

# MERCER COUNTY BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES

## EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK



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**“The Mercer County Board of Social Services is committed to providing economic and social services to individuals and families residing in Mercer County based upon financial need.”**

**COUNTY EXECUTIVE**

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## **Section 1: Disclaimer**

### **1:1 Disclaimer**

**THE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES SET OUT IN THIS HANDBOOK ARE NOT AN EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT. THIS HANDBOOK IS A SET OF EMPLOYEE GUIDELINES.**

**IF ANY POLICY OR PROCEDURE IN THIS HANDBOOK CONFLICTS WITH AN EMPLOYEES' CONTRACT THEN THE EMPLOYEE'S CONTRACT GOVERNS.**

**THE MERCER COUNTY BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES FOLLOWS ALL LAWS, REGULATIONS, AND ORDINANCES.**

**IF ANY POLICY OR PROCEDURE IN THIS HANDBOOK CONFLICTS WITH A LAW, REGULATION OR ORDINANCE THEN THE APPLICABLE LAW, REGULATION OR ORDINANCE TAKES PRECEDENCE.**

**THE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES IN THIS HANDBOOK MAY BE CHANGED OR TERMINATED AT THE DISCRETION OF THE MERCER COUNTY BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES.**

**THE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES IN THIS HANDBOOK (5/10/07) REPLACE ALL PREVIOUS ONES.**

## Section 2: Introduction

### 2:1 Introduction



Frank A. Cirillo  
Director of Welfare

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Mercer County Board of Social Services. I think the Board is a special place-made all the more so by the hard work and dedication of our employees.

The Mercer County Board of Social Services has developed this Handbook to provide employees with an overview of Board policies and procedures. The intent is to provide information related to employment. Employees are expected to become familiar with these policies and procedures and refer to them when questions arise. Please understand that this Handbook can only highlight and summarize the Board's policies and procedures.

The Mercer County Board of Social Services was established under the authority of New Jersey Statutes Annotated 44 and has been serving the citizens of Mercer County since 1932. The Board's mission statement is:

The Mercer County Board of Social Services is committed to providing economic and social services to individuals and families residing in Mercer County based upon financial need.

In order to meet its mission the Board has adopted the following guiding principles:

- Treat each person with dignity and respect.
- Strengthen families.
- Direct programs to address the entire spectrum of a family's needs, not just the discrete needs of individuals.
- Provide services that will protect those that are most vulnerable, i.e., elderly and children.
- Promote individual responsibility.
- Empower persons to move off assistance and toward independence.
- Make work more rewarding than assistance.
- Allow flexibility in programs to accommodate state, local, and individual differences.
- Focus success measures on persons, not on processes.
- Use public funds efficiently.
- Build partnerships within the community.
- Build community.

Contained within the following pages are approved policies and procedures of the Mercer County Board of Social Services. In the Board, circumstances are constantly changing. As a result, the Board may have to revise, rescind, or supplement these policies from time to time. For employees' convenience, the Mercer County Board of Social Services will make changes to the handbook on the internet. Employees will be responsible to review changes on the internet and familiarize themselves with any changes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Frank A. Cirillo".

Frank A. Cirillo  
Director of Welfare

## **Section 3: Hiring**

### **3:1 Equal Opportunity Policy Statement**

The Mercer County Board of Social Services believes that all people are entitled to equal employment opportunity. The Board follows state and federal laws prohibiting discrimination in hiring and employment. The Board does not discriminate against employees or applicants because of race, creed, color, national origin, nationality, ancestry, age, religion, sex (including pregnancy), marital status, domestic partnership status, familial status, affectional or sexual orientation, atypical hereditary cellular or blood trait, genetic information, liability for service in the Armed Forces of the United States, and mental or physical disability (including perceived disability, and AIDS and HIV status) or any other characteristic protected by law.

### **3:2 Americans with Disabilities Act Employment Policy Statement**

It is the policy and practice of the Mercer County Board of Social Services to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and ensure equal opportunity in employment for all qualified persons with disabilities.

The Board will provide reasonable accommodations to a qualified individual with a disability, as defined by the American with Disabilities Act, who has made the Board aware of his or her disability, provided that such accommodation does not constitute an undue hardship on the Board.

Employees with a disability who believe they need a reasonable accommodation to perform the essential functions of their job should contact the Human Resources Department.

