

# Catoosa County

## Board of Commissioners

### Employee Handbook

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## Section 1: General Provisions

### 1.1 Introduction

The Catoosa County Board of Commissioners (“Catoosa County” or “the County”) welcomes you as an employee. We are committed to ensuring that you have a positive work environment in which to pursue your career. To assist in creating such an environment, we expect our employees to meet the following minimum standards:

- **Exhibit Honesty and Integrity.** You are expected to be honest and ethical. Always.
- **Have Regular and Prompt Attendance.** Your presence at work helps fulfill our purpose and commitment to the public. Your regular and prompt attendance ensures you are contributing and adding value to our community.
- **Maintain a Positive Attitude.** Your attitude and demeanor are infectious. Our standard and expectation is to maintain a positive attitude, so both you and the County can accomplish great things. Problems should be quickly addressed through the proper channels.
- **Be Courteous and Helpful to the Public.** Our customers and citizens provide us with our jobs; as such, deserve excellent service and to be treated with respect.
- **Be Productive.** Use all your abilities, every day, to accomplish our mission. Our work is too important and our standards are too high to spend our time doing anything other than our best. Expect excellence from yourself.
- **Respect Yourself and Each Other.** We expect everyone to treat each other with respect and will not allow racial, gender, religious, or cultural bias. Jokes and other behaviors that demean or insult others are not appropriate and will not be tolerated.
- **Be Safe.** Most of us work with equipment and vehicles and under conditions that expose us, and the public, to safety hazards. Accidents hurt everyone. Be careful and use safety equipment.
- **Work Smart.** Be responsible for your own performance and set high standards for yourself. Be creative. Always try to do the right thing.
- **Be Accountable.** Make yourself responsible for your own performance. Take it upon yourself to solve problems. Give your colleagues credit when it is due.
- **Be Committed.** We all spend a significant part of our lives at work. Let’s make it count for something. Let’s make a difference!

### 1.2 Code of Ethics for Public Service

It is the policy of the Catoosa County Board of Commissioners to uphold, promote, and demand the highest standards of ethics from all of its employees. County employees shall conduct themselves in accordance with the Code of Ethics for Government Service (O.C.G.A. § 45-10-1).

There is established for and within the state and for and in all governments therein a code of ethics for government service which shall read as follows:



— CODE OF ETHICS FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICE —

Any person in government service should:

- Put loyalty to the highest moral principles and to country above loyalty to persons, party, or government department.
- Uphold the Constitution, laws, and legal regulations of the United States and the State of Georgia and of all governments therein and never be a party to their evasion.
- Give a full day's labor for a full day's pay and give to the performance of his/her duties his/her earnest effort and best thought.
- Seek to find and employ more efficient and economical ways of getting tasks accomplished.
- Never discriminate unfairly by the dispensing of special favors or privileges to anyone, whether for remuneration or not, and never accept, for himself/herself or his/her family, favors or benefits under circumstances which might be construed by reasonable persons as influencing the performance of his/her governmental duties.
- Make no private promises of any kind binding upon the duties of office, since a government employee has no private word which can be binding on public duty.
- Engage in no business with the government, either directly or indirectly, which is inconsistent with the conscientious performance of his/her governmental duties.
- Never use any information coming to him/her confidentially in the performance of governmental duties as a means for making private profit.
- Expose corruption wherever discovered.
- Uphold these principles, ever conscious that public office is a public trust.

### **1.3 Purpose of Employee Handbook**

This Employee Handbook provides general information about the County's policies, procedures, expectations, and benefits. The information in this Handbook, however, cannot anticipate every situation or answer every question regarding your employment. Therefore, the policies set forth in this Handbook will not apply in every situation. The County Manager will make interpretive decisions for those situations that are not specifically covered by the provisions of this Handbook.

Catoosa County reserves the right to change or revise the policies contained herein when such action is deemed necessary. Proposed changes may be recommended at any time by the County Manager, Department Directors, Elected Officials, the Human Resources Director, Commissioners, or any employee. Such recommendations for changes should be submitted to the Human Resources Director.

This Handbook is not intended to and does not create an employment contract between you and Catoosa County. Your employment is for no specific period of time, and this Handbook does not limit your right or the County's right to terminate your employment at any time, for any reason, with or without cause. The employment-at-will relationship exists for all employees, unless otherwise specified by state law.



## **1.4 Applicability**

This Handbook is intended to apply to all Catoosa County employees. The broad application of this Handbook will ensure all employees are treated equally. Moreover, the provisions contained in this Handbook establish uniform procedures for handling employment situations that facilitate efficiency and productivity.

## **1.5 Administration**

This Handbook is administered by and under the direction of the County Manager. However, powers and duties designated to the County Manager in this Handbook may be delegated by the County Manager to Department Directors, who may further delegate such authority to subordinates.

If the position of County Manager is vacant, the Human Resources Director or any interim official designated by the County will be responsible for administration of the Employee Handbook until the County Manager position is filled by the Board of Commissioners.

## **1.6 Departmental Operating Rules and Regulations**

Departmental Operating Rules and Regulations (sometimes referred to as “Standard Operating Procedures” or “SOPs”), not in conflict with this Handbook, may be established and used by any Department Directors as applicable. All such Departmental Operating Rules and Regulations and subsequent amendments must be submitted to the County Manager for maintenance in the County Manager’s office. The County is not involved with the creation, administration, or enforcement of any Departmental Operating Rules and Regulations established by any Elected Official.

If a conflict arises between conduct or performance required by Departmental Operating Rules and Regulations and conduct or performance required by this Handbook, the rule or regulation requiring the higher standard of conduct or performance will control.

## **1.7 Revisions to Employee Handbook**

This Employee Handbook may be amended in whole or in part from time to time at the sole discretion of Catoosa County to maintain legal compliance, operative effectiveness, and desired workplace conditions. Amendments will be incorporated and provided to you upon adoption.

# **Section 2: Catoosa County Government Structure**

## **2.1 Role of Board of Commissioners**

The Board of Commissioners establishes levels of service and appropriates funds to meet the needs of the County. By adopting ordinances and resolutions, pay and benefit programs, and other actions, the Board of Commissioners provides the basic tools for management to guide, motivate, attract, and retain a productive workforce.



## **2.2 Role of County Manager**

The County Manager is the chief administrative official and is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the County. In addition to numerous other duties, the County Manager issues rules, regulations, policies, and procedures, and provides direction and guidance regarding allocation of the County's resources to achieve the desired objectives of the County Government.

## **2.3 Constitutional Officers & Other Independent Offices**

The constitutional officers of the County are:

- Judge of the Probate Court;
- Clerk of the Superior Court;
- Tax Commissioner;
- Sheriff;
- Superior Court Judges; and
- State Court Judges.

The elected officials whose offices are created by Local Act or Statute and who serve within the County are:

- District Attorney;
- Public Defender;
- State Court Solicitor;
- Chief Magistrate Judge; and
- Coroner.

Unless the aforementioned Constitutional Officers and other independent offices created by Local Act or Statute elect to be covered by the County's employee policies, each Constitutional Officer and/or independent office will promulgate policies and procedures applicable to their respective employees.

## **2.4 Role of Department Director**

Except as provided in [Section 2.3](#), the Department Director is responsible for ensuring the optimum performance of their Department by providing leadership, guidance, and direction to achieve organizational goals and assuring the overall integrity of the Department.

## **2.5 Role of Supervisors**

The Supervisor ensures satisfactory performance, enforces rules, and ensures compliance with applicable rules and regulations. A Supervisor or other designated manager is responsible for giving positive guidance and correcting or responding to improper action or misconduct witnessed, even when the subject is not a direct subordinate.



## 2.6 Role of County Employees

The employee's role is to perform assigned duties efficiently, effectively, and professionally and to be flexible in adjusting with the changing nature of the County Government's functions based on the expectations of both management and the public. Employees must be courteous and respectful of the public with whom they interact.

# Section 3: Statement of Catoosa County Policy

## 3.1 Equal Employment Opportunity

Catoosa County is an equal opportunity employer. It is our policy to provide an equal employment opportunity to qualified persons without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin or ancestry, citizenship or immigration status, age, physical or mental disability, genetic information (including testing and characteristics), uniformed service status, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, transgendered status, pregnancy (including childbirth, lactation, and related medical conditions), or any other legally protected category. This policy relates to all phases of employment, including but not limited to recruitment, placement, promotion, transfer, demotion, reduction in force, separation, training, compensation, and benefits. All decisions regarding any other term or condition of employment will be based upon your qualifications and performance. If you have any concerns regarding Catoosa County's equal employment opportunity policies, report those concerns to the Human Resources Director. Please refer to Section 12, [Section 12.3](#) for procedures for reporting harassment.

## 3.2 Reasonable Accommodations

### Disability Accommodations

The County is committed to providing a work environment in which you are treated with respect. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) are federal laws requiring the County to not discriminate against individuals with disabilities and, when needed, to provide reasonable accommodation so they may perform the essential functions of the position. The County does not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities in application procedures, recruitment, placement, promotion, transfer, demotion, reduction in force, separation, training, compensation, benefits, or any other terms, conditions, and privileges of employment.

The County provides reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities who need assistance to perform their essential job functions, unless doing so would cause undue hardship to the County. A qualified individual is one who, with or without reasonable accommodation, can perform the essential functions of the position they hold or desire.

Reasonable accommodation is any modification or adjustment to a job or the work environment that will enable a qualified individual with a disability to participate in the application process and/or perform the essential functions of the job. Reasonable accommodation also includes



adjustments to ensure a qualified individual with a disability has rights and privileges in employment equal to those individuals without disabilities. Accommodations are identified on a case-by-case basis through an interactive process involving you, your supervisor, and the Human Resources Director.

The interactive process is a timely, ongoing dialogue to clarify your needs in performing the essential functions of the job and to identify an appropriate accommodation. All parties involved have a duty to cooperate in good faith in the interactive process. During this process, we may request that you provide written documentation from your healthcare provider regarding functional limitations and recommendations for accommodation. After an accommodation has been identified and implemented, the effectiveness of the accommodation will be monitored and adjusted as needed.

### **Religious Accommodations**

The County respects religious beliefs and practices and will make our best effort, upon request, to reasonably accommodate religious practices and observances. Religious accommodations must not cause undue hardship on other employees or the County. You are permitted to wear religious attire if doing so does not compromise any safety rules or conflict with the County's Dress Code, as outlined in [Section 19](#).

If you require accommodation that interferes with your normal work schedule, you should submit a written request to your supervisor. Your supervisor will work with the Human Resources Director to review the request and determine whether an accommodation is available that would not create undue hardship to the County. Your supervisor will notify you if the request is approved or considered unreasonable. If accommodation is not possible, you will be expected to assume your usual duties as previously scheduled.

Employees who wish to observe a religious holiday that occurs on a scheduled workday should submit a request for approval for Paid Time Off (PTO) to their supervisor.

All agreed-upon accommodations must be in writing and will be included in your personnel file. The County reserves the right to review and reconsider, if necessary, all accommodations if the circumstances surrounding the previously granted accommodation change or if the previously granted accommodation is causing an undue hardship to the County.

## **3.3 Workplace Environment**

Catoosa County is committed to ensuring that all employees enjoy a work environment free from intimidation, harassment, and violence. These issues are discussed in more detail in this Handbook. If you have any concerns regarding your workplace environment, report those concerns to the Human Resources Director.

## **3.4 Workplace Safety**

The County is concerned about the well-being and personal safety of our employees and all individuals conducting business or otherwise interacting with the County. Consequently, you are



prohibited from transporting, carrying, or possessing weapons in the course and scope of your employment with the County. A person with a valid weapons-carry license, as the terms “weapon” and “weapons-Carry License” are defined in O.C.G.A. § 16-11-125.1(5) and (6), may carry a weapon into a County building or portion of a building when the building or portion thereof is open for business, except if access to the building or portion of the building is restricted or screened by security personnel.

The paragraph above has no application to County elected or appointed officials, constitutional officers and their respective employees, and any other County officer or agent for whom an exemption is authorized by law.

### **3.5 Smokefree Environment**

Consistent with the public health concerns addressed by the adoption of the Georgia Smokefree Air Act of 2005, all Catoosa County property, enclosed buildings, and vehicles are smoke-free areas. Smoke free tobacco, e-cigarettes, and vapes are included under this policy.

Outdoor areas where cigarette smoking is permitted will be formally designated as such by the County.

## **Section 4: Classification Plan**

### **4.1 The Classification Plan**

The Classification Plan is based upon a categorical designation of job descriptions. In turn, each job description is grouped into a corresponding Grade within the Classification Plan, which governs the pay scale for that job description.

### **4.2 Administering the Classification Plan**

The County Manager or designee is responsible for administering the Classification Plan, with the opportunity for assistance of any third-party administrator retained by the County. Reorganization of Departments in the Classification Plan may be requested by the County Manager, with final approval of such reorganization by the Board of Commissioners.

### **4.3 Official Copy of the Classification Plan**

The County Manager maintains a master copy of the Classification Plan.

### **4.4 Job Descriptions**

Job Descriptions endeavor to describe the duties and responsibilities for each position; however, they do not necessarily include all of the duties of the position. The language in a job description does not limit the authority the County Manager and Department Directors have to add, withdraw, or eliminate duties, functions, and responsibilities applicable to particular jobs or positions.



## 4.5 Minimum Qualifications

The minimum qualifications contained in each job description are considered comprehensive statements of the minimum required education, experience, and other qualifications for all positions as evidence of your ability to perform the work properly and will be strictly followed. Other qualifications cannot be considered in lieu of, or in substitution of, the minimum qualifications established, unless otherwise noted in the job description. The Human Resources Director or designee will review and determine whether applicants meet minimum qualifications as detailed further in [Section 6: Recruitment](#).

## 4.6 Procedures for Adopting or Modifying Job Descriptions

### Responsibilities of the County Manager

The County Manager or designee is responsible for overseeing the creation of new job descriptions and modification of existing job descriptions, consistent with the procedures contained in this Section.

### Request for New Job Description

Whenever a Department Director requests a new position that would require the adoption of a new job description or modification of an existing job description, a request must be submitted to the County Manager. In addition, the County Manager and the Board of Commissioners each have the authority to request the creation of a new job description or modification of an existing job description with input from the affected Department Director. The request must describe in detail the intended duties for requests for new positions or describe in detail the changes in duties or other reasons for requests for modification to existing positions. An interview with the requesting party and/or all other affected Department Directors may be required by the County Manager to verify the information submitted.

### Review of Request

Upon receipt and verification of the request, the County Manager or designee will conduct an analysis of the request, placing the job description into the appropriate Grade within the Classification Plan, and determining whether creation of a new job description or modification to an existing job description is warranted.

### Approval Process

The decision of the County Manager or designee regarding the approval or denial of a request to approve a new or updated job description is final.

### Budgetary Limitations

Requests for creation of a new job description or modification to an existing job description should be presented for consideration in conjunction with the annual budget process, absent exceptional circumstances. Such requests are contingent on available funds.



## Responsibilities of the County Manager

The County Manager or designee is responsible for the abolishment of job descriptions and/or positions consistent with the procedures contained in this Section.

## Request for Abolishment of Existing Job Description and/or Position

Whenever a Department Director requests the abolishment of an existing job description or a particular position within their Department, a request must be submitted to the County Manager. In addition, the County Manager and the Board of Commissioners each have the authority to request the abolishment of a job description or position with input from the affected Department Director. Any request for abolishment must describe in detail the reasons for the requested abolishment. Such reasons may include but are not limited to lack of work, reorganization, or lack of funds. An interview with the requesting party and/or all other affected Department Directors may be required by the County Manager to verify the information submitted. In no case will a job description or position be abolished as a means of terminating the employment of an employee, but it may result in the termination of an employee.

## Review of Request by County Manager

Upon receipt and verification of the request, the County Manager or designee will conduct an analysis of the request for the purpose of determining whether the requested abolishment is warranted.

## Approval Process

The decision of the County Manager regarding all requests for abolishment shall be final; however, this provision does not limit the authority of the Board of Commissioners to abolish a position in conjunction with the annual budget process or otherwise.

# 4.7 Procedures for the Reclassification of Positions

## Statement of Intent

Each position of employment in Catoosa County is categorically assigned to a particular job description. This Section allows for changing the assignment of a particular position to a different and more suitable job description when it is determined that the position is incorrectly assigned. This change may produce a corresponding change in the Grade for the position.

## Request for Reclassification

Department Directors may request reclassification. In addition, the County Manager may direct a Reclassification with input from the affected Department Director. A request for reclassification must be submitted to the County Manager and must contain a detailed statement of justification for the request. Reclassifications are justified as a result of the following:

- The position was incorrectly assigned to an inappropriate job description; or
- There has been a change in the duties and responsibilities associated with a position since it was assigned to a particular job description.



## Review of Request by County Manager

Upon receipt and verification of the request, the County Manager or designee will conduct an analysis of the request for the purpose of determining whether the requested reclassification is warranted.

## Approval Process

The decision of the County Manager regarding reclassifications is final.

## Budgetary Limitations

To the extent that a reclassification will require a change in Grade that produces a corresponding increase in needed funds for the position, the request for reclassification should be presented for consideration in conjunction with the annual budget process, absent any exceptional circumstances. Such a request is contingent on available funds.

## Treatment of Affected Employee Upon Reclassification of Position

If the position is occupied at the time of reclassification, the employee is entitled to serve therein with the corresponding status after the reclassification and will not be subject to a working test period in the reclassification position.

If the position is assigned to a higher Grade as a result of the reclassification, such action is considered an upgrade of the position. If the position is occupied at the time of an upgrade and the salary of the employee who is occupying the position is below the minimum rate for the higher Grade, the employee's salary will be increased to the minimum salary of the higher Grade. Reclassifications of positions are not promotions and do not impact an employee's pay, unless their salary is below the minimum rate of pay for the new Grade.

If the position is assigned to a lower Grade as a result of the reclassification, such action is considered a downgrade of the position. If the position is occupied at the time of a downgrade, the employee will continue at the same pay as prior to the reclassification and may receive future salary increases up to the maximum rate of pay of the new lower Grade. If the employee's current salary is above the maximum rate of pay for the new lower Grade, the employee will revert to the maximum of the lower Grade.

In all cases of reclassification of a vacant position, the position will be filled according to the [Recruitment Policies](#) contained in this Employee Handbook.

# Section 5: Compensation Plan

## 5.1 Statement of Policy

The Compensation Plan is intended to be a fair and equitable method for payment of Catoosa County employees. The Compensation Plan establishes a basic salary schedule for full-time employees, as approved by the Board of Commissioners and is subject to availability of funds. Each Grade shall contain a minimum salary, a mid-point salary, and a maximum salary. The Board



of Commissioners may establish, as part of the County's annual budget, the minimum, midpoint, and maximum salaries for each Grade as recommended by the County Manager. No full-time employee in any Grade will be paid a salary lower than the minimum or higher than the maximum of the salary range approved for the position; however, employees whose salaries are higher than the maximum salary approved for their position at the time this Handbook is adopted may be eligible for annual salary increases as established by the Board of Commissioners. In contrast, part-time, temporary, seasonal, and part-time grant-funded positions are not subject to the Compensation Plan or the provisions of this Chapter, unless expressly noted otherwise.

## **5.2 Administration**

The Compensation Plan is maintained and administered by the County Manager or designee, with the opportunity for assistance from a third-party administrator. The Compensation Plan will be available for review upon reasonable request during business hours.

## **5.3 Starting Rates for General Employees**

A new full-time employee will be paid the minimum rate of pay for the applicable Grade. The minimum rate of pay is based upon the assumption that a new employee meets the minimum qualifications stated in the job description. If a new employee exceeds the minimum qualifications for a position based on extensive knowledge, skills, and abilities, they may be appointed at a higher salary within the Grade assigned to their position based on a request to the County Manager by the Department Director, and based on consideration of the following:

- Whether the candidate possesses objectively outstanding or unusual abilities, experience, and/or training above the minimum requirements for the position;
- Whether the County is unable to find a desirable and qualified candidate to accept the position at the minimum rate of pay; and
- Whether the Departmental funds are available for such appointment.

Consideration should be given to a review of the salaries of current employees in the same or similar positions whose present salaries are below the requested higher salary for the new employee. Upon consideration of the above, the County Manager will determine the appropriateness of the appointment above the minimum rate of pay, not to exceed midpoint. The decision of the County Manager is final.

## **5.4 Starting Rates for Executive Employees**

For purposes of this Handbook, executive employees include the County Manager and all employees who report directly to the County Manager (hereinafter collectively referred to as "executive employees"). The term executive employee does not include the Chief Financial Officer or the Clerk to the Board of Commissioners, who report directly to the Board of Commissioners.

Incoming executive employees will be paid the minimum rate of pay for the position. Every effort will be made to recruit a qualified candidate who will accept appointment at the minimum rate of pay for the position. However, in recognition of the important role and increasing demands placed



upon executive employees, an executive employee may be appointed at a higher rate of pay, within or above the salary range, at the discretion of the County Manager when considering salaries for executive employees, and at the discretion of the Board of Commissioners when considering the salary of the County Manager, in the event that desirable and qualified applicants cannot be located for a given position at the minimum rate of pay.

To seek Appointment at a higher rate of pay, the County Manager or the Board of Commissioners, as applicable, must consider the following:

- Whether the candidate possesses objectively outstanding or unusual abilities, experience, and/or training above the minimum requirements for the position;
- Whether the County is unable to find a desirable and qualified candidate to accept the position at the minimum rate of pay; and
- Whether the Departmental funds are available for such appointment.

Upon consideration of the above, the County Manager or the Board of Commissioners, as applicable, will determine the appropriateness of the appointment above the minimum rate of pay. The decision of the County Manager or the Board of Commissioners, as applicable, is final.

## **5.5 Components for Salary Adjustment**

If you are a full-time employee, your salary may be adjusted based on market adjustment to the Compensation Plan and/or merit increase. If you are a full-time employee, in any given year, you may receive an increase in salary because of either market adjustment, merit increase, or both. Salary increases are discretionary and dependent on available funds as determined by the Board of Commissioners. Any increases for part-time employees will be determined on an as-needed basis, depending on whether there are existing budgeted funds available. Seasonal, temporary, and part-time grant-funded employees are not normally entitled to salary adjustments.

### **Market Adjustment**

Market adjustments are used to ensure the salary structure is adjusted equally across the County to reflect changes in the wage index. Two considerations dictate whether a market adjustment will be administered: changes in the wage index based upon references such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics or the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and the budgetary constraints of the County. The Board of Commissioners will consider the applicability and the ability of the County to apply a market adjustment to the Compensation Plan as recommended by the County Manager. As applicable, if the Compensation Plan falls below the market, for example, a percentage increase may be applied to the Compensation Plan, such that the pay scales are adjusted upward.

### **Merit Increase**

#### **Policy**

For purposes of determining eligibility for a merit increase and to monitor performance, a comprehensive performance evaluation may be conducted annually. You may be evaluated by your immediate supervisor, and the evaluation may be endorsed by any appropriate intermediate



supervisors, with final approval by the County Manager or Department Director, as applicable. Interim appraisals are strongly encouraged to assist in performance development or otherwise, but such appraisals are solely for the purpose of ensuring performance standards and not related to the merit increase process. The County strongly recommends interim evaluations so you are aware of performance issues and are given the opportunity to improve your performance.

### ***Appraisal Forms***

Appraisal forms prepared or approved by the Human Resources Director must be utilized for each employee. Appraisal forms will be maintained in your personnel file and will serve as the necessary documentation to authorize any salary adjustment.

### ***Salary Increases***

You may receive a merit increase as determined by the County Manager or Department Director, as applicable. The Board of Commissioners may, as part of the County's annual budget, establish the range of potential salary increases for that budgetary year, unless there is a salary freeze in place.

### ***Annual Appraisal for Employees on Extended Military Leave***

If you are on approved military leave in excess of six months of the appraisal period, you will receive a compensation adjustment for merit increase, if applicable, based on the average of your past two annual appraisal ratings. This average will be the percentage of your compensation adjustment. If a two-year history of annual appraisal ratings is unavailable, you will receive a compensation adjustment based on the average rating within your Department. If the rate of pay for the position to which you are returning is an attribute of position, you are entitled to the current rate of the entitled position, including all the changes that occurred in your absence.

### ***Re-Evaluation of Unsatisfactory Performance***

If you receive an unsatisfactory appraisal, you may be re-evaluated within three months for purposes of monitoring your performance. If you receive a second unsatisfactory appraisal, you may be subject to termination. Any such re-evaluation must be submitted to the Human Resources Director for retention in your personnel file. This re-evaluation process will not result in an upward salary adjustment.

### ***Appraisal Disputes***

The appraisal rating is final upon approval of the rating by the County Manager or the respective Department Director, as applicable. The [grievance procedures](#) outlined in this Handbook are not available to address a dispute over an appraisal rating. As such, there is no mechanism for disputing an appraisal rating; however, you may submit a written statement setting forth the reasons for disagreement with the appraisal for retention in your personnel file.

## **5.6 Limitations to the Compensation Plan**

The Compensation Plan and all provisions in this Handbook related to salaries are contingent upon funds being available as determined solely in the discretion of the Board of Commissioners.



Any deviation from the Compensation Plan or the provisions of this Handbook must be approved by the Board of Commissioners.

## **5.7 Payroll Changes in Paydays**

A payroll change will not take effect until the personnel action notification has been approved by the County Manager in writing on the appropriate personnel action form. Most employees will be paid bi-weekly, with some being paid monthly, depending on the position held. No employee will be paid prior to their regular payday. You are strongly encouraged to provide information to the County to direct deposit paychecks into your desired account.

## **5.8 Recovery of Salaries Improperly Paid**

Elected Officials and employees may be held liable for the return of salary improperly, accidentally, or illegally paid to employees. If you notice an error in your paycheck, reach out to the Finance Department.

# **Section 6: Recruitment**

## **6.1 Statement of Policy**

Recruitment of candidates for all positions with Catoosa County including but not limited to positions created and/or funded by state or federal grants will be based upon meeting or exceeding the minimum qualifications established in the applicable job description in accordance with the non-discrimination policies in this Handbook and in accordance with federal, state, and local law.

## **6.2 Filling Vacancies**

All vacancies will be filled according to the policies set forth in this Section, regardless of whether the vacant position exists as a result of a newly created position or whether an existing position has been vacated. Newly created positions must be approved by the Board of Commissioners prior to commencement of recruitment efforts when funding of said position was not approved in any previous or existing budget. All such offers must be extended to the candidate from the County Manager or designee.

## **6.3 Advertisement of Vacancies**

The County Manager or the Department Director, as applicable, will request that the Human Resources Director publish an advertisement and initiate the recruitment process. The County Manager or the Department Director, as applicable, will simultaneously submit to the Human Resources Director an acknowledgement confirmed by the Chief Financial Officer that there are available funds in their respective budget for the requested advertising. The County Manager or the Human Resources Director, as applicable, has sole discretion to determine whether the recruitment will be limited to internal advertisements within the County workforce or



simultaneous internal and external advertisements will be used. The means and methods of external publications shall be selected at the discretion of the County Manager or the Human Resources Director, as applicable, and indicated in the request. The job vacancy advertisement will specify the title, minimum qualification requirements, how to apply, and other pertinent information. The job vacancy advertisement may include a specific salary or compensation amount, a salary or compensation range, or may provide that salary and compensation will be determined based on candidate qualifications and other pertinent factors.

