

LAURENS COUNTY PERSONNEL POLICY



Section 1 – **OBJECTIVE**

Par 1.101

Purpose: The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that employees of Laurens County fully understand the philosophy regarding their employment, conduct and responsibility in the performance of their duties. It is the responsibility of the employee to review and understand the content of this Policy.

Par 1.102

Coverage: This Policy applies to all employees of the Laurens County Board of Commissioners and Constitutional Officers. Within this Policy, the Laurens County Board of Commissioners and Constitutional Officers are used as one in the same and are inter-changeable unless otherwise stated. All employees fall under the supervision of the Laurens County Administrator or the respective Constitutional Officer. The Laurens County Administrator and the Laurens County Attorney serve solely at the pleasure of the Laurens County Board of Commissioners. Pursuant to the Georgia Employer At Will Law, Laurens County is an At Will Employer. The Policy is advisory in nature and creates non-contractual obligations on the part of the employees and County and shall not in any way alter the at-will relationship. Employment with Laurens County is at will, and either the employee or Laurens County may at any time terminate the employment with or without cause.

Par 1.103

Policy Changes: The Laurens County Board of Commissioners and Constitutional Officers reserve the right to change these policies at any time upon notification to the employees.

Section 2 – **DEFINITIONS**

Par 2.101

Adverse Action: An action taken for cause that results in a disciplinary suspension without pay, disciplinary salary reduction, disciplinary demotion, or disciplinary dismissal.

Par 2.102

Adverse Effect: The results of an action or decision that is not an adverse action but which deprives the employee of income or the opportunity to earn more income.

Par 2.103

Covered Employees: Employees who work for the Laurens County Board of Commissioners or Constitutional Officers.

Par 2.104

Days: When the word "days" is used as a method of counting, it means calendar days unless stated otherwise.

Par 2.105

Handicapped: Any person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity, who has a record of such impairment, or who is regarded as having such impairment.

Par 2.106

Immediate Family: Included are the employee's spouse, children, grandchildren, parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters and spouse's children, grandchildren, parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters.

Par 2.107

May: The word "may" is conditional, and implies that there is discretion as to whether a condition exists or an act or action will take place.

Par 2.108

Full Time Employee: An employee who has completed all employment requirements and works forty (40) or more hours per week on a regular schedule.

Par 2.109

Shall/Will: These terms are unconditional and imply that a condition exists or an act or action will take place.

Par 2.110

Unlawful Discrimination: Employment practices which are prohibited by state and federal laws, and which include discrimination because of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, mental or physical handicap, and political affiliation.

Section 3 – **CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT**

Par 3.101

Work Hours: The minimum work week for permanent full-time employees eligible for benefits will be forty (40) hours, one hundred seventy-one (171) hours in a twenty-eight (28) day period for law enforcement or two hundred twelve (212) hours in a twenty-eight (28) day period for firefighters. Because of the differences in job requirements in the different departments, the required work week will vary from job to job and department to department.

Par 3.102

Overtime: Non-exempt employees whose work period is one week will be paid at the rate of one and one-half the normal rate for all hours worked over forty (40) hours per week. Exempt employees will receive their normal salary for any work period. Time paid for vacation or sick paid days, holiday, funeral or jury duty will not count for hours worked for the purpose of determining overtime.

Par 3.103

Compensatory Time: Compensatory time for overtime hours may be given in lieu of overtime pay at the rate of one and one-half hours for each over time hour. Each department will determine the jobs that will receive compensatory time and the method of administering compensatory time.

Par 3.104

Timesheets: Employees and supervisors are required to keep timesheets on forms provided by the appointing authority in accordance with FLSA requirements.

Par 3.105

Holidays: The following are the official holidays that will be observed: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Veterans' Day, Thanksgiving Day, the day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day.

Par 3.106

Observation: Employees may be required to work during the above holidays. If a holiday falls on Saturday, it will generally be observed on the preceding Friday. If the holiday falls on a Sunday, it will generally be observed on the following Monday.

