the law to take drugs prescribed for someone else, employees should not use someone else's prescription drugs. Employees may be required to submit to drug testing.

Employees who do not comply with the above are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including separation, and future employment by the Department may be denied.

### **Alcohol-Free Workplace**

As part of the terms and conditions of employment, employees are to be free of alcohol while at work or on duty. Employees may be required to submit to an alcohol testing. Employees who do not comply with the above are subject to disciplinary actions, up to and including separation, and future employment by the Department may be denied.

### **Alcohol and Drug Testing Programs**

All employees may be subject to reasonable suspicion alcohol and drug testing. Specific jobs require pre-employment and/or random testing due to the nature of work performed. The following alcohol and drug testing programs are in place in DHR:

- Pre-employment (drug testing only);
- DHR Board Directed Random (drug testing only);
- Commercial Driver's License (alcohol and drug testing);

- POST Certified Random (drug testing only); and,
- Reasonable Suspicion (alcohol and drug testing).

Employees who refuse alcohol testing, or whose alcohol confirmation tests indicate the presence of alcohol, **MAY** be separated from employment and future employment with the Department could be jeopardized.

Drug testing is conducted to detect the presence of the following drugs:

- Marijuana/Cannabinoids (THC);
- Cocaine;
- Amphetamines/Methamphetamines;
- Opiates; and
- Phencyclidine (PCP0).

Employees who refuse drug testing, or who test positive for the presence of an illegal drug(s), **WILL** be immediately separated from employment and **WILL NOT** be eligible for future employment with the Department for two years.

### **Admission of Illegal Drug Use**

The Department is willing to assist employees with illegal drug use problems who come forward prior to being notified of required testing and prior to an arrest for a criminal drug offense.

Employees who would like to discuss available assistance should contact their supervisor, human resource/personnel representative or the Office of Human Resource Management.

Employees who carry health insurance through the State Health Benefit Plan may prefer to discuss available assistance with their Employee Behavioral Health Services organization. Employees should refer to their health insurance cards for appropriate telephone numbers.

**NOTE:** Employees who are absent from work while receiving treatment for substance abuse may be placed on available family and medical leave during the absence as appropriate.

### **Admission of Alcohol Abuse**

The Department is willing to work with employees who are seeking assistance due to alcohol abuse problems. Employees should request assistance prior to exhibiting attendance or performance problems on the job.

Employees who carry health insurance through the State Health Benefit Plan may discuss available substance abuse treatment with their specific Behavioral Health Services organization.

**NOTE:** Employees who are absent from work while receiving treatment for substance abuse may be placed on available family and medical leave during the absence as appropriate.

## **X. CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

Employees are encouraged to bring work-related concerns to their supervisors for review and potential resolution. Supervisors should communicate directly with employees and be open to review of concerns.

### **Third Party Involvement in Employment Matters**

Supervisors will maintain contact and relations with DHR employees on an individual and direct basis rather than through third party individuals, representatives or organizations. There will be no recognition, expressed or implied, of any third party involvement in any matter pertaining to management of staff. (*See exceptions listed below.*)

Supervisors will not meet, confer, negotiate or engage in discussions with any third party individual, representative or organization regarding Departmental employment matters. This provision applies whether the third party is a non-employee or an employee who is asked to, or claims to, represent another employee.

Third parties include, but are not limited to: employees' relatives, friends, acquaintances, representatives of professional associations, those who are not considered in a "need to know" status, and attorneys.

Exceptions to discussions with third parties are as follows:

1. Officials representing the Department may discuss employment matters with attorneys or representatives from enforcement agencies in certain instances, such as hearings conducted by the Office of State Administrative Hearings, settlements, and/or court litigation.

NOTE: Supervisors are to contact the Office of Human Resource Management prior to engaging in discussions with third parties regarding employment matters.

2. Employees may request the assistance of a DHR Third Party Representative to prepare a grievance and/or provide representation in a grievance hearing. Supervisors involved with a grievance may also select a DHR Third Party Representative to assist them in preparing for and/or representing them in a grievance hearing.