The internal publications, and if applicable, the external publications may continue indefinitely as the County Manager or the Human Resources Director deems appropriate or until the vacancy is filled. There may be a stated closing date for the submission of applications. Interviews with applicants will begin as determined by the Human Resources Director.

## **6.4 Minimum Qualifications**

All positions will be open only to persons who meet such minimum requirements listed on the job description and job vacancy notice. Such requirements may include but are not limited to experience, education, training, skills, and other qualifications that are desired or normally required to perform the duties and any responsibilities. The County Manager or designee will review all applications to ensure applicants meet the minimum qualifications. Applicants who fail to meet minimum qualifications may be denied the opportunity to proceed further in the hiring process and will otherwise be ineligible for consideration.

## **6.5 Filing of Applications**

All applicants will be required to complete a standard application form. Applications must include detailed information regarding educational background, training, skills, employment experience, and other pertinent information sought on the application form as needed to assess their ability to meet the minimum requirements for the position. Applicants must apply for positions through the Human Resources Department.

All applications will be signed by the applicant, attesting to the truth of all statements contained within. Any application submitted electronically must contain an electronic signature by the applicant, attesting to the truth of all statements contained within. Untruths, misrepresentations, or material omissions made by an applicant on the application are grounds for rejection of the application or, if the applicant was hired prior to the County learning of the discrepancy, it will be grounds for termination.

Incomplete applications may be returned to the applicant for corrections. The County has no obligation to detect an incomplete application and notify an applicant prior to the vacancy being filled. Incomplete applications may be completed or revised and re-submitted; however, there is no guarantee the vacancy will remain open.



## 6.6 Conditions for Rejection of Applicants

The Human Resources Director or designee may reject any application from consideration if the application is incomplete, was not received on or before the published closing date/time noted on the recruitment announcement, or when the applicant:

- Does not possess one or more of the minimum requirements as specified in the job description for the position sought;
- Falsified statements, practiced deception, or materially omitted information on the application;
- Does not reply to or return a phone call within two days;
- Was previously employed by Catoosa County and was dismissed for cause, resigned not in good standing, resigned in lieu of termination, or is otherwise not eligible for re-employment;
- Has been convicted of a criminal offense involving the manufacture, distribution, trafficking, or sale of a controlled substance, dangerous drug, or marijuana;
- Note, such applicant will be given the opportunity to demonstrate the conviction should not exclude them from consideration for the position. Thereafter, the County will determine whether exclusion of the application is job-related and consistent with business necessity.
- Has been convicted of a crime involving a violent crime such as assault with a deadly weapon, aggravated assault, or murder;
- Note, such applicants will be automatically rejected and will be given the opportunity to demonstrate the conviction should not exclude them from consideration for the position. Thereafter, the County will determine whether exclusion of the application is job-related and consistent with business necessity.
- Has received information regarding a qualification examination that other applicants did not receive and to which the applicant was not entitled, such that they had an unfair advantage over other applicants taking the examination;
- Has used or attempted to use political influence or bribery to gain an advantage in securing employment; or
- Has tested positive to a drug or alcohol test administered by Catoosa County and/or been found to have submitted an application containing untruths, misrepresentations, or material omissions.

## 6.7 Interviews

Upon initial review and removal of applicants from consideration that are rejected in accordance with the standards set forth above, the Human Resources Department will make available the remaining applications to the applicable Department Director for further consideration, which may include conducting personal interviews with those remaining applicants. The Human Resources Director or designee will assist the applicable Department Director to the extent requested in the interview and selection process.



## 6.8 Verification of References

The Human Resources Director or the Department Director will verify the references and past employment of at least the top candidate prior to making any job offer, unless a legitimate reason can be provided to the County Manager regarding why such reference verification is unnecessary.

## 6.9 Qualification Examinations

### Statement of Policy

The Human Resources Director, upon approval by the County Manager, may implement a suitable examination program for any position, along with the procedures to implement such an examination program. In addition, any Department Director may also implement a suitable examination program for any position, provided the examination program is reviewed and approved in advance by the Human Resources Director and the County Manager. Any written or performance tests will be designed to test for job performance and will not be discriminatory against any category protected by federal, state, or local law. Any examination program will be administered in a fair and neutral manner and applied consistently to all applicable interviewees.

### Conduct of Examination

The Human Resources Director or designee may, as appropriate, designate monitors to manage the examination process under prescribed instructions.

### Method of Rating Examinations

For all examinations, the Human Resources Director, in coordination with the applicable Department Director, will establish minimum standards for performance or requirements to achieve an eligibility standard. If there is more than one part to an examination, such as a written test and a rating of experience and training, the Human Resources Director, in coordination with the applicable Department Director, will assign the minimum acceptable scores and/or weighted score to the various parts of the examination prior to conducting the examination. If the examination is comprised of successive components, candidates must obtain acceptable scores on each component for continued consideration for employment. The formula for assigning weights will be administered in a uniform and equal manner for all applicants for the same class of positions.

### Inspection and Confidentiality of Examination Material

The confidentiality of all applications, examination results, and test materials is essential to the integrity of an examination process. Accordingly, general access to or disclosure of examination results and/or materials is prohibited. Limited access to promotional examination results and/or test materials will be allowed in a manner carefully constructed to protect both confidentiality and the integrity of the examination process. Specifically, participants in an examination process will be able to review their own examination materials. No participant will be able to review the examination materials of other participants.



In all cases, testing materials will be reviewed in the presence of a representative of the Human Resources Director or an individual authorized by the Human Resources Director. Unless otherwise specified by the Human Resources Director, the opportunity to review examination materials will be limited to a period of 30 days following the release of results for the examination. Individuals may make general notes regarding their review of their own testing materials, but may not directly transcribe or make copies of any examination materials.

Nothing contained in this section should be construed to limit the availability of examination materials for use in judicial proceedings, related appeals, or as required by applicable law.

The Human Resources Director is responsible for the maintenance of all records, including the completed tests, related to the examination process.

### Notification of Examination Results

Upon completion of the examination process, participants may request their rating on all phases of the examination within a reasonable time period. Failure to request examination results within a reasonable time period is not grounds for challenging the examination process or any employment decisions related thereto.

### Adjustment of Errors on Examinations

If an objectively demonstrated error in the rating of an examination is called to the attention of the Human Resources Director within 30 days after the announcement of the results, the Human Resources Director will correct such error.

### Eligibility Registers

If, as part of the examination process, a listing of participants who met certain minimum standards is created, this listing will be referred to as an eligibility register. Any examination process that results in the creation of an eligibility register will specifically state in writing the method by which offers for employment will be extended to individuals appearing on the eligibility register and will notify all participants of such in the examination process. In any event, and under any examination process resulting in the creation of an eligibility register, an individual's existence on an eligibility register does not constitute an offer for employment or any guarantee of future employment. Therefore, an individual should have no expectation of employment based upon appearance on an eligibility register. To the extent the examination process utilizes an eligibility register and specifically provides for future hiring based upon the eligibility register, any individual who is extended an offer of employment based upon appearance on that eligibility register more than 60 days after the completion of the examination will be subject to submitting updated information, including re-submitting to the applicable background checks, drug tests, and medical exams. The subsequent submittal of updated information may result in an applicant being denied employment if the results are unacceptable.

## 6.10 Promotional Examinations

Any Department Director may institute a suitable promotional examination program for purposes of testing and promoting employees within the particular Department to positions designated in



higher Grades within the Department, provided the promotional examination program is approved by County Manager and complies with the policies set forth in this Section. Such a program would be in lieu of the recruiting requirements set forth in this Section for those positions for which the promotional examination program is established.

## **6.11 Selection**

The hiring Department Director will notify the Human Resources Director of the selected applicant(s). The Human Resources Director or designee will notify successful applicants by email or phone and provide the applicant with instructions regarding the completion of additional required forms and pre-employment screening. If an individual fails to accept employment, timely report for any drug or medical screenings, submit information for completion of a background check or motor vehicle report investigation, or report to duty within the time prescribed in the employment offer, it may result in the employment offer being rescinded.

All employment offers are contingent upon successfully passing a drug test and/or background check, as well as successful completion of a physical examination, if required. Applicants are not authorized to begin employment until the Human Resources Director receives notification of their successful completion of the required pre-employment drug test, background check, and physical Examination, if applicable. If an employment offer is rescinded or not accepted, the Human Resources Director, at the request of the applicable Department Director, may make additional job offers to others in the pool of applicants until the position is filled without the need for any further advertisement or notice, or the Department Director may request to restart the recruitment process.

## **6.12 Eligibility Verification Requirements**

Catoosa County is committed to full compliance with federal and state immigration laws and will only hire individuals who are legally authorized to work in the United States.

You must complete Form I-9 and provide appropriate documentation of your identity and authorization to work in the United States. Within three business days of hire, the Human Resources Director electronically verifies your work authorization in the E-Verify system. If a tentative non-confirmation is received, Catoosa County will follow the procedures designated under the E-Verify Program concerning notification, case referral, continued employment during the confirmation process, monitoring of case status, and final confirmation after case resolution. This policy and its procedures are intended to comply with the Georgia Security and Immigration Compliance Act and with O.C.G.A. §13-10-90, et seq. Should any portion of these laws be amended, modified, revised, or repealed, or if other or additional controlling federal or state immigration laws or regulations become adopted in the future, the processes and requirements set forth in such Act, laws, or regulations shall govern. Information about the E-Verify program can be found at [www.uscis.gov/e-verify](http://www.uscis.gov/e-verify).



## **6.13 Nepotism**

Nothing in this Handbook prohibits the concurrent employment of relatives by Catoosa County as long as neither of the related parties is employed in a supervisory role in which they may have a direct effect on the other individual's progress, performance, promotion, training, testing, or welfare. An employee may not be promoted into a position in which the employee would have a supervisory responsibility over a relative, as defined in this Handbook, unless the relative can be transferred to another position to eliminate the supervisory relationship. For purposes of this policy, relatives are defined as spouses, parents, children, siblings, parents-in-law, siblings-in-law, children-in-law, grandparents, stepparents, stepchildren, or any other person living in the household.

## **6.14 Working Test Period**

The working test period is an integral part of the selection process. If you are appointed, transferred, or promoted to a new position, you will be required to satisfactorily complete the working test period.

### **Duration**

The first six months of service in the position to which you have been appointed, transferred, or promoted constitutes the working test period. If your performance has not been adequately proficient during this period, and the Department Director believes that performance could be improved during an extension of the working test period, the Department Director may request an extension of no more than six months.

### **Extensions**

Working test period extensions are considered only when extenuating circumstances exist, or it is believed that significant improvement will be exhibited during the extended working test period.

### **Active Work Status**

Only time in active work status is counted toward completion of the working test period.

### **Transfer/Promotion**

When transferred or promoted, you will be subject to a working test period for six months in the new position. If it is determined that you are unsuitable for the position, the Department Director may return you to the position previously occupied, if it is vacant. If not vacant, the Department Director may attempt to place you in a comparable position for which you meet the requirements. If such placement is not feasible, you may be laid off and considered for placement when a suitable position becomes available. This action can be taken without your right to appeal to the Board of Commissioners.

### **Frequency of Performance Appraisals**

A performance appraisal will be conducted at the end of the six-month period, not less than 15 calendar days prior to the end of the working test period. Performance evaluations may be



completed more frequently at the discretion of the Department Director or County Manager. If the working test period is extended, a performance appraisal may be conducted at the end of each month, up to 10 days prior to the end of the extended working test period. A performance appraisal report must be completed to successfully complete the working test period.

## Performance Reports

Each performance appraisal will be completed, accepted, and returned to the Human Resources Director within five days after the conclusion of the working test period. The report will also include a completed performance appraisal, indicating work-related strengths and weaknesses and will document successful completion or failure to successfully complete the working test period.

# Section 7: Position Placement

## 7.1 Statement of Policy

This Section describes the different mechanisms for placement of employees in positions. Placements are made only to positions that have been allocated under the Classification Plan and approved by the Board of Commissioners. The different types of placements include original hire, promotion, demotion, reinstatement, lateral transfer, reassignment, grant-funded placement, and emergency assignment.

## 7.2 Original Hire

An original hire occurs upon hiring an individual as a result of recruitment efforts, except as otherwise indicated herein. Original hires may consist of employment in a full-time, part-time, seasonal, temporary, or grant-funded position.

### Full-Time Position

You are classified as full-time if you work in a position that is budgeted as full-time for 12 months of the year and work 30 hours or more per week. This classification is entitled to all PTO and benefits as described in this Handbook.

### Part-Time Position

You are classified as part-time if you work in a position that is budgeted as a part-time position for 12 months of the year and work less than 30 hours per week. This classification is not entitled to any PTO or benefits. The County Manager must provide advance approval to work any time in excess of the budgeted number of hours for the position.

### Seasonal Position

You are classified as seasonal if you work in a position that is temporary in nature and coincides with a particular season or with heavy workload periods for a particular Department. The seasonal position period may recur regularly from year to year, but it is not budgeted for 12 months of the year. This classification is not entitled to any PTO or benefits. Seasonal positions may not last



longer than six months. A seasonal position may be created or abolished at the recommendation of the County Manager provided the Departmental funds are available.

### Temporary Position

You are classified as temporary if you work in a position that is temporary for purposes of a special project or other work of a temporary nature. The temporary position period is established according to the special project or special circumstances. The temporary position is not budgeted for 12 months of the year and does not recur regularly from year to year. A Department Director requiring the use of a temporary employee is not required to utilize the recruitment procedures in recognition of the fact that a temporary position will be needed based on time-sensitive and/or exigent circumstances. Temporary positions will not exceed six months without prior approval from the County Manager. This classification is not entitled to any PTO or benefits. A temporary position may be created or abolished at the recommendation of the County Manager, provided that Departmental funds are available.

### Shift Worker Position

You are classified as a shift worker if you occasionally work one 12-hour or one 24-hour shift on a seasonal or part-time basis. This classification is not eligible for PTO or benefits.

### Grant-Funded Position

A grant-funded position is a full-time or part-time position established for a specific period of time, not to exceed the scheduled termination date of the grant. This position will terminate by law on the date of the grant termination unless the Catoosa County Board of Commissioners provides appropriate funding to continue the program or positions on or prior to the date of the grant termination. All grant-funded placements will follow the [recruitment procedures](#) outlined in this Handbook.

## 7.3 Promotion

A promotion occurs when you are promoted from a position in one Grade to another position in a higher Grade and pay range. Unless a promotional examination program or a period of time in a classification is a specified promotional prerequisite instituted within a Department and approved by the County Manager, all promotions will follow the [recruitment procedures](#) outlined in this Handbook.

If you are promoted to a position in a higher Grade, your salary should increase to the minimum salary of the new Grade or to a salary approved by the County Manager, which cannot exceed the maximum rate of pay for the new position.

You must have successfully completed a 6-month working test period prior to being eligible for a promotion, unless otherwise approved by the County Manager.



## 7.4 Demotion

A demotion occurs if you are moved from a position in one Grade to a position having a lower Grade and pay range. If you are demoted to a lower Grade, your salary will decrease by the percentage difference between the minimum salary for your former position and the minimum salary applicable to your new position. For example, if you are demoted from position A, which has a minimum annual salary of \$30,000.00 to position B, with a minimum annual salary of \$27,000.00, then you would receive a 10% reduction in salary.

A demotion appointment will be one of the following types:

- Disciplinary demotion occurs if you are found to have violated County policy or are subject to certain disciplinary action;
- Administrative demotion results from a layoff, reduction in force, reorganization, or disability accommodation;
- Voluntary demotion results from your request agreement, provided the following requirements are met:
  - The request or agreement is in writing;
  - Approval is obtained from the Department Director and the County Manager; and
- If the demotion includes a transfer from one Department to another, the receiving Department must be willing to accept the transfer.
- Working test period demotion occurs if you fail to satisfactorily complete a working test period.

You are eligible for demotion within your Department at any time. If you seek a demotion outside your Department, you must have shown satisfactory performance during the working test period prior to being eligible for a demotion to any other County positions.

## 7.5 Reinstatement

A reinstatement is made if you were laid off, subject to an administrative demotion, on an approved leave of absence, or on an approved military leave, and you are eligible to return to the position you previously held. Reinstatements are not intended to include your return to work after a suspension or administrative leave. In addition, reinstatements do not include your request to return to work after leaving employment with Catoosa County voluntarily or involuntarily, as such request would follow the [recruitment procedures](#) contained in this Handbook. You will not receive credit for past employment.

### Employees Reinstated After Non-Military Leave

If reinstated, you will be paid at your salary rate prior to separation, provided you assume your prior position, or the minimum salary provided for by the job description for that position, whichever is greater. If you are reinstated to a position that is not comparable to the one previously held, your pay will be placed at the minimum salary provided for by the applicable job description.



## Employees Reinstated After Military Leave

If you are reinstated after military service lasting 91 days or more, you will be promptly reemployed in the following order of priority:

- In the job you would have held, had you remained continuously employed, or a position of equivalent seniority, status, and pay so long as you are qualified for the job, or can become qualified after reasonable efforts by the County;
- If you cannot become qualified for the position as outlined above, in your pre-service position if you are qualified for the job or could become qualified after reasonable efforts by the County; or
- If the employee cannot become qualified for either position as outlined above, in any other position, which is the nearest approximation of the position for which you are qualified.

## 7.6 Lateral Transfer

A lateral transfer is defined as a move from one position with a certain job title to a different position with a different job title, but at the same Grade, either within or outside of your Department. Your rate of pay will remain the same. Lateral transfers must be approved by the applicable Elected Officials/Department Directors and notice must be provided to the Human Resources Director.

An involuntary lateral transfer may be made without following the recruitment procedures as an administrative mechanism as needed.

If you request a lateral transfer, you must apply and follow the [recruitment procedures](#) outlined in this Handbook, and you will be subject to a new working test period. You are eligible to apply for a vacant position that would constitute a lateral transfer at any time if you seek a lateral transfer within your Department. To the extent you desire to apply for a vacant position that would constitute a lateral transfer outside of your Department, you must have successfully completed the full working test period in your current position before you are eligible to apply for a lateral transfer to an external Department.

## 7.7 Reassignment

A reassignment will be made at the request of the Human Resources Director or by a Department Director, without prior approval by the County Manager. A reassignment consists of moving you from one position with a certain job title to another position within the same Department with the same title. Any Department Director making a reassignment must provide notification to the Human Resources Director and Finance Department for purposes of allocating cost centers and budgeting. Your salary upon reassignment will remain the same. Department Directors do not have to follow the recruitment procedures, as a reassignment is designed as an administrative method to accommodate workload within the Department.



## 7.8 Temporary Work at a Higher Grade / Emergency Assignment

With prior approval from the County Manager, you may be required to work at a higher Grade on a temporary, emergency basis and may do so for a period of 30 days or less with no increase in pay. If you are required to perform the duties longer than 30 days, you will be given an emergency assignment for a specified term and will be paid the appropriate rate for the higher Grade, which may be the minimum rate of pay for that Grade upon the 31<sup>st</sup> day in the tour of duty or a maximum increase of three percent to your current salary, whichever is greater. At the conclusion of the assignment, your pay will revert to the authorized rate established for your regular position. Any such temporary increase will not affect your eligibility for other advancements. Temporary assignments pursuant to this emergency assignment position may not exceed six months without written approval for an extension from the County Manager. Recruitment procedures will not be followed in the event of working at a higher Grade on a temporary, emergency basis.

## 7.9 Rehire

If the Department Director specifies on the personnel action form, or an attachment thereto, that a former employee should not be considered for re-employment, the employee will not be eligible for reemployment with Catoosa County in any capacity for at least two years from the date of separation and one year from the date of any retirement disbursement. All rehires will follow the [recruitment procedures](#) outlined in this Handbook.

# Section 8: Separation

## 8.1 Statement of Policy

This Section outlines policies for separating employees.

### Payment for PTO

At the time of termination, resignation, retirement, or death while employed with Catoosa County, any accrued Paid Time Off (PTO) up to the accrual limit based on your length of service will be paid to you or your estate, provided all uniforms and equipment issued by the County has been returned and no outstanding liabilities or debts remain.

## 8.2 Types of Separation

### Resignation

You may submit your resignation in writing or verbally to your Department Director, supervisor, the Human Resources Director, or the County Manager. If resignation notification is provided to someone other than the Human Resources Director, the Human Resources Director must be notified immediately. Once a resignation is tendered, the resignation will be considered final. You are not guaranteed the right to withdraw or rescind your resignation.



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To resign in good standing, you must, at a minimum, give written notice at least 14 calendar days prior to the effective date of the resignation. Failure to comply with this provision will be entered on your personnel record and will result in a denial of re-employment rights for at least two years from the date of resignation, unless the applicable Department Director determines that there was a hardship basis for not providing the required notice.

After submitting your resignation, you are not eligible to utilize PTO. Instead, you will be monetarily compensated for any accrued, unused PTO, consistent with this Section.

At the discretion of the Department Director or County Manager, you may be immediately dismissed from service rather than working during your notice period.

### **Abandonment of Position**

The County will consider you to have abandoned your position when any of the following occur: (1) you are absent without notice to the Department Director or designee for three or more consecutive working days; (2) you are absent for three or more consecutive working days after providing notice, but without having any available leave time; or (3) you are absent for three or more consecutive working days without receiving prior approval for the absences. You may not be deemed to have abandoned your position if you have provided notice to the Department Director and you demonstrate a serious medical condition, supported by medical documentation, to the satisfaction of the County. Such status could change at any time in the discretion of the County, depending on the length of the absence from the position and other circumstances.

For purposes of this paragraph, a working day is defined as eight hours for County employees; 12 hours for E911 Center dispatchers who work a 12-hour shift; and 24 hours for Fire Department employees who work a 24-hour shift. In any of the three situations set forth herein, you will be deemed to have abandoned your position and to have resigned at the end of the third working day. The Human Resources Director must be notified immediately in the event of job abandonment.

### **Layoff**

#### ***Reasons Justifying Layoff***

Layoff is defined as a reduction in force that may result in the separation of employee(s) due to abolishment of a position, shortage of funds or work, need to increase efficiency, or material change in the duties or organizational unit of the Department. No layoffs will be made for the purpose of separating an employee for incompetence, misconduct, or for other reasons, except as included in this Section. A layoff can be recommended by the Board of Commissioners, County Manager, and/or Human Resources Director. Any layoff must have prior approval from the County Manager.

#### ***Order of Layoff***

Prior to the layoff, the affected Department Director will make recommendations to the Human Resources Director with consideration of job performance, work records, evaluation ratings, and length of service in determining which employees will be laid off. If two or more persons in the



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Department in which the layoff is to be made have equal job performance, records, and/or ratings as determined by review of records and evaluation ratings, the order of layoff will be based upon seniority. If you are a full-time employee, you will not be laid off while another person is employed on a temporary or part-time basis with the same job description if you are willing to accept temporary or part-time work. You will not be laid off based on your membership in any category protected by federal, state, or local law.

Prior to lay off and to avoid separation of employment, the Human Resources Director may instead direct lateral transfers or demotions as necessary to place you into positions for which you are qualified. Lateral transfers or demotions in accordance with this Section will be effective unless you elect in writing to be laid off. Written notice of said election must be received by the Human Resources Director within three calendar days after you have received notice of a lateral transfer or demotion.

### ***Special Cases***

If a Department Director determines that retaining you is essential to the effective operation of the Department because you possess special skills or abilities, and if the Department Director wishes to retain you in preference to another employee with a higher rating or seniority, the Department Director must submit a written request to the County Manager. Such notification must set forth, in detail, the specific skills and abilities you possess, and the reasons why you are essential to the effective operation of the Department. With the approval of the County Manager, you may be retained to the detriment of the higher-ranking employee.

### ***Re-Employment Register***

The Human Resources Director will maintain a register of employees who have been laid off to be utilized for potential re-employment. The order of names appearing on the register is based on the order of the layoff and, when there is a tie, seniority will be the determining factor. Names will remain on the layoff register for a one-year period. During the life of the layoff register, you may submit a written request to have your name removed from the list. If your name appears on the register, you will be given primary consideration when conditions warrant rehiring. Primary consideration means you do not have to go through the recruiting process and Catoosa County will notify you if there is an opportunity to fill a position you previously held or a comparable position, either full-time or part-time, provided you meet the minimum qualifications for the position. If you are appointed to a position in this manner, you will serve the stated working test period for that position. In any event, you are welcome to apply for other positions with Catoosa County at any time. If you are hired for another position in the County during the life of the layoff register, your name will be removed from the register, and no other special consideration will be given to you. If you do not accept the first offer for re-employment having the same classification as the one held at the time of your separation, your name will be removed from the register, and no other special consideration will be given.

### ***Death***

Any employee who dies while in Catoosa County's employment will be separated effective the date of death.



### ***Retirement***

You may be separated from employment upon your retirement, consistent with retirement eligibility pursuant to federal and state law, as well as in the Catoosa County Retirement Plan. If you wish to retire, you must provide written notice, a minimum of 14 calendar days prior to the intended retirement date, to the affected Department Director. After providing notice of retirement, you are not eligible to utilize PTO without prior approval from the County Manager and only under special circumstances.

If you are eligible for the Catoosa County Retirement Plan and retire from employment, you must terminate employment prior to receiving any benefit under the Retirement Plan. After such termination of employment, you may not return to perform services for the County on a part-time, temporary, seasonal, or independent contractor basis for a period of at least one year from the retirement payout. If you return to the County after one year, you will not receive any increases in benefits received under the Retirement Plan on account of future years of service and compensation.

### ***Inability to Perform***

If you suffer from a condition or physical or mental disability or are otherwise unfit for duty, preventing you from performing the essential functions of the position even with reasonable accommodation or in the absence of an available reasonable accommodation, you are subject to dismissal for inability to perform the job.

### ***Loss of License or Certification***

If you are unable to perform the essential functions of your job adequately because you have lost a necessary license or certification, you will be subject to dismissal. You are independently and solely responsible for ensuring any license or certification required to perform your job is maintained in good standing.

### ***Dismissals***

A dismissal is an involuntary separation from employment. A dismissal for disciplinary reasons may be instituted without prior notice when deemed necessary to protect the County or the employee concerned. In the event of such a dismissal, the applicable Department Director must notify the Human Resources Director no later than the end of the following business day. However, in all other cases, the applicable Department Director should notify the Human Resources Director of the intent and the reasons prior to dismissal. Upon such notification, the applicable Department Director or designee and/or applicable supervisor will arrange to meet with the affected employee for a dismissal conference, at which the employee will be advised that the County intends to dismiss them. If an employee refuses to attend the dismissal conference, the dismissal will become automatic and enforced, and all rights to a dismissal conference are waived by the employee. The dismissal conference will consist of the applicable Department Director or designee and/or applicable supervisor, the Human Resources Director or designee, and the employee. The employee will be advised of the specific reasons for the dismissal and be further advised of their opportunity to respond to the reasons for dismissal prior to being discharged. The employee's verbal response at the conference should be considered. If deemed appropriate,



the County will proceed with dismissal. If deemed inappropriate, the County will proceed with another disciplinary action.