Par 3.107

Prohibited Activities: Laurens County employees are in positions created for the public and funded by the public. The public has a right to expect that the employees in the positions will not abuse the trust placed in them. The employees of Laurens County shall observe and honor the laws of the State of Georgia and the ordinances of Laurens County.

Par 3.108

Political Activities: Laurens County employees are protected from political patronage by these policies. The governing authority expects the covered employees to avoid the public political activities. Neither their position nor Laurens County time should be used for political purposes, nor should an employee actively campaign for a bipartisan candidate. The employees may express their political opinions privately and the Officers of Laurens County encourage the employees to vote for the candidate of their choice.

Par 3.109

Gifts and Gratuities: No employee should accept any gifts or gratuities from anyone who might expect to receive return favors from the Department and/or Laurens County.

Par 3.110

Alcohol and Controlled Substance(s): It is the objective of Laurens County to provide safe and effective public service. To accomplish this goal the following regulations will be utilized:

1. The use, possession or distribution of alcohol or controlled substances as identified in the Official Code of Georgia by employees while on the job or job premises is strictly prohibited.
2. Reporting to work while intoxicated or otherwise impaired by alcohol or controlled substances shall be prohibited.
3. Employees may be required to submit to alcohol and/or controlled substance testing in compliance with the Laurens County Drug and Alcohol Policy.
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Par 3.111

Abuse and Misuse of Equipment and Supplies: Employees are entrusted with the use of public equipment and supplies. The abuse or misuse of Laurens County equipment and supplies shall lead to appropriate disciplinary actions.

Section 4 – **EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES**

Par 4.101

Security Clearance: Applicants for employment, promotion or transfer may be asked to supply personal information to include poly-graphs and/or background investigations.

Par 4.102

Competitive Appointments: Competitive appointments are the normal practices Laurens County. It is the policy of Laurens County to employ the best qualified individuals for all vacancies in accordance with sound and lawful personnel policies and procedures. All applicants are considered for employment without regard to race, national origin, color, sex age religion, creed, political affiliation, or physical handicap. This applies to all promotions, demotions, suspensions, lay-offs, terminations, transfers, and compensation issues.

Par 4.103

Job Mobility: It is possible for an employee to voluntarily move upward, downward, or laterally in the organization. It is also possible for the employee to be involuntarily moved in all three directions.

Par 4.104

Job Abandonment: Employees who are absent from work for two (2) or more consecutive days without having received leave approval or without having called in to report the absence will be considered as having voluntarily abandoned their jobs. The separation will not be in good standing and may affect the receipt of accrued benefits.

Par 4.105

Reduction In Force: A reduction in force may be necessary when a position or group of positions must be closed.

Par 4.106

Safety: Safety is every employee's responsibility. Employees shall comply with all Laurens County safety requirements.

Par 4.107

Worker's Compensation: Laurens County employees who are injured on the job are protected by the Georgia Worker's Compensation Act. The provisions of this Act are the exclusive remedy for employees injured on the job. In case of any conflict between the provisions of the Act and this Personnel Policy, the provisions of the Act shall control. This Policy confers no rights or benefits in excess of that required by the Act. It is the employee's responsibility to report to their supervisor and Laurens County Human Resources any on-the-job injury immediately when possible but in all cases no later than 24 hours after the injury is incurred. The employee is obligated to cooperate with any investigation and reporting requirements. Fraudulent activities are grounds for termination.

Par 4.108

Exceptions: There are exceptions to compensation for work related injuries which include the following:

1. Willful acts of the employee such as misconduct, including intentional self-injury and injury sustained during an attack on another person;
2. Failure to follow safety rules, specifically those adopted by Laurens County;
3. Intoxication;
4. Recreational activities, unless participation required by Laurens County or part of regular employment;
5. Heart disease, unless it can be demonstrated that the disease is attributable to the work environment;
6. Confirmed illegal drug use or influence of intoxication.