NOTE: DHR Third Party Representatives must be DHR employees and cannot be human resource/personnel representatives.

## Grievance Procedures

Internal Departmental grievance procedures have been established to review allegations of unfavorable employment decisions and conditions that are not considered unlawful discrimination or sexual harassment. There are separate grievance procedures for eligible classified and eligible unclassified employees.

Eligible classified and unclassified employees may be granted appropriate work time, as approved by the supervisor, to file or process a grievance.

***There are specific deadlines by which a grievance must be filed.*** Attempts at informal resolution do not extend the filing deadlines.

Please refer to the DHR Human Resource/Personnel Policy Manual for specific information.

## Unlawful Discrimination Complaint Procedure

Complaints alleging unlawful discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, disability, age or religious or political opinions or affiliations, and allegations of sexual harassment by be filed with the Office of Human Resource Management – Employment Practices and Concerns Section for investigation. ***There are specific deadlines by which a complaint must be filed.***

Filing a complaint through this procedure does not prevent otherwise eligible employees from late filing with the State Commission on Equal Opportunity or appropriate Federal agency.

### ***Policy Regarding Sexual Harassment***

Sexual harassment is a violation of law and is considered an act of misconduct. Employees engaging in sexually harassing behavior are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including separation from employment.

Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, request for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

1. Submission to such conduct is made explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment;
2. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an employee is used as a basis for employment decisions affecting the employee; or
3. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of interfering with an employee's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.

Employees who believe that they have been subjected to sexual harassment should immediately report the incident to an appropriate supervisor, human resource/personnel representative or the Office of Human Resource Management – Employment Practices and Concerns Section.

## **Mediation Procedure**

The Mediation Procedure is a forum for employees involved in work-related disagreements to come together to discuss their concerns with the help of a certified mediator. Mediation is designed to be informal and non-adversarial. It may take place either as a part of a grievance or outside of the grievance process.

### **Process for Review of Written Reprimands**

Eligible classified employees who are issued written reprimands may file a written request for review. The request is to be filed with the Office of Human Resource Management – Employment Practices and Concerns Section. *There are specific deadlines by which a request for review must be filed.*

For complete information concerning conflict resolution, please contact your supervisor, human resource/personnel representative or the Office Human Resource Management – Employment Practices and Concerns Section or refer to the DHR Human Resource/Personnel Policy Manual.

## **XI. DISCIPLINARY ACTION**

Disciplinary action may be appropriate due to employees' inappropriate behavior and/or unsatisfactory performance. When disciplinary action (except for separation) is taken, employees should be given sufficient information to enable them to correct the inappropriate behavior and/or unsatisfactory performance.

Since only classified employees are covered by the Rules of the State Personnel Board, there are separate disciplinary action procedures for classified and unclassified employees.

### **Disciplinary/Dismissal Action – Classified Employees**

When determining the appropriate disciplinary action, the following factors should be taken into consideration:

- seriousness of the offense;
- whether it was deliberate or unintentional
- employee's work record, and
- applicable rules, policies and standards.

Disciplinary action may range from an oral reprimand to a dismissal. It is not necessary to follow specific “step” in discipline. Each situation should be reviewed individually, and the most appropriate disciplinary action should be chosen for the inappropriate behavior and/or unsatisfactory performance.

The following actions may be taken against classified employees for disciplinary reason and are considered **adverse actions** :

- Suspension Without Pay
- Salary Reduction
- Demotion
- Dismissal

An adverse action may result from:

- Negligence or inefficiency in performing assigned duties;
- Inability or unfitness to perform assigned duties;
- Insubordination;
- Misconduct;
- Conduct reflecting discredit on the Department;
- Commission of felony or other crime involving moral turpitude;
- Chronic tardiness or absenteeism;
- Failure to report for or remain at work without justifiable cause;
- Failure to process performance appraisals in a timely manner;
- Political activity in violation of Rule 3 of the Rules of the State Personnel Board.