The dismissal of the County Manager, Chief Financial Officer and/or the Clerk to the Board of Commissioners must be pursuant to a majority vote of the Board of Commissioners in accordance with [Section 9](#).

### **8.3 Recommendation of Re-Employment**

In every instance of separation other than death or retirement, the applicable Department Director will specify on the personnel action form or an attachment thereto whether you can be considered for re-employment. An answer of “no” disqualifies you for further appointments with Catoosa County for at least two years from the date of separation.

## **Section 9: Disciplinary Actions**

### **9.1 Statement of Policy**

Catoosa County is an at-will employer, meaning either you or the County may terminate employment at any time, with or without cause or notice. Nonetheless, we seek to resolve performance and conduct problems in the most positive and constructive manner possible. When situations occur that warrant disciplinary action, we will treat all employees fairly and consistently.

The County Manager is responsible for all disciplinary actions against the other executive employees who report to them, including reprimands, demotions, suspensions and separations.

The Board of Commissioners is responsible for all disciplinary actions against the County Manager and the Clerk to the Board of Commissioners, including reprimands, demotions, suspensions, and separations.

### **9.2 Prohibited Conduct Generally**

In general, conduct that interferes with the operations of the County, brings discredit to the County, or is deemed inappropriate by supervisors, coworkers, or the public is not tolerated. Examples of conduct that is not permitted, and will subject the individual involved to disciplinary action, up to and including immediate separation, include, but are not limited to:

- Insubordination or uncooperative attitude, including but not limited to disrespect to a supervisor, a higher-ranking employee or official, coworker, or the public, and failure to follow the lawful orders of a supervisor;
- Failure to do work at an acceptable level of competence;
- Excessive tardiness, excessive absenteeism, unexcused absences, and absences when you do not have accrued PTO to accommodate the absence;

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- Conviction of a felony or a crime involving moral turpitude, if the conduct leading to such conviction is job-related and the disciplinary action is consistent with business necessity;
- Theft, abuse, or misuse of County property or vehicles, violation of traffic laws while driving a County vehicle, failure to report damage or destruction of County property to a supervisor, loaning property or equipment of the County without permission or proper authority;
- Willfully giving false statements to supervisors, officials, or the public;
- Violation of County ordinances, administrative regulations, provisions of this Handbook, or Departmental rules;
- Consumption or distribution of alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs or abuse of prescription drugs or over-the-counter medication in a manner that violates the Catoosa County [Drug- and Alcohol-Free Workplace policies](#);
- Acts during duty hours which are incompatible with public service;
- Use of profane or abusive language or discourteous treatment of the public or other employees;
- Consumption of alcoholic beverages or use of illegal, prescription, or over-the-counter drugs outside work hours in such a manner as to adversely affect attendance or job performance;
- Falsification or destruction of official records or documents, or use of official position for personal benefit, profit, or advantage;
- When duly and properly called as a witness before any County Board, appeals board, state or federal judicial or administrative tribunal, and when before such tribunal, failing to answer truthfully any question concerning performance of official duties with the County;
- Failure to report an occupational injury or accident during the shift in which it occurred;
- Absence due to incarceration;
- Use of any form of physical abuse of the public, supervisors, or other employees, or making threats to the public, supervisors, or other employees;
- Violating any lawful official regulation or order or failing to obey any proper directive made and given by a superior officer;
- Dishonest and unlawful conduct;
- Careless or negligent with the monies or other property of the County;
- Failure to pay or make reasonable provisions for future payment of debt to such an extent that such failure is detrimental to the work relationship;
- Use or threatening of use, or attempt at use of personal or political influence to secure employment benefits, including but not limited to promotion, leave of absence, transfer, change of pay rate, or character of work;
- Taking for personal use from any person any fee, gift, or other valuable thing in the course of work or in connection with it, when such gift or other such valuable thing is given in the hope or expectation of receiving a favor or better treatment than that afforded other persons based upon the Code of Ethics for Government Service (See O.C.G.A. § 45-10-1);



- Violating established security procedures during the examination process or obtaining information, through unauthorized or illegal means, which provides an unfair advantage on the examination;
- Failure to acquire a valid license, registration, or certification when such license, registration, or certification is required and specified in the specifications for the class assigned to your position;
- Wasted time, inefficiency, and/or loitering during working hours;
- Violation of any provisions of the Code of Ethics for Public Government Service (as fully set forth in [Section 1.2](#) in this Handbook), or the applicable Departmental SOP;
- Release of confidential information learned through your position without specific approval from the applicable Department Director, Constitutional Officer, or County Manager;
- Lending or borrowing money from another County employee who makes a practice of loaning money and charging interest to employees; and/or
- Babysitting or keeping children in your assigned work area.

### **9.3 Conduct Prohibited by Departmental SOP and Rules**

Notwithstanding the conduct prohibited generally above, or any other conduct prohibited by Code of Ethics for Public Government Service (as fully set forth in [Section 1.2](#) of this Handbook), you will be subject to disciplinary action for violation of Departmental SOPs or rules. Additionally, the Departmental SOPs or rules may contain schedules of penalties for violations. If the applicable Department imposes a higher standard of conduct and/or the schedule of penalties results in a harsher penalty than the conduct guidelines and penalties contained in this Handbook, the Departmental SOP or rules will control.

### **9.4 Progressive Discipline**

Whenever possible, Department Directors should provide you with an opportunity to correct problematic behavior or poor performance. All supervisors are encouraged to follow specific steps of progressive discipline. However, depending upon the nature of misconduct, poor performance, and/or length of employment, the use of progressive discipline is discretionary. Thus, while this Section sets forth available mechanisms for disciplinary action, certain steps may be skipped in a disciplinary process depending upon the nature of misconduct, poor performance, working test period status and/or length of employment. To the extent progressive discipline is being utilized, when you engage in different types of misconduct or poor performance, each incident can provoke increased discipline, even if the incidents of misconduct or poor performance are in different areas or unrelated to other previous incidents.

The mechanisms for progressive discipline may include but are not limited to verbal reprimand, written reprimand, suspension without pay, demotion, and dismissal. While there are five steps identified in this Section, it does not mean five incidents of misconduct or poor performance are required prior to dismissal being an appropriate disciplinary action. Moreover, other forms of discipline not detailed in this Section may be utilized in the applicable supervisor's discretion. All



disciplinary actions must be documented in writing and forwarded to the Human Resources Director for maintenance in personnel files.

## **9.5 Verbal Reprimand**

A verbal reprimand is a verbal notice of a policy violation, mistake, inefficiency, misconduct, poor performance, or other factors that may adversely influence your ability to carry out your duties and responsibilities. Any supervisor may verbally reprimand a subordinate employee at any time. Verbal reprimands may affect your employment status, particularly if you do not take corrective action. All verbal reprimands will be documented in your personnel file and will be signed by the Human Resources Director to acknowledge receipt.

## **9.6 Written Reprimand**

A written reprimand is a written notice of a policy violation, mistake, inefficiency, misconduct, poor performance, or other factors that may adversely influence your ability to carry out duties and responsibilities. Any supervisor may reprimand in writing to a subordinate employee at any time. Written reprimands are required to be shown and explained to you, and you will be required to acknowledge receipt with your signature. If you refuse to sign, it will be noted on the written reprimand. If you feel the written reprimand is unjust, you can provide a response in writing, which must be completed within five calendar days. An original copy of the reprimand, with your response, if any, must be forwarded to the Human Resources Director to be placed in your personnel file. The Human Resources Director will sign the written reprimand to acknowledge receipt. A written reprimand may be presented on a form adopted by the applicable Department or available from the Human Resources Director, or the written reprimand may be in letter or memo form.

## **9.7 Suspension Without Pay**

The County Manager, a Department Director, or their respective designee, as applicable, may, by written notice, suspend you without pay. Any such suspension notice must be forwarded to the Human Resources Director to be placed in your personnel file. The Human Resources Director will sign the suspension notice to acknowledge receipt. If you are suspended for any reason, you may not utilize PTO to be compensated during the suspension without pay period.

### **Disciplinary Suspension**

To attempt to correct unacceptable behavior and/or work performance issues, you may be suspended for a specified period of time without pay. All such disciplinary suspensions for a specified period will be stated in hours, rather than days or shifts. The total period of any suspension without pay for disciplinary purposes will not exceed five days or the equivalent for shift employees.

If you are exempt, you may be suspended without pay in increments of the equivalent of one or more full days imposed in good faith for violation of workplace rules. If you are a non-exempt employee, you may be suspended without pay in consecutive full or partial day increments.



## Suspension Pending a Court Decision

You may be suspended indefinitely without pay at the discretion of the County Manager or the applicable Department Director, or their respective designee, when awaiting trial on criminal charges if the nature of which would impede or undermine your ability to satisfactorily perform your job. You will be given the opportunity to demonstrate the criminal charges should not subject you to suspension from employment with the County. Thereafter, the County will determine whether said suspension is job-related and consistent with business necessity.

In the alternative, if your actions and/or the criminal charges are such that it is not in the best interest of the County for you to remain in the County workforce, the County Manager or the applicable Department Director, or their respective designee as applicable may elect to terminate you upon notice of the criminal charges or at any time thereafter. You will be given the opportunity to demonstrate that the criminal charges should not subject you to dismissal from employment with the County. Thereafter, the County will determine whether said dismissal is job-related and consistent with business necessity.

If the County does not elect to terminate you during pending of criminal charges, once you notify the County that the criminal matter has been resolved by dismissal, plea, or trial, the County Manager, applicable Department Director, or respective designee, will determine whether you will be reinstated and whether any such reinstatement will be with or without loss of pay. If you are fully exonerated of all criminal charges, you will be reinstated without loss of pay, privileges, benefits, or status retroactive to the date of suspension.

## Suspension Pending Drug/Alcohol Testing

If you are required to submit to a reasonable suspicion drug or alcohol test, you will be suspended without pay. The total period of any suspension without pay will be indefinite and will conclude upon completion and receipt of the drug or alcohol test and any applicable confirmation tests.

If you initially test positive for drugs or alcohol pursuant to any other type of drug or alcohol testing (such as workers' compensation testing, return to duty testing, post-accident testing, and/or random testing) you will be immediately suspended without pay pending any applicable confirmation of the positive test results. The period of suspension will be indefinite and will end upon completion and receipt of any applicable confirmation tests.

## ***Suspension During Investigation/Paid Administrative Leave***

A suspension during an investigation is referred to as Administrative Leave. Please refer to [Section 11.15](#) for more details on Administrative Leave.

## **9.8 Demotion**

The County Manager, applicable Department Director, or designee may, by written notice, demote an employee for disciplinary purposes. If you are demoted to a lower Grade, your salary will decrease by that percentage difference between the minimum salary for your former position and the minimum salary applicable to your new position. You will be subject to a working test period upon demotion. All demotions must be approved in writing by the County Manager.



## 9.9 Dismissals

You may be dismissed from employment with Catoosa County for disciplinary purposes. Please see [Section 8](#) for additional details.

Immediate dismissal, in the absence of progressive discipline, may be necessary in certain circumstances. The following list includes some, but not all, offenses that may be grounds for immediate dismissal:

- Theft;
- Falsification of documentation and/or other acts of dishonesty;
- Fighting or other physical violence or threats of violence;
- Wrongful or negligent destruction of Catoosa County property;
- Conviction of a felony or other offense that, in the opinion of the County, conflicts with and/or undermines the performance of your job duties;
  - Note, you will be given the opportunity to demonstrate that the conviction should not exclude you from employment with the County. Thereafter, the County will determine whether said conviction is job-related and dismissal is consistent with business necessity;
- Possession of firearms, weapons, or explosives on Catoosa County property without express consent from the County Manager, or as otherwise allowable pursuant to applicable law(s);
- Use, possession, sale, or testing positive for alcohol or illegal drugs on Catoosa County property or while on duty, and/or failure to submit to testing for same;
- Use, possession, sale, or testing positive for prescription or over-the-counter drugs that lead an employee to be unfit for duty;
- Falsification of an employment application or other information for the purposes of obtaining employment or any benefits from Catoosa County;
- Violation of safety rules that endanger lives or safety and/or any conduct that endangers lives or safety;
- Violation of the Catoosa County's anti-harassment, non-discrimination, and/or internet use policies;
- Unreported or unauthorized absences of three consecutive working days;
- Unauthorized and repeated tardiness; and
- Gross insubordination.

## Section 10: Grievances

### 10.1 Purpose

The purpose of this Section is to provide an orderly process for hearing grievable claims. The objective of this process is to reach a firm and equitable decision in a timely manner. The



Department Director, County Manager, and you are all expected to make an effort to resolve any grievance informally before initiating the formal grievance procedure.

The chain of command must have the opportunity to resolve any grievance. If you are not satisfied with the results following appeal through the chain of command, you may file an appeal to the Board of Commissioners as discussed in [Section 10.5](#). At any point when following the chain of command, you, your supervisor, or the Department Director may call upon the County Manager to assist in the mediation of the dispute.

## **10.2 Overview of Grievable Areas**

You may file a written grievance with the applicable Department Director, Human Resources Director, or County Manager, in accordance with this policy.

Grievance is defined as a claim by an employee declaring:

- Unsafe or unhealthy working conditions;
- Unlawful discrimination;
- Application of County policies in violation of this Policy Manual; or
- As a result of a disciplinary demotion, a disciplinary reduction in pay, or termination.

## **10.3 Areas That Are Not Grievable**

The following areas are NOT grievable:

- Issues which are pending or have been concluded by other administrative or judicial procedures;
- Management's right to assign work and/or establish work processes;
- Disciplinary actions that do not result in a dismissal, demotion or salary reduction;
- Budget allocations and expenditures and organizational structure, including the persons or number of persons assigned to particular jobs or units;
- The content or rating of a performance evaluation;
- The selection of an individual by the Department Director or County Manager to fill a position through appointment, promotion, or transfer, except when adverse effect can be shown because of unlawful discrimination;
- Any matter which is not within the jurisdiction or control of the County;
- Internal security practices established by the County Manager and/or Board of Commissioners; and
- Decisions, practices, resolutions, or policies made or passed by the County Manager or Board of Commissioners.

## **10.4 Processing of Grievances**

All executive employees are responsible for ensuring grievances are fully processed. You will not be retaliated against for using the County grievance procedures.



Complaints will follow the procedure outlined below and will refer to the provision or provisions of County policy; identify the manner in which County policy is alleged to have been applied in violation of this Policy Manual; identify the practice, procedure, rules, or regulation alleged to have been violated; and adequately set forth the facts pertaining to the alleged violation.

You must sign and date any grievance submitted. Any decision will be provided to you in writing and will be dated and signed by the County representative at that step.

## **10.5 Formal Grievance Procedure**

### **Step 1**

Present a grievance or complaint in writing to the applicable Department Director within five working days from the date that the grievable action or violation occurs. Discussions will be informal for the purpose of settling the issue in the simplest and most direct manner. The Department Director will make a decision and communicate in writing to you within five working days from the date that the grievance was presented. If there is no applicable Department Director, you should proceed directly to Step 2 within five working days from the date that the grievable action or violation occurs.

### **Step 2**

If you are not satisfied with the decision in Step 1, you may appeal the decision within three working days of the Step 1 decision in writing to the County Manager or the Human Resources Director.

You must include the following in your appeal:

- A written statement clearly explaining the issue at hand, including any known violation of County policy, procedures or laws;
- The steps already taken by the grievant to address the issue;
- A copy of the response of the Department Director; and
- Your requested remedy.

The County Manager will review the facts of the grievance and, if appropriate, schedule a meeting with you and the Department Director. You will represent yourself during the grievance process. However, at your discretion, you may, with advance notice to the County Manager, bring another County employee(s) to testify on your behalf.

After reviewing the facts of the grievance or after meeting with the affected employee(s), as appropriate, the County Manager will notify you of the decision on the grievance within 15 business days from the time it was submitted to the County Manager.

### **Step 3**

If you are not satisfied with the decision in Step 2 and the action taken results in termination of employment, or the grievance contends a violation of state or federal law, you may appeal the decision in writing within five working days of the Step 2 decision to the Board of Commissioners.



You must include the following in the appeal:

- The specific violation contended within the original grievance;
- A complete copy of all of the grievance materials generated through Step 2; and
- Specific information establishing that a termination is not warranted or supporting your position that the aggrieved matter constitutes a violation of state or federal law.

The Board of Commissioners will review the appeal on its merits and, if appropriate, meet with you within fifteen working days from receipt of the appeal. The Board of Commissioners will thereafter investigate the contentions and communicate the Board's decision to the grievant within 45 working days from the date the grievance was received. The decision of the Board of Commissioners is final, without further right to appeal.

## **10.6 Time Limits**

The time limit at any step set forth in this Section may be extended by the Human Resources Director for good cause. A grievance not advanced to the higher step within the time limit provided will be deemed permanently withdrawn and settled on the basis of the decision most recently given. Failure on the part of the County's representative to answer within the time limit set forth in any step may entitle you to proceed to the next step.

# **Section 11: Attendance and Leave**

## **11.1 Hours of Work**

### **Attendance**

You are responsible for your attendance and are required to work the schedule as assigned by the applicable Department Director.

### **Annual Period**

The Annual Period for purposes of determining rights under this Policy Manual will commence on October 1st and conclude on September 30th.

### **Maximum Work Hours**

The following table sets forth the maximum work hours for purposes of computing overtime. In accordance with the table, you are not entitled to overtime compensation until the maximum work hours in the applicable work period have been exceeded.

<b>Classification of Employees</b>	<b>Work Period</b>	<b>Maximum Hours</b>
Fire Department	28 days	212 per period
911 Employees	14 days	84 per period
Other County Employees	7 days	40 per period



## Emergency On-Call Policy

You may be required to be “on-call” for the purpose of responding to emergency situations. Any emergency response generating potential on-call time will be approved by the County Manager.

According to the Fair Labor Standards Act, if you are a non-exempt employee, the waiting time while on call is not compensable as hours worked as long as the conditions on your activities are not so restrictive that you cannot use the time effectively for personal pursuits. It is our intent that you are able to effectively use on-call time for personal pursuits, such that on-call time is not compensable. With the exception of the Hutcheson Maintenance Department, if you are non-exempt and on the emergency on-call list, the County will pay you one hour of pay at your regular rate of pay for each day that you appear on the emergency on-call list. If you are a non-exempt Hutcheson Maintenance employee, you will be paid at the rate of \$2.50 per hour for each hour on call. The applicable Department Director will maintain the emergency on-call list on a monthly basis.

If you are a non-exempt employee, compensable time will begin to run immediately when you commence travel to the emergency on-call location. With the exception of the Hutcheson Maintenance Department, you will be paid a minimum of two hours at your regular rate of pay if the time worked is less than one hour. If you are a Hutcheson Maintenance employee, you will be paid your normal hourly rate for actual time worked as the result of an emergency call and will not be paid a two-hour minimum. Additional emergency calls that occur while you are responding to a prior emergency call will not be reimbursed as a separate emergency call but considered a continuous event.

If you are an exempt employee, you will not receive pay in addition to your regular salary for on-call time.

## Time-Swapping Recordkeeping

The County does not allow time-swapping or shift-swapping between employees, unless it is previously authorized by all shift supervisors involved. Shift-swapping is the practice of trading work shifts. Time-swaps or shift-swaps without proper authorization are grounds for disciplinary action. Falsifying payroll records to show an individual is present when not actually present is grounds for termination.

## Rounding Hours Worked

Catoosa County tracks hours worked in 15-minute increments. Time worked between one to seven minutes will be rounded down and thus not counted as hours worked; however, time worked between eight to 14 minutes will be rounded up and be counted as a quarter-hour of work time.

## 11.2 Overtime Compensation

### Classification as Exempt or Non-Exempt

You will be classified as either exempt or non-exempt according to the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and its governing regulations. These classifications are established by the County based



on the actual duties and compensation earned by each employee. The County complies with the FLSA and compensates non-exempt employees for overtime work according to the FLSA and policies set forth herein while exempt employees are not compensated for overtime worked.

### Approval and Recording Overtime

All overtime work performed must have prior approval of the Department Director. In addition, you must record all overtime hours during the pay period in which you performed the work. A supervisor will not require you to work overtime without allowing you to record and receive compensation for overtime hours. If you have concerns about the overtime compensation practices occurring in your Department, immediately advise the Human Resources Director.

### Overtime Rate

If you are a non-exempt employee and perform overtime work, you will receive one and one-half times your regular rate of pay for all overtime hours.

### Computation of Hours Worked for Overtime Compensation Purposes

The computation of hours worked for purposes of reaching the maximum hour threshold (as specified in [Section 11.1](#)) to trigger the entitlement to overtime compensation includes all hours actually worked. Paid personal leave, holidays, and other types of leave are not included.

### Overtime for Part-Time, Non-Exempt Employees

If you are a part-time, non-exempt employee and you work more than your normal work schedule, but less than the FLSA maximum hours for the appropriate work cycle, you will be paid at your regular rate. When hours worked exceed FLSA maximums for the appropriate work cycle, you will be paid overtime at one and one-half times your regular hourly rate. You are not authorized to perform any work in excess of your normal work schedule without written approval from the County Manager.

## 11.3 Holiday Leave

### Holidays Observed

If you are a full-time employee, you are eligible for the following eleven holidays each year:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Veterans Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the day after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day



Other holidays may be authorized by the County. When a holiday falls on Saturday, it is observed on the Friday prior, and if it falls on Sunday, it is observed on the following Monday.

### **Holiday Pay**

If eligible, you will be paid a total of eight hours for each holiday, regardless of the hours in your shift, provided you are scheduled to work on the holiday. If you are part-time, temporary, seasonal, or on approved leave without pay, suspension without pay, military leave, FMLA leave, or other unpaid leaves, you are not entitled to holiday pay. Holiday pay is not included in calculation of overtime pay.

To qualify for holiday pay, you are required to work your scheduled workdays before and after the holiday, unless you are off on scheduled and pre-approved PTO. If unscheduled PTO is taken the day before or the day after a holiday, you will not qualify for holiday pay. Holidays which occur during pre-approved PTO are not charged against PTO.

If you are an employee of the Sheriff's office who is scheduled to work on an observed holiday and you did not schedule and receive pre-approval for PTO for the holiday, you may receive holiday pay only if the following conditions are met: you must work the day before, the day of, and the day after the observed holiday, if scheduled to work. If unscheduled PTO is used for any of these days, you will not qualify for holiday pay. In this situation, holidays which occur during pre-approved PTO are charged against PTO.

### **Scheduled Work on Holidays**

If you are non-exempt and required to work on or during one of the actual holidays identified by the County, you will be compensated at your regular rate of pay for the hours worked on the actual holiday. You will also receive eight additional hours of pay at your regular rate of pay for hours worked on the day the County observes the holiday. Holiday pay does not count toward overtime pay calculation.

## **11.4 Paid Time Off**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of Paid Time Off (PTO) is to provide paid time away from work for vacation, healthcare appointments, family sickness, and hazardous weather conditions. PTO is used to supplement hours so that your absences are covered and you reach the full scheduled hours for your position. PTO may not be used to create hours beyond what you would normally be scheduled to work in any given week.

### **Eligibility**

If you are a full-time or part-time employee and are scheduled to work 30 or more hours per week, you are entitled to accrue PTO.

If you are a part-time employee scheduled for less than 30 hours per week or 1,000 hours per year, you are not eligible for PTO under these policies.



## PTO Accrual

PTO is accrued each bi-weekly pay period as follows:

Hourly Accrual – 40-Hour Employees				
Years of Service	Months of Service	Hours Per Pay Period	Annual Maximum	PTO Accrual Limit
Less than 1 year	0-11	3.6923	96	96
More than 1 year, less than 6 years	12-71	4.9231	128	400
More than 6 years, less than 10 years	72-119	5.6923	148	400
More than 10 years, less than 15 years	120-179	6.4615	168	400
15 years or more	180-999	8.0000	208	480
Hourly Accrual – 42-Hour Employees				
Years of Service	Months of Service	Hours Per Pay Period	Annual Maximum	PTO Accrual Limit
Less than 1 year	0-11	3.8846	101	96
More than 1 year, less than 6 years	12-71	5.1538	134	400
More than 6 years, less than 10 years	72-119	5.9615	155	400
More than 10 years, less than 15 years	120-179	6.7692	176	400
15 years or more	180-999	8.3846	218	480
Hourly Accrual – 56-Hour Employees				
Years of Service	Months of Service	Hours Per Pay Period	Annual Maximum	PTO Accrual Limit
Less than 1 year	0-11	5.1538	134	96
More than 1 year, less than 6 years	12-71	6.8846	179	400
More than 6 years, less than 10 years	72-119	7.9615	207	400
More than 10 years, less than 15 years	120-179	9.0385	235	400
15 years or more	180-999	11.1923	291	480
Hourly Accrual – Directors Premium				
Years of Service	Months of Service	Hours Per Pay Period	Annual Maximum	PTO Accrual Limit
Less than 1 year	0-11	5.2308	136	96
More than 1 year, less than 6 years	12-71	6.4615	168	400
More than 6 years, less than 10 years	72-119	7.2308	188	400
More than 10 years, less than 15 years	120-179	8.0000	208	400
15 years or more	180-999	9.5385	248	480
Hourly Accrual – Sheriff Department Only				
Years of Service	Months of Service	Hours Per Pay Period	Annual Maximum	PTO Accrual Limit
Up to 5 years	0-59	6.4616	168	400
More than 5 years, less than 10 years	60-119	7.3846	192	400
10 years or more	120-999	8.3077	216	480
Hourly Accrual – Tax Commissioner Department Only				
Years of Service	Months of Service	Hours Per Pay Period	Annual Maximum	PTO Accrual Limit
Less than 1 year	0-11	3.6923	96	64
More than 1 year, less than 3 years	12-35	5.2308	136	400
More than 3 years, less than 5 years	36-59	6.4615	168	400



More than 5 years, less than 15 years	60-179	7.3846	192	400
15 years or more	180-999	8.0000	208	480

PTO accrual begins with the first pay period of each calendar year for eligible employees. Up to 40 hours of PTO may be taken in advance upon approval from your supervisor. This means your accrual balance can be negative during a calendar year. You may not carry a negative balance from one calendar year to the next. PTO balances must be 0 or greater during the final pay period in the calendar year.

Up to 88 hours of accrued, unused PTO may be carried over to the next calendar year and each year thereafter until the accrual limit is reached based on your length of employment. When you reach the maximum accrual limit, you may request payment for up to no more than 40 hours of accrued, unused PTO. Such requests may be made at the end of each calendar year.

### PTO Approval

All requests for PTO must be pre-approved by the Department Director or the appropriate supervisors as designated by the Department Director. Department Directors' requests for PTO must be pre-approved by the County Manager. You are required to report any needed time off, for any reason, prior to your scheduled work time. If that is not possible, you must report your tardiness or absence as soon as possible, or it will be unexcused and unpaid. Absences from duty without previous approval that occur frequently or are habitual will be addressed per the disciplinary process.

### Compensation for PTO Upon Separation

At the time of termination, resignation, retirement, or death while employed with Catoosa County, accrued, unused PTO (up to the accrual limit based on length of employment) will be paid to you or your estate, provided all uniforms and equipment issued by the County have been returned and no outstanding liabilities or debts remain.