## **Section 4: Employee Information**

### **4:1 New Employee Orientation**

On the first day of employment, all new employees must attend an employee orientation meeting. During this meeting, new employees will receive important information about the Mercer County Board of Social Services' personnel policies and procedures. Employees will also be asked to complete paperwork and forms relating to their employment, including but not limited to tax withholding forms, emergency contact forms and benefits paperwork.

### **4:2 Proof of Work Eligibility**

Employees must produce documentation proving their identity and eligibility to work in the United States prior to being hired by the Mercer County Board of Social Services. On the first day of employment, all employees are required to complete a federal employment eligibility verification form (Form I-9). The Mercer County Board of Social Services keeps records related to that proof, including a copy of the Form I-9 each employee completes.

I-9 forms are kept as confidential as possible. The Board does not keep them in one's personnel file.

For more information about one's I-9 form, contact the Human Resources Department.

### **4:3 Child Support Requirements**

Federal and state laws require the Mercer County Board of Social Services to report basic information about new employees, including an employee's full name, address, Social Security number, date of birth, and date of hire to the New Jersey New Hire Directory. The state collects this information to enforce child support orders.

### **4:4 Residency Requirements**

All Mercer County Board of Social Services employees shall comply with residency requirements as prescribed by County of Mercer Ordinance 82-9 and 85-3. The failure of any employee to comply with residency requirements shall be cause for removal or discharge from service.

For more information about residency requirements, contact the Assistant Personnel Officer in the Human Resources Department.

### **4:5 Outside Employment**

An employee may pursue employment outside their regular working hours when it does not interfere with his or her performance or attendance at the Mercer County Board of Social Services. This type of work shall not create a conflict of interest in employment. If it does, employees may be subject to discipline up to and including termination.

Employees are required to complete an Outside Employment Notification Form.

All employees will be subject to Mercer County Board of Social Services' scheduling demands, regardless of any existing outside employment requirements.

### **4:6 Grievance Problems**

All claimed grievances should first be resolved at the lowest possible level, and if unresolved the employee should then follow the grievance procedure guidelines in their appropriate labor agreement.

For more information, refer to one's appropriate labor agreement (Article 10 of Agreement between Mercer County Board of Social Services and Local 2285 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees AFL-CIO; Article 14 of Agreement between Mercer County Board of Social Services and Local 3390 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees AFL-CIO; Non-Collective and Non-Limited Salary and Benefits Package).

## **Section 5 Forfeiture of Employment**

### **5:1 Forfeiture of Employment**

New Jersey law mandates forfeiture of employment for a public employee if convicted of a third degree offense or higher (or equivalent offence in another jurisdiction) or an offense involving dishonesty or convicted of an offense touching one's office, position or employment.

For more information on forfeiture of employment, refer to NJSA 2C:51-2 et. seq.

## **Section 6: Civil Service Information**

### **6:1 Service Categories**

Mercer County Board of Social Services employees are subject to the Civil Service Act, New Jersey Statutes Annotated, and rules and regulations as described in New Jersey Administrative Code. For more information, refer to the New Jersey Department of Personnel web site at: <http://www.state.nj.us/personnel/index.html>.

The Board hires from the Career Service and Unclassified Service categories.

#### **Career Service**

Career Service positions and job titles are subject to the tenure provisions of the Civil Service Act. These positions are further subdivided between the following divisions:

- **Competitive Division:**  
Job titles in the Competitive Division subject to competitive examination procedures.
- **Non Competitive Division:**  
Job titles in which it has been determined that competitive testing is not appropriate.

#### **Unclassified Service**

Unclassified Service positions and job titles are not subject to the tenure provisions of the Civil Service Act, New Jersey Statutes or N.J.A.C. 4A unless otherwise specified by law or statute.

For more information on service categories, refer to N.J.A.C. 4A:3-1.1 to 4A:3-3.8.

### **6:2 Working Test Periods**

All employees who receive a regular appointment in the Career Service category are required to serve a working test period for three months. During this time, employees learn their job duties and responsibilities and are monitored and evaluated on their work performance.

If it is determined that an employee's performance is unsatisfactory during the work test period, the employee may be demoted or terminated. For more information on working test periods, refer to N.J.A.C. 4A:4-5.1 to 4A:4-5.5.

### **6:3 Promotions**

In order to notify all employees of promotional opportunities, the Mercer County Board of Social Services prominently posts promotional announcements. Generally, employees may be considered for a promotion, provided they have the minimum qualifications for the vacant position and meet all other Department of Personnel regulations.