Section 5 – LEAVE

Par 5.101

Types of Leave: Laurens County recognizes eight (8) types of leave that is available to employees. They are: vacation leave, sick leave, military leave, jury duty, and funeral leave, leave-without pay, leave-of-absence and FMLA.

Par 5.102

Anniversary Date: In calculating the accrual of vacation and sick leave, accrual date begins on the most recent date of full-time employment.

Par 5.103

Vacation Leave: Vacation leave is leave that is earned to be used for vacations, personal business activities and other personal activities.

Par 5.104

Vacation Eligibility: Full-time employees shall accrue vacation leave from the date of most recent full-time employment but shall not be allowed to take vacation leave until satisfactorily completing three (3) months of service. Part-time or temporary employees are not eligible for paid leave.

Par 5.105

Vacation Accumulation Rate: Vacation leave is accrued at the rate of ten (10) days per year for employees who have eight (8) years or less service with Laurens County; twelve (12) days per year for employees who have between nine (9) and fifteen (15) years of service; and fifteen (15) days per year for those with sixteen (16) or more years of service with the Laurens County.

Par 5.106

Vacation Accumulation: Vacation leave is accrued on a bi-weekly basis. Upon separation, the employee *may* be paid for accumulated vacation leave as follows:

1. Employees who work 8 and 10 hour days may be paid up to a maximum of one hundred sixty (160) hours;
2. Employees who work 12 and 24 hour days may be paid up to a maximum of two hundred forty (240) hours.

Par 5.107

Request for Leave: Taking vacation leave is a privilege that must be requested and approved by the Department Head at least one week prior to taking it; unless circumstances arise beyond the control of the employee or it is approved by the Department Head.

Par 5.108

Sick Leave: Sick leave is leave accumulated to be taken for a bon-a-fide illness or injury and other medical related necessities such as physician's appointments, medical examinations and dental appointments. Sick leave is available for the employee's personal health care as well as for the care of immediate family members. A doctor's excuse will be required for all leave absences in excess of three (3) days.

Par 5.109

Sick Leave Eligibility: Full-time employees shall accrue sick leave from the date of most recent full-time employment.

Par 5.110

Sick Leave Accumulation Rate: Sick leave will be accumulated at the rate of one (1) day per month.

Par 5.111

Sick Maximum Accumulation: Sick leave may not be accrued in excess of one hundred thirty (130) days. Employees who are not able to return to work within six (6) months of their illness shall be terminated. Employees will not be paid for accumulated sick leave upon separation.

Par 5.112

Sick Leave Reporting: Employee shall report any sick leave absence prior to his or her scheduled work time, if possible. If not, employee shall see that his or her absence is reported within one (1) hour after the scheduled time for the employee to begin work.

Par 5.113

Physician Certificate: A medical statement signed by a licensed physician will be required for sick leave absences resulting in three (3) or more days absent due to an illness, of employee or family member, or when absence recurs frequently or habitually.

Par 5.114

Funeral Leave: A maximum of three (3) days paid leave may be used at any one time for the funeral or bereavement of an immediate family member as outlined in Par 2.107.

Par 5.115

Military Leave: Georgia law requires that paid leave be granted to members of the Reserve and National Guard under certain conditions. In compliance with Georgia Code 38-2-279, any employee ordered to military duty shall be placed on military leave with pay for a period of time not exceeding a total of eighteen (18) days in any one calendar year or one continuous period of absence.

Par 5.116

Declared Emergency: According to Georgia Code 38-2-279, in the event the Governor declares an emergency and orders any employee to State active duty as a member of the National Guard, the employee shall receive pay for a period not exceeding thirty (30) days in any one continuous period of active duty service.