Under no circumstances will you be allowed to request payment for unearned or advance leave.

### Emergencies

Employees on PTO are subject to recall in cases of emergencies.

### Maximum Allowance

PTO accrual begins January 1 of each year. PTO may be carried over past December 31 of each calendar year into the next calendar year and accumulated in accordance with information covered under the [PTO Accrual](#) section.

### Donation of PTO

You may receive PTO donated by fellow employees in cases where extended illness or injury exceeds the maximum allowable accumulation. A cap of up to 40 hours of accrued PTO may be donated once per year. You may receive a maximum of four weeks of donated PTO per year. The PTO donation form must be completed and returned to the Human Resources Director.



## Major Medical

Paid medical leave will be provided for eligible employees experiencing major medical conditions based on the specific requirements and limitations of this Section. The County will pay for time away from work due to a major medical condition, up to a maximum aggregate combined total of 120 hours of full pay. Paid medical leave is based on the actual time missed from work and is subject to the maximum annual aggregate limitations set forth in this Section.

### ***Eligibility Criteria***

To be eligible for major medical, you must be an active full-time employee with at least one year of continuous service. In addition, you must provide documentation of your hospital admission for at least 24 hours.

All accrued, unused PTO must be exhausted before you are eligible for major medical benefit. Major medical may be used only once per incident of major surgery, illness, or injury. Unused major medical benefit time does not accrue or rollover from one calendar year to the next.

## **11.5 Workers' Compensation Leave for On-the-Job Injuries**

### Reporting Injury, Drug Test, and Exam

If you sustain an injury on the job, you must, at the time of the injury, notify your supervisor on the forms prepared and maintained by the Human Resources Department. You may be required to submit to a drug test within eight hours of the injury. You must, upon request, submit a statement from a physician who is listed on the workers' compensation approved Panel of Physicians if the injury will prevent you from performing your regular duties.

The County reserves the right to refuse payment of medical services if you are examined by a physician not listed on the workers' compensation approved Panel of Physicians.

### Compensation

If a work-related injury necessitates your absence from work as certified by the authorized treating physician, you will receive your regular rate of pay for a maximum of seven working days.

The County's workers' compensation insurance carrier is responsible for determining if you are eligible for further compensation. However, you may at no time receive workers' compensation income benefits and PTO benefits in excess of your average weekly wage as determined by O.C.G.A. § 34-9- 260.

If you qualify for workers' compensation leave and are eligible for leave under the [Family and Medical Leave Act \(FMLA\)](#), these leaves will run concurrently.

### Supplemental Pay

You may elect to use PTO to supplement workers' compensation pay up to the amount of your average weekly wage.



## Pay for Doctor Visits

If you are injured on the job and return to light-duty work, you will be paid for time off for physician visits. A medical note from your authorized treating physician must be presented to the Department Director and Human Resources Department.

## PTO Accrual and Policies

If you are out on workers' compensation leave, you will continue to accrue PTO until you are released to return to work.

## Return to Work Program

Catoosa County's return-to-work program is designated to:

- Assist the medical recovery process by providing a focus and a goal for your return to work;
- Benefit you by allowing you to return to full wages as soon as possible; and
- Benefit the County by reducing workers' compensation costs.

Catoosa County will seek return to work opportunities through transitional employment if you are temporarily disabled due to an on-the-job injury as quickly as medically possible. Transitional employment opportunities will be considered in all Departments, not just the Department in which you were working before the injury or illness occurred.

Transitional employment assignments are intended to assist you in transitioning back to work after a temporary disability that resulted from a work-related injury. All transitional employment duties must be productive. Duties must never be demeaning or appear worthless in any way.

Catoosa County, through our [reasonable accommodations program](#), will make efforts to retain employees who are disabled as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA).

## 11.6 Reporting of Unscheduled Personal Leave or an Illness

If you are absent from work without prior approval, you are responsible for contacting the appropriate Department Director or supervisor within 30 minutes before your designated reporting time and reporting thereafter on any subsequent days, unless approved ahead of time. Leave for an illness will be charged against PTO. If you are employed in a Department that must provide 24 hours of sustained service, you must report the absence two hours before the designated reporting time unless otherwise required by the Departmental SOP or rules. If you fail to comply with this Section, your leave may be without pay, and it will be a disciplinary matter. The method for notification of absences pursuant to this Section is at the discretion of the applicable Department Director. The method for notification will be clearly communicated to the Department.

Personal leave for an illness that exceeds three consecutive working days, without prior approval, are allowed at the discretion of the Department Director only after presentation of a satisfactory written statement by a licensed physician or dentist certifying that your condition prevented you



from performing your duties. With the exception of a Leave of Absence approved pursuant to the applicable Leave Policies set forth herein, there is no “leave without pay” available to employees.

## 11.7 Military Leave

If you are a member of the National Guard and Reserves, an organized military reserve of the United States, or otherwise engaged in the performance of military duty, you will be allowed military leave with pay, not to exceed 20 working days during any calendar year to attend training camps if you provide a copy of the orders pursuant to such training. Military leave is not charged as PTO and may be intermittent in nature.

In addition, if you are called up to active duty in any branch of the military service of the United States, you will be allowed to take military leave and maintain rights and benefits consistent with federal and state law if you provide a copy of the orders pursuant to such active duty.

All military leave time counts towards all seniority rights.

Catoosa County complies with the applicable federal and state law for public employees concerning military leave. You must comply with the same laws when you seek to return to work following military service.

To be entitled to the reemployment rights set forth in federal and state law, you must apply for reemployment according to the following schedule:

- **If service is less than 30 days (or for the purpose of taking an examination to determine fitness for service)** – you must report for reemployment at the beginning of the first full regularly scheduled working period on the first calendar day following completion of service and the expiration of eight hours after a time for safe transportation back to your residence.
- **If service is for 31 days or more but less than 181 days** – you must apply for reemployment no later than 14 days following the completion of service.
- **If service is over 180 days** – you must apply for reemployment no later than 90 days following the completion of service.
- **If you are hospitalized or convalescing from a service-connected injury** – you must apply for reemployment no later than two years following completion of service.

## 11.8 Civil/Jury Leave

You may take time off without loss of pay when serving jury duty or when required by subpoena to be a witness in a legal proceeding. You must provide documentation to support your need for leave in advance to your Department Director. Leave under this Section is not charged as PTO.

If you are required to perform jury duty or be a witness in a legal proceeding pursuant to subpoena, you are required to use your best efforts to minimize the time spent away from work and to request an on-call arrangement for appearance in response to a subpoena. If you are dismissed early from jury duty or released from a subpoena with reasonable hours remaining in the workday,



you are required to return to work for the completion of the workday. Failure to do so could result in loss of pay for those remaining hours.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, you will not be granted leave under this policy for any case or proceeding in which you are a litigant, defendant, or other principal party, or you have any other personal or familiar interest in the proceeding, outside the scope of employment. In addition, you will not be granted leave for any case in which you are charged with a crime.

You must submit to the applicable Department Director a copy of the subpoena, summons for jury duty, or other court order or process as a prerequisite for approval of leave under this policy. Appropriate certification of service is also required.

The County will not discharge, discipline, threaten, or otherwise penalize you for requesting or taking leave under this policy.

## **11.9 Maternity Leave**

Maternity leave is provided pursuant to, and governed by, the provisions of the [Family and Medical Leave Act \(FMLA\)](#), the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA), and those provisions set forth in the following Section. Maternity leave is granted to employees upon written request at least 10 regularly scheduled working days prior to the effective date or, if emergency conditions prohibit prior notice, it must be filed as soon as possible. Maternity leave begins when you, with the approval of your doctor, deem you are no longer able to carry out the duties and responsibilities of your position. Maternity leave ends as required by the FMLA.

When on maternity leave, you must utilize any available PTO, and leave will run concurrently with FMLA leave. Once PTO is exhausted, the remainder of FMLA leave, if any, is unpaid.

Catoosa County will seek to provide modified duty work assignments if you are pregnant and temporarily unable to perform your job duties due to the pregnancy. Modified duty will be considered in all Departments, not just the Department in which you were working before requesting a light duty assignment.

Modified duty employment opportunities are intended to assist pregnant workers who are temporarily not able to perform their normal job duties. All modified duty assignments will be productive. Duties must never be demeaning or appear worthless in any way.

Catoosa County, through our [reasonable accommodations program](#), will make efforts to retain pregnant employees who need temporary modified duty in accordance with the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1987.

In addition, as required by the federal Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA), Catoosa County will provide reasonable accommodation for pregnancy, or any condition related to pregnancy, childbirth, or other medical conditions including but not limited to, lactation or the need to express breast milk for a nursing child.



You may request accommodation by submitting the request in writing to the Human Resources Director. The accommodation request should include an explanation of pregnancy-related limitations, the accommodation needed, and any alternative accommodation that may be reasonable.

The Human Resources Director will engage in an interactive process with you and your supervisor to determine a proper accommodation which may include, but is not limited to, job restructuring, reassignment, schedule changes, additional breaks, and the use of a private area shielded from coworkers and the public, other than a bathroom or toilet stall, to accommodate expression of breast milk.

Catoosa County will not retaliate, harass, discriminate, or take any adverse action because of your request for accommodation under the PWFA.

## **11.10 Family and Medical Leave**

### **Statement of Policy**

Pursuant to the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), you may be eligible to take up to 12 weeks (or up to 26 weeks of military caregiver leave) of unpaid leave during any 12-month period for one or more of the following reasons:

- The birth, adoption or placement of your child;
- The serious medical condition of your parent, spouse, or child;
- A serious health condition that makes you unable to perform the essential functions of your job, including qualified injuries or illnesses that existed prior to military active duty and were aggravated by service while on active duty in the Armed Forces;
- Qualifying exigency leave if you are the family member of a covered military member to address the most common issues that arise when a covered military member is on covered active duty or called to covered active duty; or
- Military caregiver leave if you are the spouse, child, parent, or next of kin of an injured or ill servicemember or veteran to care for the covered servicemember (if eligible, you are entitled to 26 workweeks of leave during a single 12-month period to care for a covered servicemember with a serious injury or illness.

### **Rolling 12-Month Period**

For purposes of this Section, a 12-month period means a rolling 12 months measured backward from the date you use any FMLA leave. If the policies set forth in this Handbook conflict with the FMLA as it presently exists or is amended, the provisions contained in the FMLA will control.

### **Eligibility**

You are eligible for FMLA leave if you have completed at least 12 months of service with the County and worked at least 1,250 hours for the County during the 12-month period immediately preceding the need for leave.



## Request for Leave

It is your responsibility to ensure the appropriate forms required by the Human Resources Department are submitted timely to request leave pursuant to the FMLA. Failure to submit required documentation within a reasonable period of time prior to the requested effective date of the leave when the reason for leave is foreseeable may result in denial of the request. Upon receipt of a request for leave and medical certification, as applicable, the Human Resources Department will respond in writing with approval or denial of the request within three workdays. Approval will specify the terms and conditions of the leave. A denial, in whole or in part, will specify the reasons for the denial and include a notice of the right to appeal, consistent with this Section.

## Concurrent Utilization of PTO

You are required to use all accrued PTO available concurrently with your FMLA leave period. If your available PTO is less than the FMLA leave period, additional weeks of leave will be without pay.

## Concurrent Workers' Compensation and FMLA Leave

If you qualify for workers' compensation leave, it will run concurrently with any FMLA leave.

## Intermittent Leave or Reduced Schedule Leave

Leave for childbirth, adoption, or foster care may not be taken intermittently or on a reduced schedule. Leave for a serious health condition for you or your family member may be taken on an intermittent or reduced schedule basis when medically necessary. Intermittent or reduced schedule leave will reduce the total amount of approved FMLA leave according to the actual number of hours of leave taken. For example, if you take 10 hours of leave intermittently over 20 business days, your available FMLA leave will be reduced by 10 hours and not 20 days.

If you request intermittent or reduced schedule leave that is foreseeable based on planned medical treatment, the Human Resources Director may require you to transfer temporarily to an available equivalent position for which you are qualified that better accommodates recurring periods of absence.

## Spouses Employed by the County

If you and your spouse are both employed by Catoosa County, the aggregate number of work weeks of leave to which you both are entitled may be limited to 12 workweeks during any 12-month rolling period, where leave is taken for childbirth, adoption, foster care, or to care for a sick family member.

## Foreseeable Leave

When the need for FMLA leave is foreseeable, you must provide written notice to the Human Resources Director no less than 30 days before the date the leave is to begin.

If the need for leave is due to planned medical treatment, you must make a reasonable effort to schedule the treatment so as not to disrupt unduly the County's operations, subject to the



approval of your health care provider. You must also provide the Human Resources Director with at least 30 days' notice before the date the leave is to begin, or as soon as practicable.

### Certification of Serious Health Conditions

If you request leave for your own or your family member's serious health condition, you may be required to submit certification from an appropriate health care provider to the Human Resources Department.

Certification for continuous leave is sufficient if it states:

- The date on which the serious health condition commenced;
- The probable duration of the treatment or condition;
- The appropriate medical facts within the health care provider's knowledge; and
- The estimated amount of time you need to care for yourself or your family member.

### Certification of Qualifying Exigency

Catoosa County requires certification of a qualifying exigency. You must respond to such a request within 15 days of the request or provide a reasonable explanation for the delay. Failure to provide certification may result in denial of leave. This certification will be provided using the United States Department of Labor Certification of Qualifying Exigency for Military Family Leave.

### Certification for Serious Injury or Illness of Covered Servicemember

Catoosa County requires certification for the serious injury or illness of a covered servicemember. You must respond to such a request within 15 days of the request or provide a reasonable explanation for the delay. Failure to provide certification may result in denial of leave. This certification will be provided using the United States Department of Labor Certification for Serious Injury or Illness of Covered Servicemember.

### Accruals and Benefits During FMLA Leave

If you are using PTO during periods of unpaid FMLA leave, your PTO accruals will continue. If you are on unpaid FMLA leave, PTO accruals will stop until you return to work. Any period of FMLA leave will be treated as continuous service for the purposes of vesting and eligibility to participate in pension or retirement plans.

FMLA leave is not counted as part of your working test period but will be added to the remaining working test period, extending the ending date of the working test period.

During any period of Leave, Catoosa County will maintain your active health insurance coverage for the duration of the FMLA-covered leave at the level and under the conditions that coverage would have been provided if you had continued in employment. If after the period of leave to which you are entitled has expired and you fail to return to work for a reason other than the continuation, recurrence, or onset of a serious health condition or other conditions beyond your control, Catoosa County may recover the premium(s) that the County paid for maintaining coverage.



During any period of Leave, Catoosa County will continue to make coverage for health insurance for dependents and other supplemental insurance available to you, provided however, that you pay all premiums owed on a monthly basis. Failure to pay such premiums on a timely basis each month will result in coverage for health insurance for dependents and supplemental insurance being terminated. You will be required to complete and sign a form with the Human Resources Director, identifying the premiums for which you are responsible prior to the commencement of leave.

### Appeals of Denials

If the Human Resources Department denies, in whole or in part, a request for FMLA leave, you may appeal that decision.

Any such appeal must be filed within three working days following receipt of the denial. The written notice of appeal must include the request for leave and all supporting documentation and must be provided to the Human Resources Director. The appeal must be filed with the County Manager who has the authority to amend or reverse the decision of the Human Resources Director. Failure to appeal within three working days will result in forfeiture of any further right of appeal of a denial.

The County Manager will review the record of the appeal and will, within five working days, issue a final determination. The decision of the County Manager, as applicable, is final.

### Return to Duty from FMLA Leave

Prior to returning from leave, you may be required to provide certification from your health care provider that you are able to resume work, with or without accommodation. Upon your return, you will be reinstated to your former position or a position of equal Grade and pay, provided that you have complied with the terms of the leave and returned at the agreed-upon time. While you will be reinstated without loss of employment benefits accrued prior to the leave start date, you have no greater rights than those in effect prior to the start of the leave. Reinstatement may be denied if your employment would have been terminated had you not taken leave.

## 11.11 Leave of Absence

If you have been employed by the County for at least one year, you may, upon written application to your Department Director and the Human Resources Director, take a continuous leave of absence (LOA) without pay, for no more than six months. You must submit an application for an LOA in writing to the applicable Department Director and Human Resources Director. The application should include your reason for requesting such leave, a statement that you intend to return to Catoosa County employment upon expiration of such leave, a statement that you will not otherwise become employed during the period of the leave, and a statement that you otherwise agree to the terms and conditions as outlined in this Handbook. Approval of a request for an LOA is within the sole discretion of the applicable Department Director, pending final approval by the County Manager. A notice of approval/denial of the request for an LOA will be



provided to you by the Human Resources Director and will contain the terms and conditions of the approval or reasons for denial.

During your approved LOA, your position may be filled on a temporary basis. At the expiration of the leave, you will be reinstated to your former position or to a position of equal Grade and pay without loss of any rights, provided you return within the terms of the leave granted and provided that such a position is available. Once an LOA is approved, you may request reinstatement earlier than the time for which the LOA was approved. Such request for early reinstatement may or may not be granted. In any event, you are not entitled to accrue any employment benefits during the period of the LOA. You will not be entitled to accrue PTO during the period of any LOA, and you will not be entitled to continued contributions to Catoosa County's Retirement plan. If you are on an approved LOA, you may retain your health insurance benefits if you continue to pay your portion of the premium costs at the time and in the manner required by the County. If you wish to continue health insurance coverage for any dependents during an LOA, you are responsible for making the requisite premium payments at the time and in the manner required by the County.

Upon LOA approval, you will be required to turn in all County equipment, including but not limited to identification badges, keys, phones, punch cards, and any other County documentation or property.

During your LOA, you may not hold any outside employment, and you will be immediately terminated from Catoosa County if you become employed during your LOA.

## **11.12 Voting Leave**

The County encourages you to vote in all local, state, and national primary and general elections for which you are qualified and registered to vote. Federal regulations provide for advance voting during the week prior to each election, and you are encouraged to take advantage of advance voting so the County is not overburdened with absences on Election Day. You may contact the Elections Department regarding the location of polls for purposes of advance voting.

You may, upon at least 24-hour prior notice to your supervisor, take necessary time off, up to two hours, without loss of pay to vote. However, if your hours of work commence at least two hours after the opening of the polls or end at least two hours prior to the closing of the polls, you are not entitled to any time off pursuant to this Section. For example, if voting polls are open from 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m., and you work from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., you are not eligible for voting leave. Any time off taken to vote pursuant to this Section must be approved by the applicable supervisor and will not be charged as PTO.

## **11.13 Request for Leave to Observe Religious Holidays**

You may submit a request to the applicable Department Director at least seven days in advance to be given priority consideration for time off to observe religious holidays that are not County-recognized holidays. Leave for such religious holidays will be charged as PTO. The County will not deny your request to observe religious holidays unless your duties are urgently required and you, in the judgment of the applicable Department Director, are the only person available who can



perform the duties. A request for time away from work to observe a religious holiday may also be denied if you do not have enough accrued PTO to accommodate the leave request or an undue hardship would in fact result from granting such request.

## **11.14 Paid Administrative Leave**

A Department Director, the County Manager, the Human Resources Director, or their respective designee, with notification to the Human Resources Director, may place you on paid Administrative Leave if you are being investigated by Catoosa County for possible misconduct, by a law enforcement agency for possible violation of a criminal law, or in any instance where it is considered to be in your or the County's best interest.

Administrative Leave is paid. Every effort will be made to complete the investigation within an initial 10-day period. At the expiration of the initial 10-day period, if the investigation has not been completed, the Administrative Leave may be extended for an additional 20 working days, upon written notification to the Human Resources Director by the official who initiated the Administrative Leave. At the conclusion of the 21-day period, if the investigation has not been concluded, an extension may be considered, or you may be terminated or reinstated.

The purpose of Administrative Leave is to provide an investigatory opportunity and/or to relieve you of your duties when it is deemed to be in your or the County's best interest. You will be notified of the conclusion of the Administrative Leave period in writing by the applicable supervisory official, and a copy will be provided to the Human Resources Director. Upon conclusion of the Administrative Leave period, and provided that no disciplinary action is taken as a result of the Administrative Leave period, documentation will be placed in your personnel file to reflect that the investigation concluded favorably for you.

## **11.15 Leave Due to County Office Closure**

In the event of hazardous weather or other occurrence resulting in the closure of the County offices as approved by the County Manager, if you are scheduled to work during the period for which the County is officially closed, you will be paid. If you are a full-time employee, you will receive closure pay according to hours worked in your regularly scheduled shifts. Part-time, temporary, and seasonal employees will be required to take leave without pay.

If there is questionable weather but the County is open for business, you should make your own independent safety determination concerning travel to work. If you elect not to attend work due to safety concerns when the County is open for business, your absence will be charged as PTO. If you do not have any PTO available, you will not be compensated. If you are a Public Safety and Fire Suppression employee, you are expected to monitor weather conditions and report to work as scheduled.

Certain positions require mandatory coverage because they provide a critical County service, such as Fire, Building Maintenance, and Public Works Departments. The Department Director may provide transportation to ensure proper staffing of services. All other Departments may be called in to assist in the case of emergency and will be compensated in accordance with the FLSA.



## 11.16 Bereavement Leave

You may take leave with pay in the event of a death in your immediate family. You may take up to three working days of bereavement leave, not to exceed 24 working hours for the death of your sibling-in-law, grandchild, grandparent, spouse's grandparent, child-in-law, aunt or uncle. You may take up to five working days, not to exceed 40 working hours for the death of your spouse, child, stepchild, parent, stepparent, parent-in-law, sibling, or any other relative who resides in your household. Bereavement leave will not be charged as PTO, even if you have been absent from work to care for the deceased family member pursuant to the [FMLA](#).

It is your responsibility to verbally request leave directly from your Department Director. Your Department Director may request supporting documentation to justify the amount of time that has been requested and approved, such as a funeral announcement.

## Section 12: Benefits

### 12.1 Benefits Overview

The County provides certain benefits to eligible employees. All benefits are subject to the specific terms, conditions, limitations, and eligibility requirements of each applicable benefit plan. This section of the Handbook provides only a brief description of certain County benefits. More details can be found in the plan-specific Summary Plan Descriptions and the Employee Benefit Guide, or you may contact the Human Resources Director for additional information. In cases where the Handbook and plan documents contain conflicting information, details in the plan documents should take precedence.

### 12.2 COBRA Continuation Coverage

The Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) requires group health plan sponsors to allow qualified beneficiaries, meaning you and your dependents enrolled at the time of the loss of coverage, access to continuation coverage in the event you lose your coverage eligibility for a qualifying life event. You will be notified within 30 days of your eligibility for COBRA continuation coverage.

### 12.3 Health Information Privacy Policy

The County sponsors group health plans that are subject to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Certain privacy regulations apply to protected health information (PHI) under HIPAA. PHI is defined as individually identifiable information received by the County's group health plan and created or received by a healthcare provider, health plan, life insurer, or healthcare clearinghouse. PHI includes information about health status, medical conditions, claims experience, medical history, genetic information, and evidence of insurability. PHI does not refer to certain health information relating to workers' compensation, short- or long-term disability, medical information received relating to the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), or



medical information received relating to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), or the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA).

### The County's Role in Accessing PHI

The County generally only processes enrollment, changes in enrollment, and payroll deductions for group health plans. To the extent we obtain HIPAA-covered PHI, we will maintain the information in confidence. Secure methods of communication, e.g., secure upload or secure email, will be used in the transmission of PHI. We may request summary health information for obtaining premium bids or for modifying, amending, or terminating a medical insurance plan. Summary health information includes claims history, claim expenses, or types of claims from which the following has been deleted: names; addresses; phone numbers; email addresses; social security numbers; plan beneficiary numbers; and any other identifying information.

We will not take retaliatory action against you for filing a complaint, assisting in an investigation, or opposing any act protected by HIPAA. If you violate this policy, you will be subject to the County's disciplinary process, up to and including termination of employment.

## Section 13: Workplace Harassment

### 13.1 Prohibited Harassment

#### Discriminatory Harassment

Catoosa County is committed to maintaining a work environment free of any and all harassment, including harassment based on a person's race, color, national origin, religion, sex/gender, disability, age, veteran status, citizenship, sexual orientation, genetic information, uniformed service status, gender identity, transgendered status, pregnancy (including childbirth, lactation, or related medical conditions) or other status protected by federal, state, or local law. To assist in preventing or eliminating any such unwelcome harassment, Catoosa County will not tolerate any form of harassment or unlawful discrimination by or against its employees, supervisors, and Department Directors.

All employees, supervisors, and Department Directors are expected to avoid any behavior or conduct that could reasonably be interpreted as harassment. Any form of harassment related to an individual's membership in a protected group is a violation of this Section and will be treated as a disciplinary matter. For purposes of this Section, the term "discriminatory harassment" may include but is not limited to any of the following:

- Offensive remarks, comments, jokes, or slurs pertaining to an individual's membership in a protected group;
- Offensive pictures, drawings, posters, photographs, reading materials, computer monitors, or other tangible items, or communications, including email, that are reasonably offensive or that reasonably exploit an individual's membership in a protected group;
- Threatening reprisals based on an employee's membership in a protected group; or



- Conduct that has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance and/or conduct that creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.

## Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is a form of harassment and will be treated in accordance with the express terms of this Section. Sexual harassment is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature when:

- Submission to such conduct is made, either explicitly or implicitly, a term or condition of employment;
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used, either in part or in full, as the basis for employment decisions; or
- The conduct has the purpose or the effect of unreasonably interfering with the individual's job performance or when such conduct creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

For purposes of this Section, the term "sexual harassment" may include but is not limited to any of the following:

- Sexual assaults, including rape and molestation, or attempts or threats to commit such acts;
- Unwanted intentional physical contact of a sexual or suggestive nature, such as touching, pinching, patting, grabbing, kissing, brushing, or poking of another person's body regardless of the gender of the individuals involved;
- Offensive sexual remarks, sexual advances or requests for sexual favors regardless of the gender of the individuals involved;
- Threatening reprisals for an employee's refusal to respond to requests for sexual favors;
- Disciplining or retaliating against any individual in any way because they have resisted, reported, or complained about sexual harassment;
- Preferential treatment, or the promise of preferential treatment, for engaging in sexual conduct;
- Offensive pictures, drawings, posters, reading materials, calendars, photographs or other physical objects, or communications, including email, that are sexually suggestive, sexually demeaning, or pornographic;
- Any conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance and/or conduct that creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment; or
- Suggesting or inferring to any employee, supervisor, Elected Official/Department Director (or applicant for any such position) that their employment, advancement, or treatment will be affected in any way by entering into (or refusing to enter into) any form of personal or sexual relationship.



## 13.2 Applicability

All employees, supervisors, and Department Directors are subject to the terms and provisions of this Section and are required to avoid any behavior or conduct that could be interpreted as discriminatory or sexual harassment as set forth above. All employees, supervisors, and Department Directors have a responsibility to inform an individual whenever their behavior is unwelcome, offensive, in poor taste, or inappropriate, and to report harassment as set forth herein. Anyone who experiences or observes any violation of this Section is required to report the violation prior to the end of the workday following the workday on which the violation was believed to occur.