### **6:4 Reassignments**

Reassignments may occur as determined necessary by management to meet the operational needs of the Mercer County Board of Social Services.

## **6:5 Demotions**

Employees may be demoted through a voluntary request or as a direct consequence of unsatisfactory performance or disciplinary action as determined by management or any actions related to the Department of Personnel.

## **Section 7: Hours**

### **7:1 Hours of Work**

The Mercer County Board of Social Services' regular hours of business are from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday and Wednesday through Friday, and 8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. on Tuesday.

The standard workweek is thirty-five (35) hours, from 8:30 to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, exclusive of an unpaid meal break. Employees should consult their appropriate labor agreement for further information. Employees participating in the voluntary Alternate Work Week program shall have a schedule conforming to the Alternate Work Week policy.

### **7:2 Unauthorized Employees in the Building after Five O'clock**

Employees must vacate the building before five o'clock unless they are authorized to remain in the building. Employees who violate this policy may face discipline, up to and including termination.

### **7:3 Alternate Work Week Policy**

The Mercer County Board of Social Services will have extended work hours one day a week. The day is Tuesday. The hours will be 8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.

On Tuesdays, employees will have the option of working 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., 12:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., or 8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Those employees electing to work 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. or 12:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., will see no changes in their workweek (35 hours per week, five 7-hour workdays per week). Those electing to work 8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. will be entitled to time off. Specifically, those working one 12-hour day in a pay period will be entitled to one-half day off and those working two 12-hour days during a pay period would be entitled to one full day off. The time off will be at the supervisor's discretion with input from the employee, and shall be used no later than the following pay period. Use of time intervals earned in this manner or for any other reason of less than one-half day will be governed by appropriate articles in the labor agreements. Mealtime totaling one and one-half (1 ½) hours and a third fifteen (15) minute break will be available to those that work 8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Adequate coverage will be required for all hours of operation. Work schedules are subject to supervisory and administrative discretion, which will include input from individual employees. Ultimate review and approval by the department head is required.

Time off must be earned before it can be used. Time off may not be accumulated.

Supervisors have the option to offer the 12:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. shift on a temporary basis as needed.

Opportunities to take advantage of the program will be offered to all staff. However, areas designated as mandatory coverage units will be required to be staffed. This may result in temporary shifts of staff from one department or unit to another across the agency within a job classification.

Should a holiday fall on a Tuesday, there will be no extended work hours or time off earned for that day.

Staff will have the opportunity to opt in and/or out of the program on a monthly basis. All changes will take effect on the first day of a pay period.

Units designated as required mandatory coverage will be:

- Administrative/General Services (limited)
- Appointment Desk
- Child Support and Paternity (limited)
- Fiscal Operations (limited)
- Income Maintenance

- Management Information Systems (limited)
- Medical Assistance
- Security
- Social Services
- Unified Application Process Intake

Any issue not specifically addressed in the policy will be governed by the appropriate labor agreement.

#### **7:4 Meal and Rest Breaks**

Employees are entitled to one fifteen (15) minute paid break each morning, afternoon and/or evening worked.

Employees who work at least an 8-hour day are entitled to one sixty (60) minute unpaid meal break. Employees who work at least a 12-hour day are entitled one sixty (60) minute unpaid afternoon meal break and a second thirty (30) minute unpaid evening meal break.

Break time shall not be combined. Employees shall not use break time to adjust their work schedule (e.g. taking a meal break from 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.). Employees are not entitled to compensation for break time not taken. Break time is non-cumulative.

The employee's supervisor, based upon the operational needs of the work unit, shall set break times of all employees. Supervisors may approve meal breaks, which accommodate employee preferences, while at the same time ensure coverage to external and internal customers. As a guideline, afternoon meal breaks should be taken between the hours of 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and evening meal breaks should be taken between the hours of 4:30 to 7:00 p.m.

Employees who violate this policy will face discipline, up to and including termination.

#### **7:5 Overtime and Compensatory Time**

Depending on the Mercer County Board of Social Services' work needs, employees may be authorized to work beyond their regular scheduled hours. All requests for overtime and compensatory time must be requested in writing and be pre-approved by the Director of Welfare. In emergencies, where the written pre-approval of overtime or compensatory time is not possible, employees must get pre-approval from their Supervisor. Working overtime or compensatory time without permission violates Board policy and may result in disciplinary action.