Classified employees will be given specific information on rights for review and/or appeal.

Please refer to the DHR Human Resource/Personnel Policy Manual for specific information regarding disciplinary/dismissal action for classified employees.

### **Disciplinary/Separation Action – Unclassified Employees**

Unclassified employees are hired and retained by the Department “**at will.**” They may be separated from employment at any time at the discretion of the Department. (Please see the **Involuntary Separation – Retirement Law** Section for exceptions.) Reasons for separation are not provided to unclassified employees.

In unusual circumstances, disciplinary action, which does not result in separation, may be taken against an unclassified employee. The specific circumstances will be reviewed, and a determination of action will be made on a case-by-case basis.

An authorized official (other than the supervisor recommending the action) must give written approval before the following types of action are taken against unclassified employees:

- Suspension Without pay
- Salary Reduction
- Demotion
- Separation



NOTE: This written approval is not required for employees who are not eligible for benefits, such as temporary or hourly employees.

Disciplinary/separation action involving unclassified employees is not appealable to the State Personnel Board.

Please refer to the DHR Human Resource/Personnel Policy Manual for specific information regarding disciplinary/separation action for unclassified employees.

## **XII. ENDING EMPLOYMENT**

### **Resignation**

Employees who resign should provide advance written notice. Generally, a two-week notice is recommended, unless a shorter period is acceptable to the supervisor. The date of resignation becomes fixed upon receiving notice, and can only be changed with the approval of the supervisor.

### **Separation While on Working Test**

In some cases, classified employees who do not satisfactorily complete the working test period following interdepartmental transfer may be separated. Please refer to the DHR Human Resource /Personnel Policy Manual for more information.

### **Staff Reduction**

Employees may be separated from employment through a staff reduction as a result of shortage of work or funds, change in organization, or otherwise. If classified employees will be affected by staff reduction, specific procedures must be followed to implement a *Reduction in Force*.

If unclassified employees will be effected by staff reduction, their knowledge, skills, abilities, performance and length of service should be reviewed to determine which employees will be retained.

For specific information regarding staff reduction, please refer to the DHR Human Resource/Personnel Policy Manual.

### **Voluntary Separation of Classified Employees**

- ***Forfeiture of Position*** – Employees may be considered to have voluntarily forfeited their positions if they:
  - fail to secure and maintain a license, certificate or registration required by law or appropriate regulatory authority for the performance of job duties;

- engage in political activity or conflicting employment in violation of Department policy; or
  - make a false statement of material fact on an application for examination or employment.
- ***Presumptive Resignation*** – Employees who are absent from work for five consecutive workdays, or equivalent, without proper authorization may be considered to have voluntarily resigned from employment.
  - ***Release from Employment*** – Employees who are absent from duty for five consecutive work days, or equivalent, after all sick and annual leave is used may be released from employment.
  - ***Failure to Return from a Leave of Absence*** – Employees who do not return to work at the end of a leave of absence without pay may be considered to have voluntarily resigned from employment.
  - ***Suitable Vacancy Not Available*** – Employees must be released from employment if a suitable vacancy is not available for their return at the end of a contingent leave of absence without pay.

Please refer to the DHR Human Resource/Personnel Policy Manual for detailed information.

### **Involuntary Separation – Retirement Law**

Employees, who **first established** membership in the Employees’ Retirement System prior to **April 1, 1972**, and who have a minimum of **18 years** of service with the State, may have involuntary separation rights under the Retirement Law.

In order to separate employees with involuntary separation rights, specific procedural requirements as provided in law must be followed. Supervisors must work with the Office of Human Resource Management prior to taking any disciplinary action.

## **XIII. GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **Identification Badges**

DHR organizations may require employees to wear identification badges issued by the Department while at work or on duty. Employees are not to wear these identification badges while away from the work place during off-duty hours.