## 13.3 Reporting Harassment

### Submitting Complaints

If you interpret an incident as a violation of this Section, you should bring it to your supervisor's attention or to the attention of the applicable Department Director or Human Resources Director, depending on to whomever you feel most comfortable reporting. If you have not personally experienced conduct prohibited by this Section, but believe that such conduct has occurred, you must report that information to the applicable Department Director or Human Resources Director.

### Investigation of Harassment Complaints

#### ***Timely and Confidential***

Incidents reported by anyone pursuant to this Section will be handled in a timely manner, and as confidentially as possible. Due to the nature of the investigation process, however, Catoosa County cannot guarantee confidentiality. Information reported by any individual pursuant to this Section will not be unnecessarily released to third parties or to any person not involved in the investigation or involved in the conduct forming the basis of the complaint. Upon conclusion of the investigation, any such information will only be released to the extent required by law. Individuals involved in the investigation are prohibited from discussing the complaint or investigation with any person outside of the investigation process. This provision is intended to protect the confidentiality of anyone who files a complaint, to encourage reporting of all incidents of harassment, and to ensure fair treatment of all parties involved.

#### ***Investigation by Duly Appointed Agent***

Upon receiving a complaint of harassment pursuant to this policy, Catoosa County will investigate the allegations. The investigation will be conducted by the Human Resources Director or Legal Department, unless an alternate arrangement has been made with the applicable Department Director. If the complaint involves an individual in the Human Resources Department, the investigation will be conducted by the County Manager or designee.

#### ***Intent Purpose of the Investigation***

The intent of the investigation is to obtain information about the events or conduct, to enable the person(s) named in the complaint to tell their side of the story, to determine whether harassment



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or discrimination has in fact occurred, and to develop an appropriate resolution. Anyone making a complaint pursuant to this Chapter may be asked to put the complaint in writing.

The person to whom the complaint is made, or those investigating the complaint may take notes during the conversation. All employees, supervisors, and Department Directors are expected to fully cooperate with any investigation. Failure to cooperate will be justification for disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

### ***No Reprisal***

Individuals will not be retaliated against for reporting a violation of this Section or for cooperating with an investigation; however, intentional or malicious false accusations of misconduct could have a serious effect on an individual who has been falsely accused. Individuals falsely accusing another of misconduct will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

### ***Proper Handling***

If, at any time, you feel that a complaint is not being handled properly, you should immediately contact the Human Resources Director, the County Manager, or the applicable Department Director.

## **13.4 Disciplinary Action**

Violation of any provision of this Section will subject the offender to disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination. Questions about what constitutes harassing behavior or what conduct is prohibited by this Section should be directed to the Human Resources Director.

# **Section 14: Drug and Alcohol-Free Workplace**

## **14.1 Statement of Policy**

Catoosa County is committed to maintaining a work environment free from the adverse impact of drug and alcohol abuse. Drug and alcohol abuse constitute a direct threat to the lives and property of the employees and citizens of the County and to public health, safety, and welfare.

Catoosa County does not and will not tolerate any possession, sale, distribution, consumption, or presence in the body of alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs while on County property and/or on County business at any time.

This Section is intended to comply with federal regulations and state laws that mandate pre-employment, reasonable suspicion, random, and post-accident testing of certain positions of employment, and to further the objective of protecting the persons and property of the County's employees, citizens, and the general public. This Section is strictly enforced. To the extent that this Section and any results from a fitness for duty test conflict, the most strenuous provision favoring a drug and alcohol-free workplace will govern.



## **14.2 Prohibition of Drug and Alcohol Use**

This Section applies to all employees and applies to off-site lunch periods or breaks when you are scheduled to return to work, as well as to County premises. Visitors, vendors, and contractors are governed by this Chapter to the extent they are on County Premises or in County vehicles and will not be permitted to conduct business if found to be in violation of this Chapter.

Substance and alcohol use by Catoosa County employees during assigned working hours on County Premises, or otherwise while on County business is prohibited. This includes the use of illegal substances, use of marijuana, abuse of prescription medications and over-the-counter medications, and the use of or abuse of alcohol.

For the purposes of this policy, County premises includes all property, facilities, land, platforms, buildings, structures, fixtures, installations, parking lots, and vehicles, whether leased or used by Catoosa County or its officials, managers, supervisors, employees, or other agents. This also includes locations other than County headquarters and offices, including all other locations of County-sponsored recreational, social, or educational events, and any place where you are located while traveling to or from such location in the course and scope of your duties on behalf of the County, including your own vehicle when you are using it on County business, or when the vehicle is parked on County property. This definition shall not be interpreted to imply that the County assumes or accepts responsibility for any wrongful, tortious, negligent, or criminal acts of any person whom it employs when such person is not acting in furtherance of the County's business, nor shall it constitute a waiver of any immunity which Catoosa County or its officials or employees might have under federal, state, or local laws or ordinances.

## **14.3 Impairment**

Drug and alcohol abuse on or off County Premises is entirely inconsistent with fitness for duty and will constitute an impairment. Catoosa County prohibits you from being at work, on County premises, operating County equipment, or operating any other equipment or vehicles on County business while impaired due to any illegal drug(s), legally obtained drug(s), or alcohol.

## **14.4 Prohibited Substances**

### **Illegal Drugs or Controlled Substances**

Illegal drugs or controlled substances means any drug or substance the law prohibits individuals from manufacturing, dispensing, using, consuming, possessing, distributing, purchasing, selling, or otherwise transferring, including, without limitation, all drugs listed as controlled substances under Title 16 of the Official Code of Georgia. This definition encompasses any measurable amount of any drugs or controlled substances such as amphetamines, cannabinoids, cocaine, phencyclidine (PCP), methadone, methaqualone, opiates, barbiturates, benzodiazepines, propoxyphene or other drugs made unlawful under federal or state laws It also includes a metabolite of any such substances, "look-alikes," "designer drugs" having the same or similar psychotropic effects, unauthorized alcoholic beverages, marijuana, hallucinogens (whether natural or synthetic), inhalants, unauthorized prescription drugs, or authorized drugs which are



not prescribed for a verifiable medical condition and/or are not used in strict accordance with this Chapter and with the prescribing physician's instructions. This definition also includes any other substances that are mood-altering, mind- or consciousness-affecting, or likely to have an effect upon a person's perceptions, sensations, thought processes, self-awareness, emotions, or other mental or physiological or psychological reactions or behavior. It also includes urinalid or other substances, natural or synthetic, of a similar nature or purpose designated or used to alter a urine specimen or to conceal illicit chemical substances or their metabolites in an initial screening test.

You are prohibited from manufacturing, dispensing, using, consuming, possessing, distributing, purchasing, selling, or otherwise transferring any illegal drug(s) or controlled substance(s) while on the job, on call, on County premises, operating County equipment or vehicles, or operating any other equipment or vehicle while on County business.

You are considered impaired due to the influence of illegal drug(s) or controlled substance(s) if your drug test results indicate the presence of an illegal drug or controlled substance in an amount that constitutes a positive test under accepted scientific standards.

### **Legally Obtained Drugs**

A legally obtained drug includes prescription drugs and over-the-counter drugs. A prescription drug means any substance that is attainable only by lawful prescription from a physician. Over-the-counter medication includes any substance that does not require a prescription, but which has the capacity to affect a person physically, mentally, or emotionally, or could otherwise affect a person's ability to perform.

You must not be on the job, on call, on County premises, operating County equipment or vehicles, or operating any other equipment or vehicle while on County business while impaired due to any drug, legal or illegal, that renders you unfit for duty. You are unfit for duty if, in the County's opinion, your use of legally obtained drugs jeopardizes your ability to work safely and efficiently. If you are using legally obtained drugs, you must notify your immediate supervisor of any symptoms and probable adverse side effects that may render you unfit for duty. Failure to notify the County constitutes grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. If medically required use of legally obtained drugs renders you unfit for duty and, in the opinion of the County, a temporary alternative job assignment is not available, you will be considered unfit for duty.

If you are using legally obtained drugs while on the job, you must do so in strict accordance with physician and/or manufacturer's directions. It is your responsibility to notify the prescribing physician of your required job duties and to ensure the physician approves the use of the prescription medication while you are performing your duties.

The abuse and/or inappropriate use of legally obtained drugs while on the job, on call, on County premises, while operating County equipment or vehicles, or while operating any other equipment or vehicle while on County business is prohibited and is a disciplinary matter. Job performance or attendance deficiencies resulting from abuse and/or inappropriate use are causes for disciplinary action.



## Alcohol

Alcohol includes any beverage or substance containing alcohol manufactured for the primary purpose of personal consumption. Catoosa County prohibits you from using, consuming, possessing, distributing, purchasing, selling, or otherwise transferring alcoholic beverages on the job, on call, on County premises, while operating County equipment or vehicles, or while operating any other equipment or vehicles while on County business.

You are prohibited from consuming alcohol while on the job, on call, on County Premises, while operating County equipment or vehicle, or while operating any other equipment or vehicle while on County business. In addition, you may not consume alcohol within four hours of reporting for duty. Violation of these provisions is prohibited and subjects you to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

You are prohibited from being on the job, on call, on County premises, operating County equipment or vehicles, or operating any other equipment or vehicles on County business while under the influence of alcohol. Under the influence of alcohol means if, based upon your speech, statements, behavior, conduct, appearance, or odor, the County reasonably believes you are under the influence of alcohol in a manner that is adversely affecting your behavior or if an evidential breath test indicates a result of 0.02 percent or higher. You are further considered under the influence of alcohol if you have been arrested for operating, under the influence of alcohol, any County equipment or vehicles, or any other equipment or vehicles while on County business.

## 14.5 Drug and Alcohol Testing

### Pre-Employment/Post-Offer Testing

All applicants for employment with Catoosa County will be tested for drugs after a conditional offer of employment has been accepted. Drug tests must also be performed on all seasonal and shift employees returning to employment with the County after six or more months. No such applicant, new hire, seasonal, or shift employee will be allowed to report to duty until the results of the drug test are obtained. If an individual refuses a pre-employment/post-offer drug test or tests positive, they will not be extended a final offer of employment and will not be considered for any subsequent employment for a period of at least two years. The individual will be afforded the opportunity to contest the test results as set forth in this Section.

### Random Testing

If you are required to hold a [commercial driver's license](#) (hereinafter referred to as "CDL" or "CDL positions" or positions governed under FMCSA Title 49 Transportation Part 382) or you are in a [safety sensitive position](#), you will be subject to random testing as follows:

- Tests will be ordered on a random, unannounced basis from the pool of identified CDL and safety sensitive employees.
- A random selection method and test rates, as adopted by the Human Resources Director, will be used to select employees, thereby allowing each employee an equal chance of being tested each month.



- Note, random selection test rates are subject to change as determined by the Human Resources Director or if applicable, as required by law under the FMCSA or FTA.
- All names will remain in the pool, even after being selected, so every employee has an equal chance of being tested each time selections are made; therefore, it is possible that a CDL or Safety Sensitive employee who is randomly selected for testing may be randomly selected again during the same year.

### After-Care Testing

If you are in a CDL or safety sensitive position and are returning to work from an approved treatment program for drug or alcohol abuse, you may be subject to unannounced testing at the discretion of the Department Director for a period of six months following your return to work.

### Return to Duty Testing

If you are absent from work for more than 30 days for any reason, you will be tested for drugs immediately upon returning to work and before performing any job duties.

### Position Testing

If you are transferred, reclassified, promoted, or demoted from a non-CDL/non-safety sensitive position into a CDL or safety sensitive position, you will be tested for drugs before performing any job duties in the new position.

### Reasonable Suspicion

You are subject to testing when there is reasonable suspicion that you have used drugs or misused alcohol in violation of this Section. If you are required to take a reasonable suspicion test, you will be immediately suspended without pay pending the results of the test and confirmation of the results, if applicable. If after confirmation from the MRO, the test results are reported as negative, you will be reinstated with back pay for the suspension period.

Any supervisor who has received training in the signs and symptoms of drug and alcohol use and impairment may require you to undergo a reasonable suspicion test(s) for drugs or alcohol. A reasonable suspicion test may be required based upon, but not limited to the following:

- The personal observation of your job performance, appearance, behavior, speech, or odor by the trained individual creating a reasonable suspicion that you have used drugs or alcohol in violation of this Section;
- Personal observation of you by another individual who has fully disclosed the observation to the trained supervisor;
- Observation of you by a nurse or physician engaged in the treatment or evaluation of a work-related injury who has disclosed such observations to the County; or
- Information from a law enforcement agency received by the County.



Additionally, any untrained supervisor may require a reasonable suspicion test(s) for drugs or alcohol when a trained supervisor or the Human Resources Director has reviewed the underlying facts and agrees that reasonable suspicion exists to require a test.

Specific and objective facts indicating drug or alcohol use may have caused or have been a contributing factor to an on-duty motor vehicle accident or an accident involving the use of heavy machinery will give rise to a reasonable suspicion test(s) for drugs or alcohol. The following facts, if present, may independently or collectively, depending upon the circumstances, give rise to reasonable suspicion:

- Your appearance, behavior, speech, or odor immediately prior to or after the accident;
- You left the scene or attempted to leave the accident scene without legal authority or permission to do so, failed to report the accident to the appropriate individual, or otherwise attempted to keep appropriate persons from learning about the accident or the extent of the accident;
- You acted contrary to a safety rule, established safety practice, or otherwise engaged in demonstrably unsafe behavior for which there is no reasonable explanation;
- You were arrested or received a traffic citation;
- You or any other person received medical attention as a result of the accident; and
- You have been involved, as a contributing factor, in a pattern of repetitive on-duty accidents regardless of whether they involved actual or potential injury.

Notwithstanding the foregoing factors indicating reasonable suspicion of drug or alcohol use due to involvement in an on-duty motor vehicle accident, the County will administer drug and alcohol tests to any and all employees involved in any accident on the job.

### Post-Accident Testing

Alcohol and drug tests must be completed within eight hours of an accident resulting in any of the events described below. This testing is to be performed in addition to any drug or alcohol test ordered by law enforcement authorities. It is the immediate supervisor's responsibility to ensure the individuals involved report immediately for testing. Failure to do so can result in disciplinary action taken against the supervisor and/or employee, up to and including immediate termination.

Drug and alcohol testing must be performed within policy guidelines when anyone, while operating a County vehicle, transit vehicle, or heavy machinery is involved in an accident that results in a fatality; a citation issued to the employee; an injured person requiring immediate medical treatment away from the scene; damage to County or personal property; or damage to a vehicle to the extent that it is towed away.

### Post-Workplace Injury Testing

Alcohol and drug tests should be completed within eight hours of any workplace injury. If you are involved, you must report immediately for testing or be subject to immediate termination.



## **14.6 Positions Subject to Testing**

### **CDL Employees**

If you are required to hold a CDL license for your job, you are subject to all testing provisions of this Section and will be tested based on procedures in compliance with the U.S. Department of Transportation's Transportation Workplace Drug and Alcohol Testing Programs regulations set forth in 49 CFR Part 40 (DOT Guidelines).

### **Safety Sensitive Employees**

As a safety sensitive employee, you occupy a position where a lapse of judgment or impaired physical or mental ability in performing any essential job function could reasonably result in a significant threat of harm to you, fellow employees, citizens, inmates, or others. Safety sensitive positions include but are not limited to those which, as a part of the essential job functions, require the performance of law enforcement duties as a POST-certified law enforcement officer; possession of a firearm; providing emergency medical, rescue, or fire suppression services; interacting with incarcerated persons or persons on probation for drug charges; direct involvement in the enforcement of drug laws; direct involvement, access to, handling of, or testing of illegal drugs that have been seized, confiscated by, or taken into custody by law enforcement; the performance of duties essential to drug interdiction; primarily operating motorized equipment, heavy machinery, or heavy equipment or the maintenance of motor vehicles, motorized equipment, heavy machinery, or heavy equipment and are not otherwise designated as a CDL position subject to DOT Guidelines; or the performance of duties which directly affect public health or safety, such as 911 communications dispatchers, 911 supervisors, and emergency management.

Safety sensitive employees are subject to all testing provisions of this Section and will be tested based upon procedures in compliance with DOT Guidelines.

### **All Employees**

You are subject to all testing provisions of this Section. If you do not hold a CDL or safety sensitive position, you will be drug tested via non-DOT drug testing guidelines.

### **Employees in Offices of Elected Officials**

If you work in the office of an elected official, you are subject to the testing provisions contained in this Section, unless the elected official has adopted a more stringent drug and alcohol workplace policy specific to their Department.

## **14.7 Procedures for Testing**

When a drug or alcohol test is to be performed under this Section, the Department Director or designee will be notified of the circumstances necessitating the test(s) as soon as possible.

Alcohol screening will be conducted using a federally approved evidential breath-testing device or the use of a swab/saliva test performed by an approved independent medical facility.



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All drug tests, regardless of the purpose for the test, will be performed as a panel test for the following drugs or classes of drugs: marijuana metabolites; cocaine metabolites; amphetamines; opiate metabolites; and phencyclidine (PCP). Additional testing in the opioid category includes hydrocodone, hydromorphone, oxycodone, and oxymorphone.

All drug tests are administered and accounted for by an approved laboratory and/or medical facility that operates in compliance with the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Testing involves an initial screening test(s) and confirmation of positive tests by gas chromatography/mass spectrometry (GC/MS) analysis. Tests will be certified, to the fullest extent possible under the circumstances, by a laboratory approved by the HHS.

All positive drug test results will be interpreted by a physician approved by the County as a medical review officer (MRO) before the results are reported to the County. The MRO will make reasonable efforts to contact you to allow you to offer an alternative medical explanation for the positive test result. If the MRO determines there is a legitimate medical explanation for the positive test, the result will be communicated as negative to the County. If the MRO is unable to contact you before providing test results to the County, this will not void the test results or make the results unusable in any subsequent disciplinary action. If you fail to respond to the MRO's inquiry within 48 hours, you will waive your opportunity to offer an alternative medical explanation for the positive test result or to request confirmation testing. This process is not applicable to alcohol testing.

Upon notification from the MRO of a confirmed positive drug test result, you may request, within five calendar days, that the remaining portion of your specimen undergoes a second confirmation test at your expense at an HHS laboratory of your choice. If the test conducted by the laboratory that you select is negative for the presence of drugs, a third test may be conducted at the County's expense at a separate HHS facility of its own choosing. The results of the third facility will be determinative. If the results from the third facility are negative, all prior positive tests will be disregarded and will not be the basis for any disciplinary or adverse action. This option of a confirmation test is contingent upon having enough of the specimen remaining to allow for a confirmation test.

The County will make reasonable efforts to notify you in writing of a positive drug test result within five days from the date it receives the results. Because the results of a breath alcohol test are immediately available, this provision will not apply to alcohol tests.

If it is not reasonable under the circumstances to conduct an alcohol breath test, the County reserves the right to test for the presence of drugs or alcohol by a blood test analysis. If this procedure is used, the County will make reasonable efforts to notify you of the results within 10 days after the results are received. An MRO will not review alcohol blood test results.

### **14.8 Consent for Testing**

Prior to date of hire, you will be provided with a form to consent to the frequency of drug and/or alcohol test(s) set forth in this Section and permit the release of test results to the County and/or



the MRO. Signed consent forms are kept on file by the Human Resources Department and are enforceable for the duration of employment.

If you are subject to and refuse to submit to drug and alcohol testing as required, you will be subject to termination. If you refuse to be escorted or fail to appear at the designated collection site to take the test as directed or required by this Section, you will be subject to termination.

Refusal can include an inability to provide a sufficient urine specimen, breath, or saliva sample without a valid medical explanation, as well as a verbal declaration, obstructive behavior, or physical absence resulting in the inability to conduct the test.

## **14.9 Arrests, Indictments, or Convictions for Drug or Alcohol-Related Offenses**

You must notify the County if you are arrested, indicted, and/or convicted of a violation of a criminal drug statute (including any drug or alcohol offenses under local, state, or federal law, or as enumerated in the Official Code of Georgia Annotated), whether the violation occurs in or outside the workplace or on or off duty, to your immediate supervisor or Department Director. This must be reported as soon as possible, but no later than 72 hours after such arrest, indictment, and/or conviction. The term conviction means a plea of guilty or a finding of guilt (including a plea of nolo contendere and regardless of treatment as a first offender under Georgia law), imposition of a sentence, or both, by any judicial body charged with a responsibility to determine violations of the federal or state criminal drug statutes. The County will determine whether the arrest, indictment, and/or conviction causes temporary or permanent disqualification from holding your position, or constitutes grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

## **14.10 Searches**

All County-issued equipment, property, and facilities, including but not limited to, desks, lockers, and vehicles (collectively "materials") are subject to inspection at any time and for any reason. You should have no expectation of privacy whatsoever in terms of any County-issued materials. No personal property may be searched unless the owner of the property has consented or a search is otherwise legally permissible. If you are asked to submit to a search and refuse, you may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

If a search uncovers evidence of wrongdoing, illegal activity, or violations of County rules or policies, the evidence may be used to support disciplinary actions up to and including termination of employment. In cases involving suspected illegal activities, the evidence may be turned over to the proper legal authorities.

## **14.11 Confidentiality**

All reports of test results for drug and alcohol, searches, or any referral to, or participation in an assistance program or treatment program for addictive disorders, will be maintained in strict confidence. Any person with authorized access to such confidential information and who, without authorization, discloses it to another person will have engaged in gross misconduct and be



subject to severe disciplinary action, up to and including, termination. The confidentiality of such information does not apply to any use by or communication to Catoosa County's attorneys, or where the information is relevant to the County's defense in an administrative or civil action. Such information may also be disclosed to the extent required by any federal, state, or local law, statute, ordinance, or regulation.

## **14.12 Disciplinary Action**

### **Immediate Suspension**

If you test positive for drugs or alcohol, you will immediately be relieved from duty, placed on suspension without pay, and sent home, pending disciplinary action. If the positive test is explained or negated by the MRO and/or subsequent confirmation testing, you will be reinstated with backpay and the suspension without pay will be expunged from your personnel file.

### **Immediate Termination**

The following reasons will result in immediate termination of employment:

- Manufacturing, dispensing, using, consuming, possessing, distributing, purchasing, or selling, or otherwise transferring an illegal drug(s) or controlled substance(s) while on the job, on call, on County Premises, while operating County equipment or vehicles, or while operating any other equipment or vehicles on County business.
- Operating County motorized equipment while unfit for duty due to the use of drugs and/or alcohol.
- Conviction for violation of any drug law.
- Refusing to consent to or to take a drug or alcohol test pursuant to this Section.
- Failure to appear at the designated collection site to take a drug or alcohol test when so directed or as required by this Section.
- A confirmed positive test for drugs or alcohol.

## **Section 15: Workplace Violence**

### **15.1 Statement of Policy**

The County is concerned about the wellbeing and personal safety of its employees and anyone doing business with the County. Acts of violence and/or threats of violence, whether expressed or implied, toward individuals in the County workplace, are prohibited and will not be tolerated. All reports of incidents will be taken seriously and will be addressed appropriately. This policy defines prohibited conduct, as well as general procedures and potential responsive steps in the unfortunate event that workplace violence occurs despite these preventive measures. In addition, unless otherwise permitted by law, firearms, weapons, ammunition, or explosives on County property is strictly prohibited.



## **15.2 Scope**

This prohibition against threats and acts of violence, including domestic violence, applies to all persons involved in the operation of the County, including but not limited to, County personnel, contract and temporary workers, and anyone else on County property.

## **15.3 Definition of Workplace Violence**

Workplace violence is any conduct that is severe, offensive, or intimidating enough to make an individual reasonably fear for their personal safety or the safety of family, friends, or property. Examples of workplace violence include but are not limited to threats, or acts of violence or behavior that causes a reasonable fear or intimidation response that occurs:

- On County premises, no matter what the relationship is between the County and the perpetrator or victim of the behavior; or
- Off County premises, where the perpetrator is acting as an employee or representative of the County at the time, where the victim is an employee who is exposed to the conduct because of work for the County, or where there is a reasonable basis for believing that violence may occur against the targeted employee or others in the workplace.

Examples of conduct that may be considered threats or acts of violence under this policy include but are not limited to the following:

- Threatening physical or aggressive contact directed toward another individual or engaging in behavior that causes a reasonable fear of such contact;
- Threatening an individual or their family, friends, associates or property with physical harm or behavior that causes a reasonable fear of such harm;
- Intentional destruction or threat of destruction of the County's or another's property;
- Harassing or threatening physical, verbal, written or electronic communications, including verbal statements, phone calls, emails, letters, faxes, website materials, diagrams or drawings, gestures, and any other form of communication that causes a reasonable fear or intimidation response in others;
- Stalking, which is defined as a pattern of conduct over time, however short, which evidences a continuity of purpose and includes physical presence, telephone calls, emails, and any other type of correspondence sent by any means;
- Veiled threats of physical harm or like intimidation or statements, in any form, that lead to a reasonable fear of harm or an intimidation response;
- Communicating an endorsement of the inappropriate use of firearms or weapons of any kind; or
- Unauthorized possession of weapons of any type. Weapons, include, but are not limited to:
  - Any weapon which, per applicable law, is illegal to possess or unauthorized to possess at a particular location;



- Any firearm, loaded or unloaded, assembled or disassembled, including pellet, BB, and stun guns;
- Knives (and other similar instruments) other than those present in the workplace for approved work purposes or for the specific purpose of food preparation and service;
- Any switchblade knife;
- Brass knuckles, metal knuckles, and similar weapons
- Bows, crossbows and arrows;
- Explosives and explosive devices, including fireworks, ammunition and/or incendiary devices;
- Throwing stars, nun chucks, clubs, saps, and any other item commonly used as, or primarily intended for use as a weapon;
- Self-defense chemical sprays (mace, pepper spray) in canisters or containers larger than two ounces, unless otherwise approved by the County Manager;
- Tasers, stun guns or any other electroshock weapon, unless otherwise approved by the County Manager; and
- Any object that has been modified to serve as, or has been employed as, a dangerous weapon, unless otherwise approved by the County Manager.

Domestic violence is defined as a pattern of coercive tactics carried out by an abuser against an intimate partner (the victim) with the goal of establishing and maintaining power and control over the victim. Where the abuser's tactics include any of the above-described conduct on County premises, this policy applies. Where such tactics include any of the above-described behaviors off County premises, this policy applies where the abuser is someone who is an employee or representative of the County at the time, where the victim is an employee who is exposed to the conduct because of work for the County, or where there is a reasonable basis for believing that violence may occur against the victim or others in the workplace. The term intimate partner includes people who are legally married to each other, people who were once married to each other, people who have had a child together, people who live together or who have lived together, and people who have or have had a dating or sexual relationship, including same sex couples.

## **15.4 Reporting Complaints**

If you observe the unauthorized possession of weapons on County premises, if you are subjected to or threatened with violence by a co-worker or member of the public, or if you become aware of another individual who has been subjected to or threatened with violence, you must report this information to your supervisor or the Human Resources Director immediately. Supervisors must report all potential violations to the Human Resources Director. Do not assume that any violation or threat is not serious. All complaints will be thoroughly investigated, and all complaints that are reported to management will be treated with as much confidentiality as possible. If you become angry, upset, or concerned with the actions of a co-worker, supervisor, member of the public, or the County in general, you are encouraged to seek assistance from the Human Resources Director.