For more information, refer to one's appropriate labor agreement (Article 22 of Agreement between Mercer County Board of Social Services and Local 2285 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees AFL-CIO; Article 18 of Agreement between Mercer County Board of Social Services and Local 3390 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees AFL-CIO; Non-Collective and Non-Limited Salary and Benefits Package).

## **Section 8: Pay Information**

### **8:1 Payday**

Employees are paid biweekly on Friday. If payday falls on a holiday, employees will receive their paycheck on the last workday immediately before payday.

### **8:2 Direct Deposits**

All employees, except seasonal and student employees, may enroll in direct deposit. New employees may enroll in direct deposit at the time of hire. Generally, there are two enrollment periods each year one in June and one in December. For more information about direct deposits, contact the Payroll Section of the Finance Department.

### **8:3 Advances**

The Mercer County Board of Social Services does not allow employees to receive pay advances for any reason.

### **8:4 Early Release of Paychecks**

The Mercer County Board of Social Services allows employees, who receive a computer produced paycheck, to receive their paychecks early when they will be on an approved alternate, bereavement, personal or vacation day or out of the office on official Board business on the scheduled payday.

Employees are required to present their original approved alternate, bereavement, personal, vacation authorization slip to the Payroll Section to obtain their early release paycheck.

Employees who will be out of the office on official Board business on the scheduled payday must have their supervisor submit authorization in writing to the Payroll Section to obtain their early release paycheck.

Early release paychecks are subject to receipt and processing of the computer-produced checks from the payroll system.

Early release paychecks will be dated for the normal scheduled payday.

At the discretion of the Fiscal Officer and with authorization of the Director or his or her designee, an employee with the written approval of his or her immediate supervisor may request an early release of their paycheck due to special circumstances.

For more information on the early release of paychecks, contact the Payroll Section in the Finance Department.

### **8:5 Payroll Deductions**

Paychecks reflect total earnings for the pay period, as well as any mandatory or voluntary deductions that the Mercer County Board of Social Services is legally required to take.

Employees wishing to change their federal withholding form (Form W-4) should contact the Human Resources Department.

## **8:6 Wage Garnishments**

A wage garnishment is an order from a court directing the Board to withhold a certain amount of money from an employee's paycheck and send it to a person or agency.

If the Board is instructed by a court to garnish an employee's wages, the employee will be notified of the garnishment. If there is a dispute or concern about the amount of a garnishment, employees must contact the court or agency that issued that order, not the Payroll Section of the Finance Department.

## **8:7 Attendance Records**

The attendance of all employees is recorded daily by each employee on an employee attendance record and is submitted to the Human Resources Department on a biweekly basis. Employee attendance records are the Mercer County Board of Social Services' records, and care must be exercised in recording the hours worked, absences, compensatory time, overtime, dockages and any other required information.

Each employee is responsible for his or her own record keeping. Only hours worked are to be recorded on the employee attendance record. Employees shall not sign in earlier than their scheduled start time or sign out later than their scheduled ending time unless they are expressly authorized to work beyond their normal scheduled workday. Working overtime or compensatory time without permission violates Board policy and may result in disciplinary action. Once an employee signs in, work is to commence immediately. Failure to do so is considered falsification of an employee attendance record.

On days where the employee is absent, the employee's Supervisor shall note in the remarks column the status of the employee's absence for that day and initial the note.

If an employee corrects an error on their employee attendance record, the employee shall draw a line through the error, enter the correction, and initial and date the correction. The employee's supervisor shall also initial and date the correction. Employees shall not make corrections by any other method (write-over, correction fluid, correction tape, etc.).

Attendance record adjustments/corrections must be completed by 10 a.m. on the following business day after attendance records are submitted to the Human Resources Department; thereafter a memo from employee's administrator will be required.

Employees requesting payroll adjustments shall be required to make their request in writing and should include the basis for the request. Employees shall submit this request to their Supervisor and Department Head for review and written recommendation. Any authorization to make revision in the pay issuance under these circumstances will be at the discretion of the Director of Welfare or his or her designee.

Employees who violate this policy will face discipline, up to and including termination.

## **Section 9: Employee Benefits**

### **9:1 Health Insurance**

All eligible employees may choose to enroll themselves and their eligible dependents in the State Health Benefits Plan coverage provided by the Board. Eligible employees may choose between a Traditional Plan, PPO (Preferred Provider Plan) and an HMO (Health Maintenance Organization). Employees are responsible for electing the type of plan and available provider. Once made, an employee's election is typically fixed until the next open enrollment period. Employees should contact the Human Resources Department if they have a change in family status before the next open enrollment period. During open enrollment, employees may change their medical elections for the following calendar year. Employees will be notified of open enrollment periods.