### **Smoking Policy**

Smoking is prohibited in all DHR facilities and vehicles. Smoking is also prohibited in employees’ personal vehicles during work times when clients, patients or customers are being transported. Smoking is permitted **only in designated areas outside** buildings during meals and

a maximum of two discretionary 15-minute break periods. Areas designated for smoking should not be primary entrances or exists, and should not present a negative image to the public.

### **HIV/AIDS In The Workplace**

Employees are expected to care for, treat or provide services to all clients, patients and customers. The guidelines for health and safety standards established by the Department regarding HIV/AIDS should be followed. Supervisors are to ensure that employees are trained in correct procedures and provided protective clothing and proper equipment in order to provide services to those with HIV/AIDS.

Information concerning HIV/AIDS status and testing is confidential. Employees are expected to protect employee, client, patient and customer confidentiality. For more information, please contact your supervisor, human resource/personnel representative or the Office of Human Resource Management.

### **Travel**

DHR employees may be required to travel in order to perform official duties. State law and practices entitle employees to be reimbursed for allowable expenses incurred while traveling in the performance of such duties. All official travel is subject to Department regulations. Please see your supervisor or human resource/personnel representative for a copy of the current travel regulations.

### **Credit Union**

Employees of the Department may join the Human Services Employees' Credit Union. The credit union provides a convenient way to save money through payroll deductions. Employees who would like to contact the credit union directly may call 404/965-2740 or toll-free 1-800-998-2824.

In addition to the Human Services Employees' Credit Union, there are other credit unions at various locations of the State. These other credit unions serve employees in specific locations and/or specific jobs.

Please see your supervisor, human resource/personnel representative or contact the Office of Human Resource Management for additional information on credit unions.

### **Employees' Suggestion and Awards Program**

The Employees' Suggestion and Awards Program encourages suggestions from employees to improve efficiency and save funds.

Suggestions should be submitted in writing to the Georgia Merit System, Coordinator of the Employees' Suggestion and Awards Program. Both monetary and non-monetary awards are possible.

## **Relocation**

Employees may be assigned from one duty station to another as a result of transfer, promotion, demotion or relocation of function. Employees who are relocated may be eligible for reimbursement of approved relocation costs.

## **Unemployment Compensation**

All employees who are separated from employment for any reason should receive a SEPARATION NOTICE Form and may file for unemployment compensation benefits. Upon application for unemployment compensation benefits, a determination of eligibility will be made by the Department of Labor.

\*\*\*\*\*

*We hope that the information in this HANDBOOK is useful to you. If you have questions not answered in the HANDBOOK, you should:*

- ✓ *Contact your supervisor;*
- ✓ *Contact your human resource/personnel representative;*
- ✓ *Contact the Office of Human Resource Management; or*
- ✓ *Refer to the DHR Human Resource/Personnel Policy Manual*

*This HANDBOOK is not a contract of employment or a legal document, and is not to be interpreted as such. The Department has the right to change information in this HANDBOOK at any time or for any reason without prior notice.*

*Please remember to sign and date the EMPLOYEE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM at the back of this HANDBOOK and turn it in to your supervisor or orientation coordinator.*

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## EMPLOYEE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

The EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK has important information about DHR employment. My signature below acknowledges that I have received the HANDBOOK, and that I understand it is my responsibility to read and comply with the guidelines described in it. I understand that I should

- contact my supervisor;
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- contact the Office of Human Resource Management; or
- refer to the DHR Human Resource/Personnel Policy Manual

If I have any questions not answered in the HANDBOOK

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*Please complete below.*

EMPLOYEE'S NAME (please print)

---

EMPLOYEE'S SIGNATURE

---

WORK LOCATION &  
ADDRESS

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

DATE

\_\_\_\_\_

*This copy should be retained with the HANDBOOK for future reference*

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*Please complete below.*

EMPLOYEE'S NAME (please print)

---

EMPLOYEE'S SIGNATURE

---

WORK LOCATION &  
ADDRESS

---

DATE

---

---

*Supervisors please place a copy of this signed form in your supervisory file and forward the original to the employee's personnel file.*