Use your judgment to determine if a 911 call is appropriate. Under this policy, decisions may have to be made quickly to prevent a threat from being carried out, a violent act from occurring, or a life-threatening situation from developing. Nothing in this policy is intended to prevent quick action to stop or reduce the risk of harm to anyone, including requesting immediate assistance from law enforcement or emergency response resources.

Failure to report any threats or acts of violence in violation of this policy appropriately is a violation of this policy and may subject you to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Retaliation for reporting an actual or suspected violation of this policy in good faith will not be tolerated. Complaints about retaliation should be reported in the same manner as violations of this policy.

## **15.5 County Expectations for Workplace Safety**

### **Stay Away Orders/Orders of Protection**

The County reserves the right to seek orders of protection (also known as restraining orders or stay away orders) against any person who violates this Workplace Violence policy. Additionally, you may seek and obtain orders of protection against individuals outside of the workplace. If you seek an order of protection, you must immediately notify the Human Resources Director and your supervisor if an order of protection extends to the workplace; or you reasonably believe your safety (or the safety of others) in the workplace is affected by the order of protection. You should provide written notification of:

- The existence of any such order and provide a copy of the order;
- Any violations or attempted violations of the order;
- Any changes to the order that affect the workplace; and
- The order being lifted.

If you are subject to orders of protection requiring you to stay away from or refrain from contacting other individuals who are or may be in the workplace (including employees, customers, vendors, and others), you must immediately notify the Human Resources Director and provide a copy of the order.

Human Resources will contact the order of protection reporting party to gather information about the individual and assess the situation. The County will make every effort to maintain confidentiality of such orders with the understanding that it will use the information as necessary to maintain safety in the workplace.

## **15.6 Search Policy**

If the County reasonably suspects that you either have or may have violated this policy, or that you possess evidence that others pose a threat of workplace violence as defined by this policy, the County may request you to submit to a search of your person, personal effects, vehicles, and



locker. If you are asked to submit to a search and refuse, you will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

The County may conduct searches of any County property including but not limited to workstations and areas, desks, lockers, credenzas, file cabinets, computers and computer-stored information, voicemail, email, business records, County vehicles, and any other property or equipment owned by the County, at any time, without notice to or permission from affected employees, for purposes of enforcing the no violence policy.

Searches will be conducted by a supervisor with a second witness and may or may not be conducted in the presence of the person whose property is searched. Any weapons or evidence of violations of this policy will be confiscated, and may be turned over to law enforcement, as appropriate. Any illegal activity discovered during an inspection is subject to referral to the appropriate law enforcement authorities.

## Section 16: Dual Employment

### 16.1 Outside Employment

You may not engage in any outside employment, or private business during your working hours for the County, or outside of such hours if it affects the performance of your job for the County. All outside employment must be approved by your Department Director, with final approval or disapproval by the County Manager. Any approved outside employment must be reported in writing to the Human Resources Director prior to commencing the outside employment.

### 16.2 Holding Multiple Positions with the County

You may not hold more than one full-time position with Catoosa County. If you are considered part-time, you may work another part-time job with the express written approval from your applicable Department Directors and the County Manager or their designee, provided that the part-time jobs are different in scope and job duties and in different Departments. If you hold multiple positions, you will be paid at the rate of each respective position for the time spent working in that position. You must be exclusively committed to each job during the scheduled hours for the job respectively.

## Section 17: Standards of Conduct

### 17.1 General Conduct

You are covered by and subject to the Code of Ethics for Government Service (O.C.G.A. § 45-10-1). The [Code of Ethics for Government Service](#) is incorporated into Section 1.2 of this Handbook.



## 17.2 Political Activity

You are encouraged to exercise your right to vote. You are not authorized to use your government time or equipment to aid a political candidate, party, or cause, or use your government position to influence, coerce, or intimidate any person in the interest of a political candidate, party, or cause. You will not be hired, promoted, favored, or discriminated against because of your political opinions or affiliations.

### Seeking Elective Office

If you are seeking elective office within the County, you may, upon declaring candidacy, resign or submit a request in writing to the Board for a leave of absence without pay from the date of your announcement through the duration of the campaign or announcement of the election results. Such leave of absence will be requested, considered, and applied according to the [Leave of Absence policies](#) set forth in this Handbook. If elected to office, you will immediately, upon the swearing in date, be separated from County employment upon written request and approval of the County Manager.

Nothing in this section prevents you from fully exercising your rights to participate in political activities granted by federal or state law.

### Political Campaign Involvement

You may be involved in political activity that does not constitute a conflict of interest. However, you are strictly forbidden from engaging in election or political activities during your County working hours or with use of County equipment.

## Section 18: Use of Vehicles for County Business

### 18.1 Statement of Policy

You may be assigned a vehicle owned by, titled to, or otherwise under the control of Catoosa County. Such vehicles are authorized for use in the performance of essential travel and transportation duties consistent with the assignment by your Department Director and County Manager. Unless otherwise specifically provided by the Department Director and County Manager, use of a County vehicle is not authorized for unofficial travel duties or tasks or the transportation of unauthorized persons or items.

Any accident and/or injury that occurs while using a County vehicle must be reported to the Department Director and Human Resources Director as soon as possible. Upon review of an accident, the Human Resources Director will make a recommendation for disciplinary action, if necessary. More strenuous disciplinary action may be imposed by the Department Director and County Manager based on your overall employment record and any previous disciplinary actions.



## 18.2 Driver Responsibilities

If you operate a vehicle owned by, titled to, or otherwise controlled by the County, you are responsible for the proper care, use, and safety of the County vehicle. Moreover, you are required to meet the standards set forth in the Motor Vehicle Record (“MVR”) requirements as detailed below. To the extent that there is a conflict between this Section and the MVR requirements, the most strenuous provision will govern.

### Motor Vehicle Record

Every employee in a position that requires a valid driver’s license must have an MVR meeting the grading requirements as stated below. The MVR policy applies both to your use of County vehicles and when you use your personal vehicle in the course of your employment.

MVRs will be examined prior to your hire date and at least every two years thereafter, depending on availability of funds. You must submit your driver’s license every two years and authorize Catoosa County to obtain MVR information pertinent to verification of your driving history. Job offers requiring a valid driver’s license will be contingent upon the MVR meeting required standards. Continued employment with the County in a position requiring a valid driver’s license will require an MVR that meets each of the standards outlined below:

- You must have a valid driver’s license issued by the state in which you reside. If you relocate from another state, you must adhere to O.C.G.A § 40-5-20 in obtaining a timely transfer to a Georgia license. A copy of the new license must be submitted to the Human Resources Director.
- If a job requires a valid driver’s license, an applicant will not be hired if they have more than eight points on their license.
- You must always meet the insurability standards of Catoosa County’s current insurance carrier.

### Additional Requirements

If you operate a County vehicle, you must adhere to the following minimum responsibilities:

- Possess and maintain a valid driver’s license approved by the class appropriate for the vehicle;
- Obey all traffic laws and practice safe and courteous driving;
- Ensure vehicles are used for authorized purposes only;
- Report all accidents, no matter how trivial, to your Department Director immediately and submit a written report of the accident within 24 hours to the Human Resources Director;
- Accept legal responsibility for violations and fines resulting from your actions, including speeding and parking tickets;
- Follow drug and alcohol arrests and conviction reporting procedures;
- Do not use or allow passengers to use any form of tobacco or e-cigarettes inside County vehicles;



- Do not drive a County vehicle home if you live outside of Catoosa County unless otherwise approved by the County Manager.
- Do not alter the exterior or interior of a County vehicle in any manner, without the written approval of your Department Director and the County Manager.

If you misuse or abuse County vehicles, use the County vehicle for anything other than approved purposes, transport non-County employees except as expressly permitted by your Department Director and County Manager, or take a vehicle home when not approved by your Department Director and the County Manager, you will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

The County Manager has the express permission of the Board of Commissioners to take home their County-issued vehicle and to use the vehicle for any and all County business and for all uses enumerated in [Section 18.4](#).

### **18.3 Personal Vehicle**

You must make every effort to use a County vehicle whenever possible. Use of your personal vehicle in the performance of County business may be necessary.

If you use your personal vehicles for County business, you may be reimbursed on a per-mile driven basis at the rate determined by the Internal Revenue Service for that current period. Mileage for your commute between home and work does not qualify for reimbursement.

You must have prior approval from your Department Director to be eligible for travel reimbursement. You must maintain accurate and substantiated mileage records and submit them, along with the written authorization from your Department Director to the Finance Department for reimbursement.

The rate of reimbursement will be adjusted in accordance with the rate used by the Internal Revenue Service.

### **18.4 Authorized Use of County Vehicle**

Unless otherwise provided by your Department Director and the County Manager, the following constitutes authorized use of County vehicles:

- Transporting officials, employees, clients, or guests of the County;
- Performance of law enforcement duties;
- Between places of official business and temporary places of lodging as well as places to obtain meals or medical assistance during travel for the County;
- Transporting consultants, contractors, or commercial representatives when in the direct interest of the County;
- Transporting representatives from federal, state, or local government when in the direct interest of the County;



- Commuting between a place of dispatch or place of performance of official business to a personal residence when specifically authorized by your Department Director to do so;
- Transporting County recreation program participants only when authorized by your Department Director and the County Manager;
- For lunch or while on break from County business while on active service call or on active County business; or
- Transporting family members only when approved in advance by the County Manager.

## **18.5 Unauthorized Use of County Vehicle**

Unless specifically provided otherwise by your Department Director and the County Manager, the following are unauthorized uses of County vehicles:

- Traveling or performing a personal task not connected with official County business;
- Transporting family members without advance approval from the County Manager;
- Transporting friends, associates, or other persons who are not employees of the County or serving the interest of the County;
- Transporting items that have no relationship to the conduct of official business;
- Loaning the vehicle for use in non-County authorized functions, to persons that are not employed by the County, or to persons not authorized by the County to operate the County vehicle;
- Transporting acids, explosives, weapons, ammunition, or highly flammable material, except in the performance of an authorized task in the normal performance of duties; or
- Transporting an item, equipment, or cargo projecting from the side, front, or rear of the vehicle in an unsafe manner.

## **18.6 Seatbelt Use**

All drivers and passengers must use seatbelts in County vehicles and equipment and in personal vehicles when utilizing them for County business.

If you are provided a County-owned vehicle that is used in the course of your employment and that is available for your personal use, you and all passengers who occupy the vehicle at any time and for any purpose, are required to use seatbelts at all times when the vehicle is in motion.

Emergency Services Personnel are not required to wear seatbelts in the back of an ambulance while engaged in patient care.

Seatbelt use is enforced in the same manner and with the same enforcement standards as any other work rules. The driver of the vehicle is responsible for enforcing seatbelt use by all occupants.

Failure to follow this policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.



## 18.7 Cell Phone Use While Driving

You are expected to limit the use of cell phones while driving a County vehicle. You must use hands-free equipment when making or receiving calls to avoid distraction. You are not permitted to email, text, instant message, or browse the internet while driving, while stuck in traffic, or while stopped at a traffic light or stop sign.

House Bill 673 Hand-Free Georgia Act refers to distracted driving and prohibits you from:

- Holding or supporting in your lap or otherwise a cell phone, unless legally parked;
- Writing, reading, or sending text messages (even if someone else is holding the phone);
- Watching or recording a video; and
- Leaving your seat or driving position to retrieve a device.

Hands-free technology is the only acceptable use in a County vehicle. More information is available in HB673. You may also refer to department operating procedures regarding Public Service employees, especially as it relates to Public Safety employees and Transit Department employees.

# Section 19: Workplace Safety & Risk Management

## 19.1 Statement of Policy

Every employee is entitled to work under the safest possible conditions. The County will make every reasonable effort to provide and maintain a safe and healthy workplace, safe equipment, and proper materials. Department Directors are authorized to adopt and enforce safety rules and regulations applicable to the operation of their respective Department.

A copy of Department promulgated safety rules and regulations must be provided to the County Manager and will be maintained by the Human Resources Department. You are expected to comply with rules and regulations within your respective Department. You are obligated to make safety a priority, observe the rules of conduct and safety, and properly use safety equipment provided to you.

The County will:

- Provide the highest degree of safety and health possible for you and the general public;
- Preserve and protect County property and that of the general public;
- Hold Department Heads responsible for implementing all phases of the County Risk Management Program;
- Identify hazardous working conditions and take prompt corrective action to eliminate such conditions;
- Provide and maintain ongoing safety training and education to train and educate you to the extent necessary to ensure you can perform your duties economically, efficiently, and safely;



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- Comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws, rules and regulations, and policies;
- Improve communications by requiring regular safety meetings;
- Maintain current County safety and health policies, making changes when necessary;
- Require periodic and follow-up safety inspections of all work locations;
- Institute equitable disciplinary measures for violations of prescribed safety and health requirements and ensure these measures are applied in a consistent manner;
- Assure all aspects of the Risk Management Program function in the prescribed manner; and
- Minimize accident, incident, and personal injury rates by requiring investigations to ensure any safety or health concerns are addressed promptly.

### 19.2 Responsibilities

The most effective prevention measures are those formulated at each level or organization, thoroughly discussed and coordinated by all concerned, and unreservedly supported by top management.

A Safety Coordinator identified within each Department will help facilitate the exchange of ideas between Risk Management, supervisory personnel, and employees, and ensure general understanding of policies and procedures governing accident, incident, and injury prevention. Safety is a function of management at all levels.

#### County Board of Commissioners

The County Board of Commissioners supports County-wide safety and loss control programs and the County's Risk Management Policy, including but not limited to the [Return-to-Work Policy](#) as outlined in this Section.

#### County Manager

The County Manager ensures County compliance and adherence to established safety policies and procedures adopted by the Board of Commissioners.

#### County Administration

The Catoosa County Senior Leadership Team (also referred to as "County Administration"), consisting of the County Manager, the Chief Financial Officer, and all Department Heads, are tasked with ensuring that Departments within their reporting structure comply and adhere to established policy and procedures.

#### Risk & Safety Manager

The Risk & Safety Manager will support the County's policy and oversee all activities related to the Risk Management Program, obtaining required approval from the pertinent member of County Administration when necessary.

#### Safety Coordinators

Each Safety Coordinator will:



- Organize and hold meetings within their Department to discuss a safety topic, record the topic of the meeting and employees in attendance, and send the record to Risk Management; and
- Keep an open dialogue between Risk Management and the Department Head regarding safety concerns and safety initiatives.

## Department Heads

Each Department Head will:

- Maintain safe and healthy working conditions within their Department functions whether out in the field or in the office;
- Ensure minimal injuries, accidents, liabilities, and waste of materials within their Department;
- Provide leadership and positive direction essential in maintaining effective accident prevention by setting proper examples;
- Ensure all personnel under their direction comply with all safety and health requirements through regular surprise safety audits;
- Ensure Department Heads and supervisors conduct new employee safety orientation, including but not limited to newly reclassified employees, prior to allowing the employee to work;
- Support and participate in safety training related to supporting the County's and Department's goals in loss prevention;
- Work with supervisors in developing, maintaining, and updating work safety policies and requirements essential to that Department, and require those policies and requirements to be posted in the office;
- Maintain an Infection Control Plan specific to their Department and developed in the format described in [Appendix A](#);
- Ensure regular Departmental safety meetings are held and attended by all levels of personnel under their direction to review Departmental accidents, incidents, and personal injuries and to discuss plans for a more positive prevention program;
- Halt any operation or activity determined by the Department Head to be hazardous to employees or the general public;
- Ensure Departmental safety and health inspections are conducted;
- Ensure a review of all accidents, incidents, and personal injuries with the involved employee are conducted to evaluate the potential cause and an appropriate solution; and
- Report the results of the review to Risk Management within 48 hours of the date of the accident, incident, or personal injury, or as otherwise approved by Risk Management.

## Supervisors

Each supervisor will:

- Assume responsibility for safe and healthy working areas through regular inspections and safety audits;



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- Ensure employees under their supervision are fully trained to perform their assigned jobs, which may require demonstration, observation, and practice;
- Ensure employees under their supervision read all published safety rules and certify in writing that they understand compliance is required;
- Ensure all safety policies are implemented for maximum efficiency of each job and the wellbeing of each employee;
- Take initiative to recommend correction of deficiencies noted in facilities, work procedure, job knowledge, and attitudes that adversely affect County safety and loss control efforts;
- Contact each employee directly under their supervision to review safe practices, procedures, and safety rules on a regular basis;
- Be firm and impartial in the enforcement of safety policies;
- Be accountable for losses, injuries, and other work interruptions under their supervision and reporting such information as required;
- Fully cooperate with Department Heads, Risk Management, and other responsible supervisory personnel in discontinuing hazardous activities or operations which pose an immediate danger to employees, County property and/or the general public until such times as the operation can be completed safely; and
- Obtain a written list of relevant medications when notified by an employee whose position affects public safety that the medication may impair their ability to perform essential functions and notify the Human Resources Director of such information.

### Employees

Each employee will:

- Follow written and oral safety requirements to prevent injuries to yourself, your coworkers, and/or the general public, and to prevent damage to County and/or private property;
- Always maintain an alert and businesslike attitude;
- Report all incidents or accidents resulting in personal injury or property loss, regardless of how trivial, to your immediate supervisor as soon as the incident or accident occurs;
- Avoid participating in any horseplay or practical jokes;
- Keep work areas clean and orderly;
- Immediately report any condition you reasonably know or should know to be unsafe to your supervisor;
- Obey all federal, state, and local safety requirements;
- Stop and get instructions or assistance from your supervisor before continuing work if any doubt exists about the safety of completing a task;
- Wear any prescribed protective equipment;
- Operate only machinery or equipment which you are trained and authorized to operate;
- Use proper tools and equipment for the job;
- Lift and handle materials properly;
- Dress safely and sensibly for your job;
- Take an active part in the County's safety program; and



- Inform your supervisor when taking medication which may impair your physical or mental alertness and/or ability to perform your job safely.

## **19.3 Safety Inspections**

### **Authority to Inspect**

Risk Management is authorized to enter, inspect, and investigate, at any time, any County work site or County-owned or maintained establishment to ensure compliance with all safety requirements. This authority may be delegated to a Safety Coordinator within the Department or designee.

### **Procedures**

Safety Inspections may vary in type and frequency. They may be conducted on an area basis, an entire shop basis, or on a specific operation basis. The following depicts some, but not all, of the types of inspections that may be conducted.

#### ***Functional Safety Inspections***

Sometimes called an activity inspection, these are conducted regularly and frequently by a supervisor or may be delegated to another employee. This inspection is completed at the site of the activity and will result in a written and signed report or checklist and corrective action as necessary. Each Department will develop checklists specific to their facility and equipment.

#### ***Formal or Periodic Self Inspection (Audit)***

This inspection goes beyond the identification of unsafe conditions and unsafe acts and reviews management involvement in the unsafe condition or act. This inspection includes review of Departmental support, policies and requirements, training, purchasing, accident investigation and corrective actions, and internal inspections. This inspection is normally conducted by a special team headed by Risk Management as needed and at the request of County Administration. It typically results in a written report and recommendations. A follow-up inspection may be conducted to ensure recommendations have been implemented.

#### ***Spot Inspections***

Spot inspections are normally completed on an as-needed basis when one or more of the following events occur:

- Imminent danger;
- As part of an accident investigation;
- Adverse accident trend;
- A new operation or one of special interest;
- Special equipment;
- High hazard operation (trenching, confined space entry, etc.); and/or
- Request from a supervisor or Department Head.

Usually, this inspection is completed during an unannounced visit, and as a result the inspector can see working conditions as they are on an average workday. This inspection does not normally



require a written report unless conditions indicate otherwise. All spot inspections will be logged with the date, location, person contacted, type of operations, and unfavorable conditions noted.

### Safety Deficiency Notice

Safety deficiencies must be documented when any unsafe condition or act is noted, and the documentation describing the condition or act should be submitted to the Risk Manager.

## 19.4 Accident/Incident Reporting Procedures

Timely reporting of any incident, accident, or personal injury is mandatory. Ensuring full benefits and reasonable liability adjustments at the lowest cost to the County depends on proper reporting.

### Procedures for Reporting Personal Injuries

**In immediate emergency situations, call 911.**

If you have an on-the-job personal injury, you must:

- Report it immediately to your supervisor;
- If necessary, report to the appropriate medical treatment facility (using the panel of physicians for Workers' Compensation), and ensure all follow-up medical treatments are completed; and
- Complete the First Report of Injury Form, Statement of Accident, and Treatment Refusal (if no immediate treatment is sought), which are all part of the Injury Packet.

If you are a supervisor receiving a report of an on-the-job personal injury, you must:

- Seek medical attention, if needed, for the employee and, if medical attention is sought, ensure proper drug testing procedures occur as required in the [Drug Testing Policy](#);
- Complete the Injury Packet and promptly submit it to the Department Head for review and submission to Risk Management; and
- Investigate the circumstances which caused the injury and recommend appropriate corrective measures to eliminate the hazard and prevent future occurrences, ensuring such findings and recommendations are documented in the Supervisor Report.

The Department Head will:

- Review all reports completed for the Department related to the personal injury for accuracy and completion;
- Deliver the original copy of such reports to Risk Management within 48 hours of the date of the injury or as otherwise approved by Risk Management; and
- Review injury reports and forward them to Risk Management for further review and investigation.



## Procedures for Reporting Accidents/Incidents Involving Motor Vehicle or Special Mobile Equipment

If you are involved in an accident or incident while in a County motor vehicle, while using County special mobile equipment, or when using your personal vehicle for work purposes, you must:

- Notify the appropriate local law enforcement agency;
- Notify your supervisor;
- Complete the Statement of Accident/Incident; and
- If applicable, report immediately to a drug testing facility for post-accident drug testing (as covered in the [Drug Testing Policy](#)).

If you are a supervisor and learn that one of your employees has been involved in a motor vehicle accident or incident while on the job, in a County vehicle, or while using special mobile equipment, you must:

- Ensure the employee reports immediately to a drug testing facility for post-accident drug testing (as covered in the [Drug Testing Policy](#));
- Complete the Accident/Incident Packet;
- Investigate the circumstances which caused the accident or incident and recommend appropriate corrective measures to eliminate the hazard and prevent future occurrences, ensuring such findings and recommendations are documented in the Supervisor Report; and
- Ensure any County-owned motor vehicle or special mobile equipment involved is taken to Fleet Maintenance or an approved repair shop for assessment, photos, and repair evaluation.

The Department Head, upon learning that an employee in their Department has been involved in a motor vehicle or special mobile equipment accident or incident, will:

- Review all reports related to the motor vehicle special mobile equipment accident or incident for accuracy and completion; and
- Ensure an original copy of the Traffic Accident/Incident Packet is delivered to Risk Management within 48 hours of the date of the accident or incident, or as otherwise approved by Risk Management.

## 19.5 Evaluation of Accidents, Incidents and Personal Injuries

### Evaluation and Record Maintenance

Risk Management will evaluate and categorize events as accidents, incidents, and/or personal injuries. Risk Management will maintain records related to all such accidents, incidents, and personal injuries.



## Disciplinary Action

### **Accidents**

Accidents are reviewed by the Department Director, Risk Management, and County Administration to determine whether the event was avoidable or unavoidable and will recommend appropriate disciplinary action.

### **Incidents**

Disciplinary action for incidents is handled at the Department level.

## 19.6 Return to Work

This return-to-work policy and procedure applies to employees with work-related injuries and illnesses who are unable, temporarily or permanently, to return to their usual job duties.

Because Catoosa County recognizes that you are a valued and limited resource, this program is designed to:

- Assist you in the medical recovery process by providing a focus and a goal for returning to your usual job duties;
- Benefit you by allowing you to return to full wages as soon as possible; and
- Benefit the County by reducing workers' compensation costs.

### Process

Catoosa County will seek to make return-to-work opportunities available as soon as medically reasonable through transitional employment if you are temporarily disabled due to an on-the-job injury. Transitional employment opportunities will be considered in all Departments, not just the Department in which you were working before the injury or illness occurred.

Catoosa County, through its reasonable accommodation program, will make efforts to retain you if you are permanently disabled.

## Section 20: Dress Code

### 20.1 Statement of Policy

You are required to have a neat and professional appearance that reflects well upon the County. Body piercings are not allowed if they present a safety issue, at the discretion of the Department Director and/or the County Manager. The dress code applies to all on-site and off-site functions at which you are acting as a representative or are present on behalf of the County. To the extent that a particular Department Director adopts a more strenuous dress code than that set forth in this Section, the more strenuous Departmental dress code will apply.



## 20.2 Employees With Uniforms

The County may provide you with a uniform as required, if you work outside the office at least three days of the week and are likely to come into elements that could damage, stain, or otherwise harm your personal clothing, or when uniforms are needed for your protection and/or identification. You are prohibited from modifying your uniform. You must always wear your uniform when on duty and your uniform must be kept clean and neat. The uniform must clearly identify you as an employee of Catoosa County and the Department that you work for; if the uniform does not have the required identification imprinted, you must wear the laminated identification tag provided by the County. Jeans may be allowed for field personnel in lieu of uniform pants upon approval by your Department Director. If allowed, jeans must be kept clean and in good condition.

You may not wear a County uniform or any garment denoting the County, Department, or entity of any sort at an off-site, non-job-related establishment or function, or any other establishment that is deemed unbecoming to the image of the County.

Upon separation of employment with the County, you must return your uniform(s) to the County and/or reimburse the County for any uniform(s) lost or not returned to the County. If you fail to return your uniform(s) as required by this Section, the cost of the uniform(s) will be deducted from your final paycheck.

## 20.3 Employees Without Uniforms

### Appropriate Attire

- If you are not required to wear a uniform, acceptable attire includes:
  - Slacks;
  - Chinos or khakis;
  - Collared shirts, blouses, or sweaters;
  - Suits, blazers, or sport coats;
  - Dresses or skirts no more than 3" above the knee;
  - Appropriate footwear according to the type of work performed, keeping safety, comfort, and professional appearance in mind; and
  - On specific projects, as assigned, and in conjunction with Section 19.5, jeans without frays, holes, tears, patches, etc.

### Inappropriate Attire

Inappropriate attire includes:

- Clothing that is sheer, see-through, or exposes excessive skin;
- Clothing that exposes the chest, back, and/or midriff (including when standing, sitting, stooping, while arms are extended over the head, or while bending over), or that reveals undergarments;
- Athletic clothes including sweats, warm-ups, or workout clothing;



- Spandex or Lycra clothing, when not worn in layers (i.e. biker shorts/pants/body suits);
- Flip flops are not allowed;
- Hats or caps (unless they are issued as part of a County uniform or approved by the County Department Head);
- Shorts or cut-offs;
- Midriffs, crop tops, tank tops, tube tops, halter tops, and tops with spaghetti straps;
- Clothing that is excessively tight or loose fitting;
- Clothing and jewelry that pose a safety hazard within specific working environments;
- Bedroom shoes/slippers;
- Frayed dirty, or wrinkled clothing; or
- Clothing with vulgar or obscene words, logos for alcoholic beverages, or images that are sexually offensive, contain profanity, or are otherwise indecent.