All eligible employees are responsible for contributing towards all health benefit programs. Complete descriptions of the plans are available for review.

For more information, refer to the State Health Benefits Program Summary Program Description and one's appropriate labor agreement (Article 11 of Agreement between Mercer County Board of Social Services and Local 2285 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees AFL-CIO; Article 17 of Agreement between Mercer County Board of Social Services and Local 3390 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees AFL-CIO; Non-Collective and Non-Limited Salary and Benefits Package).

### **9:2 Prescription Drug Program**

All eligible employees may choose to enroll themselves and their eligible dependents in the Prescription Drug Program provided by the Board. A co-payment for brand name and generic medications is required. A co-payment for mail order medications may not be required.

For more information, refer to one's appropriate labor agreement (Article 11 of Agreement between Mercer County Board of Social Services and Local 2285 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees AFL-CIO; Article 17 of Agreement between Mercer County Board of Social Services and Local 3390 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees AFL-CIO; Non-Collective and Non-Limited Salary and Benefits Package).

### **9:3 Dental Insurance**

All eligible employees may choose to enroll themselves and their eligible dependents in the Dental Plan coverage provided by the Board. Eligible Employees may choose between a Dental Expense Plan and Dental Plan Organization. The Dental Expense Plan is a traditional indemnity plan that allows employees to obtain services from any dentist. Dental Plan Organizations are companies that contract with a network of providers for services.

Employees are responsible for electing the type of plan. Once enrolled in a dental plan, employees must remain in the dental plan for at least 12 months. Employees should contact the Human Resources Department if they have a change in family status before the next open enrollment period.

Complete descriptions of the plans are available for review.

For more information, refer to the State Health Benefits Program Employee Dental Plans Member Handbook and one's appropriate labor agreement (Article 11 of Agreement between Mercer County Board of Social Services and Local 2285 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees AFL-CIO; Article 17 of Agreement between Mercer County Board of Social Services and Local 3390 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees AFL-CIO; Non-Collective and Non-Limited Salary and Benefits Package).

## **9:4 Eye Care Plan**

Under the Eye Care Plan, all eligible employees and their eligible dependents receive a partial reimbursement for the cost of examination and lenses. These benefits are effective only after the eligible employee has been continuously employed for a minimum of 60 days. In order to be reimbursed, employees must submit a receipted bill that reflects a zero balance. For information on submitting a receipted bill for reimbursement, contact the Human Resources Department.

For more information, refer to one's appropriate labor agreement (Article 11 of Agreement between Mercer County Board of Social Services and Local 2285 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees AFL-CIO; Article 17 of Agreement between Mercer County Board of Social Services and Local 3390 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees AFL-CIO; Non-Collective and Non-Limited Salary and Benefits Package).

## **9:5 Premium Option Plan**

A Premium Option Plan is available to regular full-time employees. This plan allows employees to pay their health insurance premium, on a pre-tax basis. For more information, contact the Human Resources Department.

## **9:6 Health Care Flexible Savings Accounts**

Employee-funded Health Care Flexible Savings Accounts (FSA) are available to regular full-time employees. Health Care FSA's allow employees to pay their health insurance deductions, on a pre-tax basis. For more information, contact the Human Resources Department.

## **9:7 Dependent Care Flexible Savings Accounts**

Employee-funded Dependent Care Flexible Savings Accounts (FSA) are available to regular full-time employees. Dependent Care FSA's allow employees to pay for childcare services and under certain circumstance the care of elderly parents, or a disabled spouse or dependent, on a pre-tax basis. For more information, contact the Human Resources Department.

## **9:8 Supplemental Insurance**

Employee-funded supplemental insurance is available to regular full-time employees. Employees may choose to purchase Cancer, Critical Illness, Disability and Accident Insurance. For more information, contact the Human Resources Department.

## **9:9 Public Employees' Retirement System**

All full-time regular employees of the Mercer County Board of Social Services are required to be members of the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS). The PERS provides a retirement income based upon years of service credit and salary.

Members are vested in the retirement system after attaining at least 10 years of credit service. Being vested in the PERS means that members are guaranteed a right to receive a retirement benefit when they reach age 60.

Additional information regarding the retirement system can be found in the Public Employee's Retirement System Handbook at: [www.state.nj.us/treasury/pensions](http://www.state.nj.us/treasury/pensions).