Par 5.117

Leave-of-Absence: As follows:

1. **Military Reasons**: According to Georgia Code 38-2-279 any voluntary member of the Reserve or National Guard shall be entitled to absent himself and shall be deemed to have a leave-of-absence as an employee while in attendance at any service school conducted by the armed forces of the United States for a period of up to six (6) months during any four (4) year period.
2. **Temporary Disability & Emergencies**: Leave-of-absence may be granted for six (6) months in case of temporary disability and possible other emergency situations. A doctor's statement will be required to determine the length of leave necessary. The Department will maintain compliance with the Family Medical Leave Act.
3. **Benefits During Leave of Absence**: A leave-of-absence prevents a break in service, but no benefits such as leave or time toward retirement shall accrue during leave-of-absence.

Par 5.118

Leave Without Pay: Leave without pay is normally short-term leave similar to vacation and sick leave. Leave without pay may be requested for (a) illness when the employee does not have sufficient accumulated sick leave, (b) for vacation leave when the employee does not have sufficient accumulated leave. In addition to above, an employee may be placed on leave without pay when leave is requested without prior approval or when an employee is absent without notification.

Par 5.119

Court Leave: An employee performing court duty as a subpoenaed witness or juror will be granted leave with pay with proper supporting documentation. The employee must endorse to Laurens County all fees received from the court.

Par 5.120

FMLA Leave: The Federal Family and Medical Leave Act provides up to twelve (12) weeks of unpaid or combination of paid and unpaid job protected leave to "eligible" employees to care for their own or family members' serious health problems . In accordance with federal law, employees are eligible if they have worked for Laurens County for at least one (1) year, and/or one thousand two hundred fifty (1,250) hours over the previous twelve (12) months.

Section 6 – **DISCIPLINE**

Par 6.101

Causes of Disciplinary Actions: The causes of disciplinary actions are as follows:

1. Chronic tardiness or absenteeism,
2. Negligence in performing assigned duties,
3. Inefficiency in performing assigned duties,
4. Inability or unfitness to perform assigned duties,
5. Insubordination ,
6. Misconduct,
7. Commission of a felony or a crime involving moral turpitude
8. Conduct reflecting discredit on Laurens County or the Department
9. Failure to report to work without justifiable cause,
10. Political activity that is prohibited by these policies,
11. Sexual harassment
12. Dishonesty,
13. Abuse or misuse of Laurens County equipment, supplies or other Laurens County property.

Par 6.102

Types of Actions: The disciplinary actions fall into two (2) general categories, reprimands and adverse actions.

Par 6.103

Reprimands: A reprimand is a formal means of communicating a warning to the employee that a problem exists, and that it must be corrected. There are two (2) degrees of formality, the oral reprimand and the written reprimand.

1. Oral Reprimand- Supervisor will verbally and privately explain to the employee that he or she is being reprimanded and describe the problem and what must be done to correct the problem.
2. Written Reprimand - Employee will receive a written statement describing the problem and what must be done to correct the problem. The reprimand will also contain a statement describing the probable consequences of not correcting the problem. If the employee is at work the written statement will be given to the employee during a private interview.

Par 6.104

Adverse Action: An adverse action is an action taken against the employee for cause that results in a disciplinary suspension without pay, disciplinary salary reduction, disciplinary demotion, or disciplinary dismissal.

1. Suspension Without Pay - An employee may be suspended without pay for a violation of accepted policies governing performance and conduct. The suspension without pay shall not exceed thirty (30) days.
2. Disciplinary Salary Reduction - An employee's salary may be reduced from one pay step to a lower step for disciplinary purposes.
3. Disciplinary Demotion - An employee may be demoted from one pay grade to a lower pay grade for disciplinary reasons if the employee is qualified to perform the work at the lower position. A disciplinary demotion must include a decrease in salary.
4. Notification and Response- Once it has been determined that an adverse action should be taken, the following notification and response procedure will be observed

Par 6.105

Notice of Proposed Adverse Action: The Department Head will give the employee a written notification of the proposed adverse action five (5) days prior to the effective date of the action. The notification will contain the following:

1. The effective date of the action,
2. The specific charges or reasons for the action