## **20.4 Personal Grooming, Accessories, and Use of Fragrances**

Good personal hygiene is expected. Your clothing should be clean, neat, and well kept (no holes, tears, patches, fading, or frayed areas). Facial hair should be clean and neatly trimmed. Due to allergies and chemical sensitivities, fragrances, if used, must be mild. Citizens and others visiting County buildings and other employees may be allergic or sensitive to perfumes, colognes, or other fragrant products.

## **20.5 Casual Day**

Catoosa County has designated each Friday to be casual day. However, other days may be designated as a casual day by the County Manager. Each Department Director should use their good judgment in determining appropriate attire for casual days.

## **20.6 Compliance**

Dressing appropriately is a condition of employment with the County. Failure to adhere to the dress code will be addressed as a policy violation. Repeated or obvious violations of this policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. The County reserves the right to require you to leave work to change into appropriate clothing at its discretion. Any time spent away from work will be unpaid.

You are expected to comply with the above standards and should not put your supervisor in the position of having to police attire. If you have any doubt regarding whether an aspect of attire is appropriate, you should assume it is not. If you have questions about what is appropriate for your position, contact your supervisor or the Department Head.

The County reserves the right to interpret what is acceptable in the matter of overall appearance, and to interpret and apply this policy to other aspects of appearance not specifically covered in this policy.



## Section 21: Tardiness and Absenteeism

### 21.1 Applicability

You are subject to the tardiness and absenteeism provisions contained in this Section, unless the Department Director has adopted a more stringent tardiness and absenteeism policy specific to your Department.

### 21.2 Tardiness

You are expected to report to work at your scheduled start time. For attendance purposes, a punch made after your scheduled start time or before your scheduled finish time will be noted as a late arrival or early departure, respectively, and you may be subject to disciplinary action.

Occasional excused late arrivals may be permitted with pre-approval by the appropriate supervisor as designated by the Department Director. If you are tardy or request excused late arrivals on a recurrent basis, you will be subject to disciplinary action. You are required to speak directly with your supervisor regarding unforeseen tardiness. Such notification does not release the employee from disciplinary action.

### 21.3 Absenteeism

You are expected to report to work on your established workdays. You are not entitled to be absent from work and seek approval for that absence as leave without pay. Such an absence will be unexcused and a matter of disciplinary action, unless you experience extenuating circumstances and provide a written statement by a licensed physician or dentist, certifying to the satisfaction of the Department Director that your condition prevented you from performing your job duties.

This Section applies to intermittent absences from work and does not affect your right to seek a continuous leave of absence without pay as set forth in [Section 11.11](#).

## Section 22: Internet and Use of County Property

### 22.1 County Property

All supplies, equipment, computers, desks, information, and any other material obtained and used during the course of employment are property exclusively owned by Catoosa County (hereinafter collectively referred to as "County Property"). As a result, you should have no expectation of privacy with respect to County Property.

### 22.2 Phone Use

You are expected to use judgment and discretion and limit personal local phone calls from the workplace and when using a County cellphone. You may be responsible for any additional mobile service charges (e.g., texting, data usage, and use of minutes beyond plan limits) assessed on



County issued devices if such usage is not approved by the Department Director and/or County Manager. Personal long-distance phone calls, if incurring additional charges, are not permitted on any County phone. Failure to comply with this Section may result in disciplinary action.

## **22.3 Cell Phones**

County cell phones are provided to key individuals for the purpose of ensuring accessibility and enhancing individual efficiencies in handling County business. Cell phones are not a personal benefit and are not intended for use as a primary mode of personal communication. Use of mobile devices and/or cell phones while operating a vehicle is dangerous and can result in an accident. To that extent, you are expected to abide by the following rules:

- Use hands-free equipment to avoid distractions when driving;
- Only access mobile devices and/or cell phones when parked whenever possible;
- Keep conversations to a minimum;
- Never use a mobile device or cell phone during hazardous driving conditions or situations;
- Do not take notes or look up phone numbers while driving;
- Dial or place calls or send messages before starting a trip and/or when the vehicle is not moving;
- Avoid engaging in stressful or emotional conversations while driving as it is distracting and potentially dangerous; and
- Emailing, texting, instant messaging, or internet usage is prohibited while driving or stopped at a traffic light or stop sign and should be done while the vehicle is parked in a safe area, dependent upon traffic and weather conditions.

Department Directors have the authority to restrict or prohibit the use of any mobile device, County supplied or personal, at any time while you are on the job if they determine that use of a mobile device presents a safety hazard or distracts from the duties of your job.

Use of personal cell phones should be limited to emergencies only. Excessive use of a personal cell phone while on County duty may result in disciplinary action.

## **22.4 Qualifying for County-Issued Cell Phones**

### **Establishing New Service**

You may qualify for a County-owned cell phone only if the Department Director has determined it to be required for the performance of your job.

### **After-Hour Usage**

Use of County-owned cellular phones for personal business during non-shift periods is prohibited.

### **Responsibilities**

Cell phones are to be used only by the individual to whom they are issued. Discretion should be used in relaying information via cell transmission, as this is not a secure method of communication.



You are responsible for the safekeeping, care, and custody of your County-issued cell phone. You must take reasonable precautions to prevent equipment theft, vandalism, and damage.

Cell phones that are no longer necessary for fulfillment of your job must be returned to the Department Director or Human Resources Director so service can be terminated.

## **22.5 Communication Systems**

The County provides a variety of channels for communication to promote the efficient operation of its business. These communication systems include, but are not limited to, voicemail, email, fax, computer networks, computers (including laptops, desktops, and tablets), internet connections, online services, computer files, phone systems, cell phones, and pagers. All information and emails transmitted by, received from, or stored in these systems are the sole property of Catoosa County and you should have no expectation of privacy when using these tools and systems.

All County communications systems are intended for business use only and must not be used in a way that may be considered disruptive, inappropriate, harassing, threatening, or offensive to others. You are specifically prohibited from transmitting, forwarding, downloading, or receiving offensive or pornographic materials and messages. The County's communication systems may not be used to send or to receive copyrighted materials, trade secrets, proprietary financial information, or similar materials without prior authorization. Failure to comply with these provisions will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

## **22.6 Specifics on Computer and Network Usage**

### **Responsible Use of Resources**

You are responsible for knowing what information resources (including networks) are available, remembering that the members of the community share them, and refraining from all acts that waste or prevent others from using these resources or from using them in the ways prescribed by the Catoosa County Board of Commissioners and federal, state, and local law.

### **Use of Computer Devices**

You are responsible, in coordination with your Department Director, for the security and integrity of Catoosa County information stored on your computer devices. This responsibility includes regular backups and controlling physical and network access to the machine. Do not store passwords or other information that can be used to gain access to other government computing resources.

### **Access to Facilities and Information**

#### **Sharing of Access**

Computer accounts, passwords, and other types of authorization are assigned to individual users and must not be shared with others. You are responsible for any use of your account.



### ***Permitting Unauthorized Access***

You may not run or otherwise configure software or hardware to intentionally allow access by unauthorized users. Remote access by vendors is permitted solely with prior authorization; however, any application utilized for this purpose shall be restricted to operation exclusively during the period in which the vendor is actively accessing the computer.

### ***Use of Privileged Access***

Special access to information or other special computing privileges are to be used in performance of official duties only. Information that you obtain through special privileges is to be treated as private.

### ***Termination of Access***

When you cease being a member of the government community, or if you are assigned a new position and/or responsibilities within the County, your access authorization must be reviewed. You must not use facilities, accounts, access codes, privileges, or information for which you are not authorized in your new circumstances.

### ***Attempts to Circumvent Security***

You are prohibited from attempting to circumvent or subvert any system's security measures. This Section does not prohibit the use of security tools by system administration personnel.

### ***Decoding Access Control Information***

You are prohibited from using any computer program or device to intercept or decode passwords or similar access control information.

### ***Denial of Service***

Deliberate attempts to degrade the performance of a computer system or network or to deprive authorized personnel of resources or access to any Catoosa County computer system or network are prohibited.

### ***Harmful Activities***

You are prohibited from creating or propagating viruses; disrupting services; damaging files; intentional destruction of or damage to equipment, software, or data belonging to Catoosa County or other users; and other similar activities.

### ***Unauthorized Monitoring***

You may not use computing resources for unauthorized monitoring of electronic communications.

### ***Ethical Use***

You should always use computing resources in accordance with high ethical standards and in compliance with federal, state, and local law.



### ***Use of Copyrighted Information and Materials***

You are prohibited from using, inspecting, copying, and storing copyrighted computer programs and other material, in violation of copyright.

### ***Use of Licensed Software***

No software may be installed, copied, or used on Catoosa County resources except as permitted by the owner of the software. Software subject to licensing must be properly licensed and all license provisions (installation, use, copying, number of simultaneous users, term of license, etc.) must be strictly adhered to. All new software installations must be approved in advance by the County's designated network and computing personnel.

### ***Political Campaigning; Commercial Advertising***

The use of system materials, supplies, equipment, machinery, or vehicles in political campaigns is forbidden. Political campaigns and commercial advertisements may not be displayed on government property.

### ***Personal Business***

Computing facilities, services, and networks may not be used in connection with compensated outside work or for the benefit of organizations not related to the business of the County. Any other incidental use (such as electronic communications or storing data on single-user machines) must not interfere with other users' access to resources (computer cycles, network bandwidth, disk space, printers, etc.). State law restricts the use of state facilities for personal gain or benefit.

## **22.7 Management Information Services Policies**

The County's IT Director is authorized to oversee and manage all County communication systems. To facilitate that role, the County's IT Director may create additional and detailed policies consistent with this Section, and you are expected to comply with all such policies. A copy of any such policies will be provided to the County Manager and maintained by the Human Resources Director.

The IT Director will immediately report suspected violations of this Section to the County Manager.

## **22.8 Acceptable Technology Usage**

This Acceptable Usage Policy covers the security and use of all Catoosa County information and IT equipment. It also includes the use of email, internet, voice, and mobile IT equipment. This policy applies to all Catoosa County employees, contractors, and agents.

This policy applies to all information, in whatever form, relating to Catoosa County business activities worldwide, and to all information handled by Catoosa County relating to other organizations with whom it deals. It also covers all IT and information communications facilities operated by Catoosa County or on its behalf.



## Computer Access Control

Access to the Catoosa County Government IT systems is controlled using user IDs, passwords, and/or tokens. All user IDs and passwords are uniquely assigned to you and, consequently, you are accountable for all actions on Catoosa County IT systems.

## Password Requirements

### ***User ID and Password Overview***

- Username and password combinations provide access to assets.
- A temporary initial password may be assigned; however, once the temporary password has been used it will be changed.
- All password(s) resets require validation of user identity.

### ***Password and Session Configurations***

Password configurations, when system limitations are not present, will be set up to include the following:

- Limited consecutive unsuccessful login attempts that are less than or equal to five.
- Minimum number of characters necessary for password(s) that is greater than or equal to eight.
- Alpha and numeric password enforcers.
- Periodic forced password changes that are less than or equal to 180 days.
- Disallowance of reused password(s) that is less than or equal to five.
- Screensavers to lock a user's session after a period of 20 minutes of idle time.
- Remote administrative console, Telnet sessions, and/or SSH sessions reset after 30 minutes of idle activity.

### ***Password***

When system limitations are not present, strong password(s) must have the following characteristics:

- Contain at least eight characters.
- Contain both upper and lower-case characters.
- Contain at least one number.
- Are not based on personal information, names of family, etc.
- If written down, must be stored securely and remain in your physical control during use and will be secured in a lockable container when not in use.
- Digital password management may be authorized upon approval of your department director and the IT Director.

Additionally, it is recommended that password(s):

- Have deliberate misspellings.
- Are not words in any language, slang, dialect, jargon, etc.
- Are never shared.



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Poor or weak password(s) have the following characteristics:

- Contains some part of the user's name.
- Contains less than eight (8) characters.
- Are words found in a dictionary, i.e. English or Foreign.
- Are words found in proper names, i.e. Sports Teams, etc.
- Are common usage words, such as family name, pet, friend, co-worker, etc.

You must not:

- Allow anyone else to use your user ID/token and password on any Catoosa County IT system.
- Leave your user account logged in at an unattended and unlocked computer.
- Use someone else's user ID and password to access IT systems.
- Leave your password unprotected (i.e., writing it down).
- Perform any unauthorized changes to IT systems or information.
- Attempt to access data you are not authorized to use or access.
- Exceed the limits of your authorization or specific business need to interrogate the system or data.
- Connect any non-authorized device to the Catoosa County network or IT systems.
- Store Catoosa County data on any non-authorized equipment.
- Give or transfer Catoosa County data or software to any person or organization outside Catoosa County without appropriate authority.

Department Heads and supervisors must ensure they provide clear direction on the extent and limits of their authority regarding IT systems and data.

### Internet and Email Conditions of Use

Use of Catoosa County internet and email is intended for business use. Personal use is permitted where such use does not affect your business performance, is not detrimental to the County in any way, it does not breach any term or condition of employment, and it does not place you or the County in breach of statutory or other legal obligations. You are accountable for your actions on the internet and email systems.

### Internet Access Level

You will be assigned an access usage level by your Constitutional Officer/Department Head when hired.

Following are the Filtering Tier Levels and Blocked Categories:

Content Filter Tier	Blocked Categories
<b>Banned County-Wide</b> (Blacklisted Sites)	Pornography, Tasteless, Sexuality, Proxy/Anonymizer, Adware, Alcohol & Drugs, Dating, Gambling, Hate & Discrimination, Lingerie, Nudity, Weapons, Adult Themes, Games. (Exception: It may be necessary for certain law enforcement personnel to



	access blacklisted websites as part of criminal investigations and evidence collection. Access to blacklisted websites will be strictly controlled by the Catoosa County Sheriff.)
<b>No Access</b>	Blocks employees from accessing any websites except those that are required for performing work related tasks (i.e. www.catoosa.com and Catoosa email (Gmail).
<b>Limited Access</b>	Provides access to required work-related websites, and other specific websites determined by the Department Head/Constitutional Officer as required and essential for the employee to do their job. Examples would be chat and social, classifieds, file sharing & point to point, forums & message boards, instant messaging, photo and video sharing, visual search engines, webmail. Specific websites will be verified by the Department Head / Constitutional Officer, and access will be limited to those websites.
<b>Full Access</b>	Access to all internet sites except those blocked by the county-wide filter. Department Head / Constitutional Officer must attest to why an employee has a work-related need to be granted full access.

You must not:

- Use the internet or email for harassment or abuse;
- Use profanity, obscenities, or derogatory remarks in communications;
- Access, download, send or receive any data (including images), which Catoosa County considers offensive in any way, including sexually explicit, discriminatory, defamatory, or libelous material;
- Use the internet or email to make personal gains or conduct a personal business;
- Use the internet or email to gamble;
- Use email systems in a way that could affect its reliability or effectiveness (i.e., distributing chain letters or spam);
- Send unprotected sensitive or confidential information externally;
- Forward Catoosa County email to personal email accounts;
- Make official comments through the internet or email on behalf of Catoosa County unless authorized to do so;
- Download copyrighted material including but not limited to music, media (MP3) files, film, and video files without appropriate approval;
- Infringe upon any copyright, database rights, trademarks, or other intellectual property;
- Download any software from the internet without the prior approval of the IT Department;  
or
- Connect Catoosa County devices to the internet using non-standard connections.



## Clear Desk and Clear Screen Policy

To reduce the risk of unauthorized access or loss of information, the County enforces a clear desk and screen policy as follows:

- You must protect personal or confidential business information using security features provided;
- You must log off, lock, or protect your computer with a screen-locking mechanism controlled by a password when unattended;
- You must not leave confidential material on printers or photocopiers; and
- You must dispose of all business-related printed matter using confidential waste bins or shredders.

## Working Off-Site

When taking County laptops and mobile devices off-site, you must adhere to the following controls:

- Equipment and media must not be left unattended in public places or in sight in a car (exceptions for law enforcement may apply);
- When traveling, you may not store your laptop in checked luggage;
- Protect information against loss or compromise and use laptop encryption;
- Take particular care with the use of mobile devices such as laptops, mobile phones, smartphones, and tablets and ensure they are protected at least by a password or a PIN and, where available, encryption.

## Mobile Storage Devices

Mobile devices such as memory sticks, CDs, DVDs, and removable hard drives must be used only in situations when network connectivity is unavailable or there is no other secure method of transferring data. Only County-authorized mobile storage devices with encryption enabled may be used when transferring sensitive or confidential data.

## Software

Your software use is limited to what is authorized by the County on its computers. Authorized software must be used in accordance with the software supplier's licensing agreements. All software on Catoosa County computers must be approved and installed by the County IT department.

## Viruses

The IT department has implemented centralized, automated virus detection and virus software updates within the County. All PCs have antivirus software installed to detect and remove any virus automatically.

You must not:

- Remove or disable anti-virus software; or



- Attempt to remove virus-infected files or clean up an infection, other than by using County-approved anti-virus software and procedures.

## Voice Equipment Conditions of Use

Catoosa County Government voice equipment is intended for business use and must not be used for sending or receiving private communications on personal matters, except in exceptional circumstances. All non-urgent personal communications should be made at your own expense using alternative means of communication.

You must not:

- Use Catoosa County Government voice equipment for conducting private business.
- Make hoax or threatening calls to internal or external destinations; or
- Accept reverse charge calls from domestic or international operators, unless it is for business use.

## Actions Upon Termination

All Catoosa County equipment and data, including but not limited to laptops, mobile devices, phones, and data storage devices must be returned to the County upon termination of employment.

You are not permitted to reset or clear any technology device owned by the County and all data or intellectual property developed or gained during your employment remains the property of Catoosa County and must not be retained beyond your termination or reused for any other purpose.

## Monitoring and Filtering

All data that is created and stored on Catoosa County computers is the property of the County and there is no official provision for your data privacy. However, wherever possible, Catoosa County will avoid opening personal emails.

The County will monitor IT systems where appropriate and conduct investigations when reasonable suspicion exists of a breach of this or any other policy. Catoosa County has the right, under certain conditions, to monitor activity on its systems, including internet and email use, to ensure systems security and effective operation, and to protect against misuse.

It is your responsibility to report suspected breaches of security policy without delay to your Department Head, the IT department, or the County Manager. All breaches of information security policies will be investigated. If an investigation reveals misconduct, the County Manager will work with the Constitutional Officer and/or Department Heads to determine what actions will be taken.



## Section 23: Social Media Policy

### 23.1 Statement of Policy

For the purposes of this policy, social media includes all means of communicating or posting information or content of any sort on the internet, including to your own or someone else's blog, journal, personal website, social networking or affinity website, web bulletin board or chat room, whether or not associated or affiliated with Catoosa County, as well as any other form of electronic communication.

### 23.2 Rules and Guidelines

Social media should not be used during working hours or on equipment that is provided by the County, unless it is work-related as authorized by the Department Director and consistent with the [Internet and Use of County Property Policy](#). Your assigned County email address must not be used to register on social networks, blogs, or other online personal tools.

If you choose to maintain or participate in social media or social networking platforms while off duty, you are expected to conduct yourself with professionalism and in a manner that does not reflect negatively upon Catoosa County. Any conduct that adversely affects your job performance or that of other County employees or otherwise adversely affects members of the community or the County's legitimate business interests may result in disciplinary action.

In administering this policy, the County is mindful that you are a private citizen with legitimate interests in matters of public concern. Prior to taking any adverse employment action in connection with this policy, the County will evaluate whether or not the activity was made in your capacity as a private citizen, addressed a matter of public concern, and if the County's interest in promoting the efficiency of public services outweighs your interest in the activity.

## Section 24: Training

### 24.1 Certification

The County will pay for required and/or necessary certification testing and related training sessions for all initial attempts as approved by the respective Department Director and County Manager on a case-by-case basis. The County is not responsible for arranging or making payment for you to take subsequent exams if you fail the first attempt. It is your responsibility to pay for, re-take, and pass the certification exam within the specified timeframe to meet the requirements of your position. Failure to receive required certifications for your position will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

### 24.2 Training and Continuing Education

The County will arrange and pay for required and/or necessary training and continuing education that is directly related to your job, as approved by the respective Department Director and County



Manager on a case-by-case basis. The certification testing or training is considered directly related to your job if it is a requirement for the position and is designed to make you handle your job more effectively.

### **24.3 Compensation for Hours Spent in Certification Testing, Training and Continuing Education**

Attendance at required and/or necessary certification testing, training, and continuing education sessions or similar activities will be compensated as hours worked unless the following four criteria are met:

- Attendance is outside of your regular working hours;
- Attendance is voluntary;
- The course, lecture, or meeting is not directly related to your job; and
- You do not perform any productive work during such attendance.

You will be compensated for hours spent during attendance at a required and/or necessary certification testing, training, or continuing education session if such session is during regular working hours, directly related to your job, and approved for reimbursement by the applicable Department Director and County Manager. Specific questions related to compensation for attendance at required and/or necessary testing, training, and continuing education sessions or similar activities not expressly covered in this Section should be referred to your supervisor or the Human Resources Director prior to attending the session.

### **24.4 Compensation for Time Spent Traveling to Training**

Pre-approved training sessions that are required by the County are considered part of your normally scheduled workday. You will be compensated for travel time to and from a training session, unless specified by Departmental procedures. All training classes that require overnight lodging must be approved, specifically including the mode and time of travel to the training location. Mileage for the use of your personal vehicle will be paid consistent with the [Travel and Reimbursement Policy](#).

### **24.5 Training Reimbursements**

Requests for payment for training, conventions, or other meetings that are submitted to the Finance Department for reimbursement must include written approval from your Department Director. You must provide a copy of the certificate of completion or comparable document for all training classes or seminars you attend to the Finance Department and the Human Resources Department. The certificate of completion or comparable document will be maintained in your personnel file.



## 24.6 Training Records

All training records, including but not limited to, requests, approvals, disapprovals, course materials and/or certifications must be submitted to and maintained by the Human Resources Director.

# Section 25: Travel and Reimbursement Policy

## 25.1 Statement of Policy

This Policy contains the regulations and information necessary for reimbursement of travel expenses. This Section applies to all employees. The County allows travel on a limited basis provided that funding is available, travel is duly authorized, and travel is within the scope of your employment and performance of your official duties.

## 25.2 Authorized Travel and Expenses

Travel and related expenses are authorized when you are engaged in conducting official government business. You must complete a request for authorization to travel in advance and it must be approved by the appropriate Department Director. A request for travel authorization is considered complete when appropriate Travel Authorization Forms and Per Diem Request Forms are signed by the Department Director and the signed Travel Authorization Forms and Per Diem Request Forms are submitted to the Finance Department.

## 25.3 Registration, Lodging, and Travel Payments

The following options are available for registration, lodging accommodations, or travel by common carrier as defined in [Section 25.10](#) herein and are subject to approval of the Department Director:

Upon receipt of a travel authorization request, the Finance Department will issue you a County credit card, if needed, or if you already have an existing credit card, the spending limit may be increased temporarily to cover the anticipated expenses.

Upon receipt of approval to travel, you may arrange for registration, lodging, and/or common carrier needs using the County credit card. If you elect to pay final costs with your personal funds, you will receive reimbursement after submitting the applicable reimbursement request form.

You are exempt from hotel/motel taxes while on official business in the state pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 48-13-51. Most hotels require you to provide an exemption form before allowing such exemption. You should secure the appropriate exemption form from the Finance Department prior to your travel.



## **25.4 Reimbursement of Expenses**

You must submit your request for reimbursement of expenses to the Finance Department using the appropriate form within 30 calendar days following the date of your return to work. The request for reimbursement must contain an itemized listing of all expenses incurred for your travel and must be approved and signed by your Department Director. If you fail to reconcile the account within the specified time period, and the Chief Financial Officer does not grant an extension, the Chief Financial Officer may void your reimbursement claim. With the approval of the County Manager or Department Director, the Chief Financial Officer is authorized to withhold any cash advance or direct payment from your paycheck.

## **25.5 Documentation of Expenses**

You must provide itemized receipts or other documentation for all expenses, except for overnight travel where per diem has been issued for meals and incidentals.

## **25.6 Allowability and Limitations of Expenses**

Reimbursement is limited to the actual, necessary, and reasonable expenses incurred for authorized activities provided for in this Section. The standard for "reasonable" may be determined by the geographic location and other circumstances and the interpretation of this standard is made by the County Manager.

## **25.7 Meal Expenses for Travel Outside Catoosa County**

Department Directors are required to review the circumstances of each travel request to determine if meals are required, giving consideration that meals are often provided as part of group activities and are included in registration fees. Department Directors will exercise discretion in establishing meal allowances. Such allowances must be reasonable and within the budget as approved by the Board of Commissioners. Actual meal expenses will be reviewed when the request for reimbursement is submitted. Itemized receipts are required for all such expenses.

## **25.8 Per Diem for Meals and Incidentals for Overnight Travel**

You will receive per diem payments for meals and incidental expenses at the rate set forth by the General Services Administration (GSA) and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

Rates will follow GSA current rates for travel destinations, which can be found at <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>. You must use the current rates for your destination when completing the Per Diem Form.

Per Diem Forms must be submitted to the office of the Chief Financial Offer at least two weeks before travel. Forms can be found on the County website or upon request from the Finance Department or Human Resources.



## **25.9 Lodging**

Reasonable expenses associated with room accommodations will be paid for a hotel or motel upon presentation of an itemized bill. Whenever special rates are included as part of a planned program, payment will be made only for the special rate if such accommodation is available. Payment must be limited to the single room rate.

## **25.10 Transportation**

### **Mileage Reimbursement**

Government vehicles, if available, should be used for travel inside or close to Catoosa County. If a government vehicle is not available, you may be reimbursed for mileage on your personal vehicle. Mileage expenses for transportation using your personal vehicle are based on the rate per mile as prescribed by the IRS. The Chief Financial Officer will publish the revised rate as changes occur. If you travel to the same location with a coworker in the same vehicle, only one such payment will be made. Your personal vehicle may be used for travel inside or outside the State of Georgia provided up to the rate per mile.

### **Common Carrier**

A common carrier includes any scheduled airline, train, or bus. The reimbursement rate for common carrier is limited to the minimum fare available (economy or tourist). Roundtrip fares should be obtained whenever it results in cost savings and reservations should be made sufficiently in advance to take advantage of special savings plans offered by the carrier.

### **Ground Transportation**

Ground transportation by taxi, bus, limousine, or rideshare service is reimbursable when incurred in conjunction with common carrier transportation to and from terminals, hotels, restaurants, and meeting locations as necessary. The most economical means of ground transportation should be used.

### **Points of Departure and Return**

The points of departure and return for travel status is either the office at which you carry out your duties or your residence, whichever is more practical under the circumstances. The County will reimburse for actual miles traveled, less the normal distance traveled to and from your residence and work.

### **Direct Route**

All travel should follow the most direct route. However, an expressway route, which involves more total mileage, may result in time savings and, therefore, would be considered the more direct route. You should exercise reason and good judgment when making this determination.

## **25.11 Credit Cards**

Whenever allowable expenses are purchased or paid for by credit card, the receipt must include an itemization of expenditures or separate receipts must be obtained for each expenditure. A



credit card receipt showing only aggregate charges does not constitute sufficient documentation and cannot be used for reimbursement without the County Manager's approval.

## **25.12 County-Issued Credit Cards**

### **Purpose**

The County recognizes you may incur expenses while performing your job functions. The use of credit cards allows the County to be more effective, efficient, and accountable to the public. Furthermore, the usage of a County-issued credit card provides detailed purchase histories and other important recordkeeping information.

### **Guidelines for Usage of County-Issued Credit Cards**

Elected Officials may be issued a credit card for the purpose of purchasing goods and services directly related to their public duties in accordance with procedures outlines in O.C.G.A. § 36-80-24(c)(2).

County-issued credit cards may also be used for carrying out County business, including reasonable travel, accommodation, and meal expenses.

The County recognizes that occasionally it will be beneficial for its business interests for a County official to purchase meals when working with other officials, business representatives, or contract agencies. Such use of the County-issued credit card is recognized to be a legitimate business expense.

The O.C.G.A. § 50-5-80 states that any cardholder who knowingly uses the card for personal purchases under \$500 is guilty of a misdemeanor. A card holder who knowingly uses the card for personal purchases of \$500 or more is guilty of a felony, punishable for one to 20 years in prison.

County-issued credit cards will not be used in lieu of the normal purchasing procedures adopted by the County.

### **Cancellation of County-Issued Credit Cards**

The County Manager may cancel or order the surrender of any card which has been misused or abused. Such misuse or abuse of County-issued credit cards will be handled as a disciplinary matter. Misuse or abuse of County-issued credit cards by Elected Officials will be reported to the Board of Commissioners, who will then determine what investigation and/or legal action should be taken.

## **25.13 Registration Fees**

Registration fees for required and/or necessary certification testing, training, and continuing education sessions or similar activities are reimbursable expenses, and payment should be arranged in advance of the program start date. You are responsible for submitting a registration request to the Finance Department with sufficient time for the payment to be processed prior to any registration deadline. Optional expenses such as special events or personal memberships which are not included in the registration fee may not be deemed as allowable expenses.



## 25.14 Tips and Gratuities

Tips or gratuities in conjunction with an authorized expense are reimbursable if they are determined to be reasonable by the Chief Financial Officer or the County Manager.

## 25.15 Parking and Toll Fees

Expenses for parking and tolls are allowable if documented by receipt and/or proof of payment.

## 25.16 Other Expenses

The County Manager is authorized to pay other expenses which may be incurred in conjunction with authorized travel or activity if they are reasonable and proper. A request for payment of other expenses must include adequate documentation and justification to meet the requirements of this policy.

## Unallowable Expenses

The following expenses are specifically unallowable for payment:

- Expenses incurred by any individual other than the Department Director or employee, unless otherwise provided for in this policy;
- Expenses for entertainment;
- Laundry services;
- Personal articles, toiletries, souvenirs, etc.;
- Expenses for alcoholic beverages;
- Payments to friends or other individuals for cost of meals, lodging, or transportation that is not a part of the authorized activity or program;
- Direct expenses for operation of a personal vehicle, such as gasoline, oil, parts, or repairs;
- Travel and related expenses incurred from your residence to your designated worksite; and
- Any expenses that are unrelated to official government business or activities as determined by the Chief Financial Officer and the County Manager.

## 25.17 Family Members

Expenses related to your family members accompanying you while traveling are not reimbursable.

# Section 26: Critical Incident Policy

## 26.1 Introduction

In the event of a critical incident, Catoosa County recognizes that appropriate infrastructure must be in place to ensure the provision of all necessary support services.



This Section outlines Catoosa County’s policy, support mechanisms, and procedures for managing a critical incident. This policy ensures the County has an effective approach in responding to critical incidents as they occur and provides appropriate training and information for County employees.

## **26.2 Scope of Policy**

This section applies to all employees, volunteers, interns, and any other individuals performing services on the County’s behalf, whether paid or unpaid.

## **26.3 Definition**

A critical incident is defined as “a traumatic event, or the threat of such which causes extreme stress, fear or injury.”

Critical incidents may include, but are not limited to:

- Attempted suicide, suicide, or other death;
- A missing employee;
- Severe verbal or psychological aggression, if by someone other than an employee (employee cases are addressed in Section 12 and 14);
- Witnessing a serious accident or incident of violence, if by someone other than an employee (employee cases are addressed in Section 14);
- A fire, riot/disturbance, or other natural disaster (e.g. epidemic, earthquake, flood, windstorm, hailstorm, extremes of temperature); or
- A bomb threat, explosion, gas, or chemical hazard.

## **26.4 Critical Incident Coordination**

If you observe an act of violence at work, the steps to take are simple, even though the underlying issues may not be.

### **First Step**

**In immediate emergency situations, call 911 for the local Police Department, Sheriff’s Office, Fire Department, and/or Emergency Medical Assistance.**

As with any other emergency involving fire, violence, or medical incidents, the first action is to call 911 and report as many details as soon as possible, so the appropriate emergency response units can be dispatched.

### **Second Step**

Immediately contact the:

- Department Director involved;
- Human Resources Director; and
- County Manager.



The Police Department, Sheriff's Office, Fire Department, and those providing emergency medical assistance in coordination with the Department Director, Human Resource Director, and the County Manager will ensure that resources are coordinated in their support and response.

Other steps following a critical incident will flow from this initial contact, including any required disciplinary action and aftercare help for those who were involved in or witnessed the critical incident.

### Third Step

Actions to be taken:

- Secure the area, if possible;
- Ensure the safety of all employees;
- Assess the need for support/counseling;
- Restore regular routines as soon as possible; and
- Complete the Critical Incident Report.

### Review of Report and Incident

The Department Director, Human Resources Director, and County Manager will meet to discuss the Critical Incident Report. The purpose of this meeting is to evaluate the critical incident process and make modifications if necessary.

## Section 27: Pandemic Outbreak

### 27.1 Introduction

The County strives to provide a safe and healthy workplace for all employees. This policy outlines its response to a pandemic outbreak as well as specific steps the County takes to safeguard your health and wellbeing during a pandemic, while ensuring the County's ability to maintain essential operations and continue providing essential services to our citizens. In addition, it provides guidance on how the County intends to respond to specific operational and human resources issues in the event of a pandemic.

### 27.2 Contagious Symptoms and Contagious Condition

If you report to work with contagious symptoms and/or a contagious condition, as defined in this Section, you may significantly impact County operations due to the potential for spreading sickness, diminished productivity, and lack of quality or attention to safety.

You must consider options and practices that will reduce the risk of contracting a contagious condition or passing on a contagious condition by observing healthy practices such as receiving flu and/or other relevant vaccinations, covering your nose or mouth when coughing or sneezing, washing and/or sanitizing your hands, using sanitizers on common work areas, and other health practices that are designed to reduce infection and the spread of disease. You should also refrain



from reporting to work with contagious symptoms and/or a contagious condition, so as not to spread the illness.

In the interest of maintaining a safe and healthy workplace, the County may require you not to report to work and/or may send you home if you are exhibiting contagious symptoms or have a contagious condition.

### ***Contagious Symptoms and/or Conditions***

For purposes of this Section, contagious symptoms and/or contagious conditions exist if:

- You exhibit influenza-related symptoms (e.g., fever, vomiting, diarrhea, headache, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle aches) or other symptoms, described by a public health organization as indicative of other contagion, such as Coronavirus, SARS, swine flu, H1N1, etc.;
- You are diagnosed with an infectious/contagious condition (e.g., influenza, strep throat, tuberculosis, bacterial meningitis, mononucleosis, mumps, measles, rubella, chicken pox, etc.); or
- You and/or your family or household member recently traveled or plans to travel to a geographic area or has been subjected to a confined area, such as cruise ship or airplane, actively identified by a recognized health organization to present a high degree of contagion health risk or an area for which the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued a Level 2 or 3 travel advisory.

## **27.3 Workplace Requirements**

You and the County are responsible for maintaining a safe and productive work environment. Accordingly, if you have contagious symptoms and/or a contagious condition, you:

- Will not report to the workplace so as not to infect other employees or members of the public;
- Will not report to the workplace until your symptoms have subsided;
  - Note, a health care provider's statement that you may return to work may be required during epidemics, pandemics, or similar situations during which enhanced precautions are warranted.
- Will not report to the workplace after returning from, or after your family or household member returns from, a geographic area or confined area recently identified by a recognized health organization to present a high degree of contagion health risk or an area for which the CDC has issued a Level 2 or 3 travel advisory.
- Note, in this case, you cannot return to the workplace until completion of the incubation period as identified by a public health organization and until you have been cleared with a health care provider's statement that you may return to work. Such statement must be submitted to the Human Resources Director for approval in advance of returning to the workplace.



- May be sent home, with or without the opportunity to work from home, based on observations of symptoms of a contagious condition.

## **27.4 Absence Due to Contagious Symptoms or Conditions**

If you have been sent home by the County and/or have not reported to work due to contagious symptoms and/or a contagious condition, or if you have been ordered to quarantine, you will be required to use accrued paid leave for your time away from work. If paid leave is unavailable or exhausted, you will be recorded as absent with approved unpaid leave. If your unpaid leave extends beyond five days and/or your unpaid leave becomes a recurring issue and is deemed to constitute an undue burden upon the County, the County may request that you provide a doctor's certification as to your current condition. Ultimately, any prolonged absences will be addressed in compliance with all federal and state laws and regulations, including the ADA and the FMLA (if a serious health condition is involved).

The County may approve you to work from home or another private location while recuperating. Such approval is dependent upon consideration of factors, including your position, the severity of the illness, and other safety and logistical considerations.

If you are absent for reasons covered by this policy, you must contact the Human Resources Director to determine if your medical condition qualifies for leave covered under the FMLA.

## **27.5 Return to Work**

Prior to returning to work, you may be required to provide a health care provider's statement clearing you to return to work without risk to other employees. The written statement must be submitted electronically to the Human Resources Director, who will review the statement. The Human Resources Director must provide approval before you may return to work. If you fail to provide a written return-to-work statement prior to reporting to work, you will be immediately sent home and may be subject to disciplinary action for failure to comply with this requirement.

## **27.6 Compliance**

Due to the seriousness of the ramifications of non-compliance, any violation of this policy will subject you to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. This Section is administered in accordance with all federal and state laws and regulations, including the ADA and FMLA.



## Section 28: Definitions

Abandonment of Position – The unauthorized absence by an employee from their position for three consecutive workdays.

Accident – An unplanned, undesired event that results in property loss valued at more than \$1,000.

Allocate or Reallocate – An action by the Board of Commissioners designating the type of position to be included in an appropriate Department or agency and setting aside the budgetary funds to support the designated position.

Anniversary Date – The date the employee first became employed by the County.

Applicant – Any person who has filed an application in accordance with the provisions of the Employee Handbook.

Appointment – The act of placing an employee in an Authorized Position.

“Avoidable” Accident or Injury – An accident, incident or personal Injury involving or sustained by a County employee arising out of conditions of their employment and where Risk Management staff or a designee thereof determines the employee could have prevented such accident or personal injury.

Authorized Position – A position authorized by the Board of Commissioners, recognized in the Classification Plan, and included in an approved budget.

Body Substance Isolation – The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the use of “Body Substance Isolation” when emergency response personnel work with blood or body fluids from any patient. This precaution says emergency response personnel must consider all body substances from any patient as potentially infectious. Body Substance Isolation exceeds universal precautions which states that blood or certain body fluids from any patient may be potentially infectious. Personnel from Catoosa County Fire Department will practice Body Substance Isolation techniques when having contact with any patient.

Business Day – The eight hours the County Administration offices are officially open for business.

Catastrophic Illness – An illness not consistent with ordinary illness (e.g., cancer, heart attack, stroke, major surgery) and requiring absence from employment in excess of 80 hours.

Chargeable Accidents – A judged avoidable accident, incident, or personal injury by Risk Management or a designee thereof.

Classification Description – A written description based upon a categorical designation of positions that contain appropriate Classification Titles, essential functions, descriptions of duties and responsibilities, types of work performed, minimum qualifications, performance aptitudes, and ADA compliance factors for a certain category of positions. Numerous positions exist under each Classification Description.

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**Classification Plan** – The official or approved system of grouping positions into Classification Descriptions that are further grouped into appropriate Grades approximately equal in difficulty, responsibility, training, and experience requirements. The Classification Plan is based upon a categorical designation of Classification Descriptions that contain appropriate Classification Titles, essential functions, descriptions of duties and responsibilities, types of work performed, minimum qualifications, performance aptitudes, and ADA compliance factors for a certain category of positions.

**Classification Title** – The official designation of a position’s title as set forth in the Classification Plan and assigned to a respective Classification Description. The Classification Title is used to designate each position in all budget estimates, payrolls, and other official records, documents, vouchers, and communications in connection with all personnel processes.

**Communicable Disease** – A disease that can be transmitted from one person to another. It is also known as a contagious disease.

**Compensation Plan** – The system of assigning jobs to Classification Descriptions and to an appropriate pay Grade based on the similarities of positions.

**Continuous Service** – Continuous Service is employment that is uninterrupted, except for authorized leaves of absence or suspension.

**County** – Catoosa County, Georgia

**County Manager** – The chief administrative employee of the Catoosa County Board of Commissioners.

**Critical Incident** – A traumatic event, or the threat of such which causes extreme stress, fear, or injury.

**Demotion** – A change in the rank of an employee from a position in one Grade to a position in another Grade having a lower minimum starting salary.

**Department** – A major administrative division of County government whose employees report to a Department Director.

**Department Director** – The top administrative official in each major administrative division.

**Dismissal** – The termination of an employee.

**Elected Official** – A County official duly elected by the citizens of Catoosa County and presently serving in office.

**Eligible Applicant** – A person who has met the minimum requirements for a position as outlined in the Classification Description.

**Emergency Assignment** – An assignment of an employee on an emergency basis to a position without compliance with the recruitment procedures for a limited time.

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**Examination** – Methods used to determine eligibility of applicants for employment. Examinations may include but are not limited to written, oral, physical, medical, or performance tests, rating of training, and/or experience.

**Executive Employees** – The County Manager and all employees who report directly to the County Manager. The term ‘executive employee’ does not include the Chief Financial Officer or the Clerk to the Board of Commissioners, who report directly to the Board of Commissioners.

**External Advertisement** – A recruiting effort to notify interested applicants who are not employed by the County of job vacancies by placing advertisements of such vacancies with the outside media and/or internet site.

**Full-time Employee** – An employee who works in a position that is budgeted for 12 months of the year, scheduled to work 30 or more hours per week regularly throughout the year.

**Grade** – All positions in a group which are sufficiently similar as to authority, kind or subject matter of work, level of difficulty, and duties and responsibilities with the same minimum requirements of training, experience or skill, and such other characteristics that warrant the same range of compensation for each position in the group.

**Grant-Funded Appointment** – The placement of an individual in a position that is created as a result of a grant that provides for the position for a specific period of time.

**Human Resources Director** – The official designated by the County Manager as the representative in charge of the personnel system of Catoosa County.

**Immediate Family (Funeral Leave)**– An employee’s spouse, child, parent, sibling, half-sibling, aunt, uncle, grandparent, grandchild, parent-in-law, sibling-in-law, child-in-law, stepparent, and stepchild.

**Incident** – An unplanned, undesired event that results in minor property loss or damage to property. Minor property loss is defined as property loss valued at \$1,000 or less.

**Infectious Disease** – An illness or disease resulting from invasion of a host of disease producing organisms such as bacteria, viruses, fungi, or parasites.

**Internal Advertisement** – A recruiting effort to notify interested applicants who are employed by the County of job vacancies by placing advertisements of such vacancies throughout the County.

**Lateral Transfer** – When an employee is moved from one position with a certain Classification Title to a different position within the same Grade, but with a different Classification Title, either within or outside the employee’s Department.

**Layoff** – The separation of an employee or employees from County employment for specified reasons unrelated to the employee’s performance.

**Leave** – Ways in which an employee is permitted to take time off from work. Leave may be granted with or without pay.

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Minimum Qualifications – The minimum requirements for education and experience that qualify an applicant to be considered for appointment as an employee with the County. Additional requirements such as licenses, certificates, and others may also be indicated where necessary.

Modes of Transmission – A communicable disease can be spread through two means: direct and indirect transmission. Bloodborne diseases spread through direct blood-to- blood contact. Blood is the single greatest source of HIV and HBV in the workplace setting. Airborne diseases spread via droplets expelled into the air by a cough or sneeze.

Motor Vehicle – Every self-propelled device in, upon, or by which any person or property is or may be transported or drawn upon a highway, excepting devices used exclusively upon stationary rails or tracks and electric personal assistive mobility devices (EPAMD).

Motor Vehicle Accident – The collision of any motor vehicle or specialized mobile equipment with another vehicle or with any object or fixture, or involvement of a motor vehicle or specialized mobile equipment in any manner in which any person is killed or injured or in which property loss occurs.

Notice – Such publicity as may be deemed necessary to assure reasonable notice to those concerned.

Occupational Risk – Occupational exposure may occur in many ways, including needle sticks, cut injuries, or aerosols of body fluids. Government workers in various capacities may be at high risk for bloodborne infections due to routinely increased exposure to body fluids from potentially infected patients, inmates, customers, sewer systems, etc. Any exposure to a communicable disease carries a certain amount of risk. Emergency response personnel are in an occupation that directly exposes them to body fluids and must be considered at substantial risk of occupational exposures.

Part-time Employee – An employee who works in a position that is budgeted for 12 months of the year, but who works less than 30 hours per week.

Performance Evaluation or Appraisal – A method of evaluating each employee on a periodic basis as to performance on the job.

Personal Injuries – Injuries to a County employee arising out of and in the course of employment.

Promotion – A change in rank of an employee from a position in one Grade to a position of another Grade having a higher minimum salary.

Property Loss – The loss, loss of use, or damage to County property.

Public Safety Employee – Non-administrative personnel in the Sheriff's, Fire Suppression, or 911 agencies

Reassignment Appointment – When an employee is moved from one position with a certain Classification Title to another position within the same Department with the same Classification Title.

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Reclassification – The assignment of an existing position to a different and more suitable Classification Description when it is determined that a position is incorrectly assigned. A Reclassification may produce a corresponding change from one Grade to a different Grade.

Reinstatement Appointment – The filling of a vacant position with a former Catoosa County employee.

Resignation – The termination of an employee at their request.

Risk Management – Catoosa County Human Resources Director & Local Government Risk Management.

Safety Coordinator – Employee selected by the Department Head who is responsible for ensuring effective communication between Risk Management and the Department. Each Safety Coordinator, among other tasks, ensures proper display of workers' compensation panel of physicians, safety posters and information, and may conduct safety inspections of the Department. This person may also be requested to attend and/or lead safety meetings and trainings.

Safety Inspections – An in-depth investigation of a work area/location/operation to correct unsafe work conditions and to determine if safety and health rules and regulations are followed.

Safety Sensitive Position – Part of the essential job functions require the operation of a County vehicle two or more times during a normally scheduled workweek for that position; performance of law enforcement duties as a POST-certified law enforcement officer; possession of a firearm; providing emergency medical, rescue, or fire suppression services; interacting with incarcerated persons; performing duties essential to drug interdiction; performing duties related to the operation of heavy machinery; or performing duties which directly affect public health or safety.

Seasonal Employee – An employee who works in a position that is temporary in nature which coincides with a particular season or seasons of the year or with heavy workload periods for a particular Department. The seasonal position period may recur regularly from year to year, but it is not budgeted for 12 months of the year and cannot exceed 38 continuous or intermittent weeks during a calendar year.

Serious Accident – Accident requiring extensive and intensive hospitalization or at-home care and disabling an individual from performing work duties for more than 80 hours.

Shift Worker – An employee who occasionally works one 12-hour or one 24-hour shift on a seasonal or part-time basis. A shift worker is not eligible for benefits.

Special Mobile Equipment – Every vehicle not designed or used primarily for the transportation of persons or property and only incidentally operated or moved over a highway, including but not limited to ditch-digging apparatus, well-boring apparatus, and road construction and maintenance machinery such as asphalt spreaders, bituminous mixers, bucket loaders, tractors other than truck tractors, ditchers, leveling graders, finishing machines, motor graders, road rollers, scarifiers, earth-moving carryalls and scrapers, power shovels and drag lines, and self-propelled cranes and

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earth moving equipment. The term does not include house trailers, dump trucks, truck mounted transit mixers, cranes or shovels, or other vehicles designed for the transportation of persons or property to which machinery has been attached.

Supervisor – An individual who is authorized by the County to take tangible employment actions against subordinate employees, i.e., to effect a significant change in employment status, such as hiring, firing, failing to promote, reassignment with significantly different responsibilities, or a decision causing a significant change in benefits.

Suspension – A forced leave of absence without pay.

Temporary Employee – An employee who works in a position that is temporary for purposes of a special project or other work of a temporary nature. The temporary position period is established according to the special project or special circumstances requiring work of a temporary nature. The temporary position is not budgeted for 12 months of the year and does not recur regularly from year to year.

“Unavoidable” Accident or Injury – An accident or personal injury involving or sustained by a County employee arising out of condition of their employment and where Risk Management staff or a designee thereof determines that the employee could not have prevented such accident or personal injury.

Vacancy – A position duly created and still existent but not occupied by an employee.

Weapon – A knife or handgun, which is further defined as follows. A knife means a cutting instrument designed for the purpose of offense and defense consisting of a blade that is greater than five inches in length which is fastened to a handle. A handgun means a firearm of any description, loaded or unloaded, from which any shot, bullet, or other missile can be discharged by an action of an explosive where the length of the barrel, not including any revolving, detachable, or magazine breech, does not exceed 12 inches; provided, however, that the term handgun does not include a gun which discharges a single shot of .46 centimeters or less in diameter.

Workday or Working Day – A workday or working day is defined as eight hours for County employees; 12 hours for 911 Dispatchers who work a 12-hour shift; and 24 hours for Fire Department employees who work a 24-hour shift.



## Appendix A: Infection Control

As part of the Risk Management plan, Catoosa County has established required guidelines for each Department to follow as they develop an Infection Control Standard Operating Guideline specific to the needs of their Department.

The applicable Department Head will be responsible for administering their Departmental program.

Catoosa County is committed to full compliance with applicable laws and policies as they related to Infection Control (29 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1910.1030, OSHA Instructions CPL 2-2.44B, and NFPA 1581).

Catoosa County prohibits discrimination against any individual for health reasons, including infection and/or seroconversion to HIV or Hepatitis B virus.

You are responsible for following the policies and procedures outlined in the Departmental Exposure Control Plan. The Departmental Exposure Control Plan will contain guidelines for the following areas:

- Precaution and Prevention;
- Personal Protective Equipment;
- Scene Management;
- Cleaning and Disinfection;
- Infectious Waste Disposal;
- Immunizations;
- Exposure Determination;
- Post Exposure Evaluation and Follow-up;
- Medical Surveillance;
- Record Keeping; and
- Training Requirements.

### Precautions and Prevention

Catoosa County requires the following precautionary and prevention methods:

- All employees must wash their hands when possible after removal of gloves or other personal protective equipment that have contacted blood or other potentially infectious materials.
- Contaminated personal protective equipment (PPE) must be removed when possible upon leaving a contaminated scene; contaminated PPE will be placed in an appropriately designated area or container for storage, washing, decontamination, or disposal.
- All providers must perform procedures involving blood or other body fluids in such a way as to minimize splashing, spraying, or aerosols of these substances.



- All used needles or other sharp objects must not be sheared, bent, broken, recapped, or re-sheathed with two hands. Used needles must not be removed from disposable syringes. All sharps must be placed directly into a sharps container when possible.
- All employees are required to follow outlined personal protection procedures in the care, treatment, and transportation of patients suspected or known to have bloodborne or airborne diseases.

## **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

Catoosa County:

- Provides and assures employees use appropriate PPE where biomedical hazards are possible.
- Assures appropriate PPE in the appropriate sizes are readily accessible at the worksite or individually issued to employees.

## **Scene Management**

Catoosa County:

- Assures that all employees always follow infection control measures.
- Assures employees consistently and correctly answer infection control questions arising from contact with the public or any other suspected contaminated substance.

## **Cleaning and Disinfection**

Catoosa County:

- Provides for the cleaning, laundering, or disposal of required personal protective equipment.
- Repairs or replaces personal protective equipment as needed to maintain effectiveness.

## **Infectious Waste Disposal**

Catoosa County:

- Assures that employees dispose of infectious waste according to applicable federal, state, and local regulations.

## **Immunizations**

Catoosa County:

- Makes available the Hepatitis B vaccination to all employees who have a potential occupational exposure as soon as possible after their hire date.
- Provides booster doses for Hepatitis B if an employee is inadequately protected as a result of testing from an exposure or at a future date, according to standard recommendations for medical practice.



- Advises employees to obtain other vaccinations recommended for their specific line of employment by the Center for Disease Control.

## **Exposure Determination**

Catoosa County:

- Establishes a bloodborne pathogen Level 3 exposure as any of the following:
  - Contaminated needle stick;
  - Blood or body fluid contact with mucus membranes of eyes, nose, or mouth'
  - Blood or body fluid contact with open skin (non-intact skin);
  - Cuts with sharp objects covered with bloody or body fluids; or
  - Injury sustained while cleaning contaminated equipment.
- Establishes a Level 3 airborne pathogen exposure as any of the following as evaluated by Risk Management:
  - Mouth to mouth contact with a person suspected or known to have an airborne disease; or
  - Unprotected contact (no mask with shield) by an employee within three feet of the head of a patient suspected or known to have an airborne disease. For tuberculosis patients, the patient must have had a cough, or procedures were performed that produced an aerosol or mist. Final exposure determination will be done by evaluation of the incident and source (if applicable) by Risk Management.
- Provides employees with a method for the reporting of occupational exposures from bloodborne and/or airborne pathogens.

## **Post-Exposure**

Catoosa County:

- Provides post-exposure follow-up for all employees with occupational exposure.
- Assures a licensed physician does, or supervises, all medical evaluations and procedures.
- Assures employees are informed of the results of the medical evaluation and employees are told about any medical conditions resulting from the exposure that may require further evaluation or treatment.

## **Medical Surveillance**

Catoosa County:

- Provides all evaluations, procedures, vaccinations, and post-exposure management to employees at a reasonable time and place, according to the standard recommendations for medical practice.

## **Recordkeeping**

Catoosa County:



- Maintains accurate medical records for each employee for at least the duration of employment plus 30 years.
- Keeps all employee medical records confidential, and does not release them to any person within, or outside the workplace, except as required by law.
- Maintains all training records.

## **Training Records**

Catoosa County:

- Assures that all employees who are at risk for potential occupational exposure participate in a training program.
- Provides training at the time of employment and at least annually after that.
- Assures the training program contains those elements required by law.

The Infection Control Program will be reviewed and updated as necessary to reflect significant changes in tasks or procedures.

## **Measures for Prevention**

### **Health History**

A complete and detailed history for each employee is a critical preventive measure. An individual's health history helps to identify potential high-risk areas that may require special attention. A copy of the Post Offer Employment Questionnaire may be completed and kept by Risk Management.

The plan is designed to educate personnel about infection control procedures in Catoosa County. The goal of infection control is to prevent infection from occurring in patients, emergency response personnel, and their families.

The dangers faced by government personnel are not always obvious. The occupational hazards of AIDS, hepatitis, and other communicable diseases are unseen but very real. An effective Exposure Control Plan provides the means to minimize, but not eliminate, health risks.