For information on submitting a retirement letter, contact the Human Resources Department.

## 9:10 Group Life Insurance

Noncontributory Group Life insurance is provided to members of the Public Employees Retirement System at no cost to the member.

Contributory Group Life insurance is life insurance for which employees pay. This insurance is mandatory for members during their first 12 months of enrollment in the pension system. After 12 months of membership in the Public Employees Retirement System, employees may discontinue this insurance. Once a member discontinues Contributory Group Life insurance, it cannot be reinstated, nor can contributions that were made prior to discontinuance be refunded.

The amount of Death Benefits paid out to beneficiaries depends on three factors:

- Membership status at time of death
- Last 12 months of salary
- Age (if beneficiary is a disability retiree).

In general, active members receive death benefits as follows:

- Noncontributory – 1 ½ times salary
- Noncontributory and contributory – 3 times salary.

For more information on group life insurance, refer to the Public Employees' Retirement System Handbook.

## 9:11 Domestic Partner Coverage

The Domestic Partnership Act applies to any Mercer County Board of Social Services employee who has obtained a New Jersey *Certificate of Domestic Partnership* (or a valid certification from another jurisdiction that recognizes same-sex domestic partners, civil unions, or similar same-sex relationships). Employees have 60 days from the date that they obtain their *Certificate of Domestic Partnership* to add an eligible domestic partner to their coverage. Employees may also add dependent children of their domestic partner at this time **provided they also qualify as their dependents**. For more information, contact the Human Resources Department.

## 9:12 Civil Unions

The New Jersey Civil Union Act was signed into law Dec. 21, 2006, and took effect on Feb. 20, 2007. It is the policy and practice of the Mercer County Board of Social Services to comply with the New Jersey Civil Union Act. For more information, contact the Human Resources Department.

## 9:13 COBRA

Under the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) employees and their eligible dependents who lose group health coverage may have the right to continued group health plan benefits for a set period at their own expense. For more information, contact the Human Resources Department.

## **9:14 State Disability Insurance**

When an employee suffers an illness or injury outside of the workplace that prevents the employee from working and earning an income, state disability insurance may provide the employee with a percentage of their salary while they are unable to work. Employees are eligible for this coverage and pay for it through deductions from their paycheck.

For more information on state disability insurance, contact the Human Resources Department.

## **9:15 Worker's Compensation**

Employees who suffer from an illness or injury that is related to work, may be eligible for worker's compensation benefits. Worker's compensation pays for medical care and lost wages resulting from a job related illnesses or injuries.

Employees are responsible to report any workplace illness or injuries immediately to their supervisor regardless of how minor the injury or illness might be. See Section 15:1 for information on workplace safety. To find out more about Worker's Compensation Accident - Proper Procedures, contact the Human Resources Department.

## **9:16 Unemployment Insurance**

Employees who become unemployed may be eligible for unemployment benefits. These benefits provide a person with a percentage of their wages while they are unemployed and looking for work. For more information, contact the Human Resources Department.

## **9:17 Sick Leave Buy Back**

Full-time employees having accumulated ten or more of their fifteen sick days for the calendar year have the option to be paid five days wages in lieu of carrying over five of their sick days.

An employee wishing to exercise the sick leave pay option must make this request in writing to the Human Resources Department. The Human Resources Department will distribute a form for this purpose with instructions regarding its return.

## **9:18 Employee Assistance Program**

The Board provides free, confidential, short-term counseling to help employees and members of an employee's household resolve problems that may affect their work performance or personal lives. Metro Employee Assistance Service provides this service.

Employees may be referred to the Employee Assistance Program by Administration or Supervisors to get help with problems they are having at work to improve their work performance. In addition, employees may refer themselves by calling and asking to speak with a counselor. In Trenton, the number to call is 609-396-5877; in Hamilton, 609-689-0950.

## **9:19 Mileage**

Employees who are required to use their own private vehicles for business use receive a mileage reimbursement allowance as per appropriate labor agreement.

For more information, refer to one's appropriate labor agreement (Article 23 of Agreement between Mercer County Board of Social Services and Local 2285 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees AFL-CIO; Article 26 of Agreement between Mercer County Board of Social Services and Local 3390 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees AFL-CIO; Non-Collective and Non-Limited Salary and Benefits Package).

## **9:20 Tuition Reimbursements and Educational Leave**

Tuition Reimbursement and Educational Leave is provided by the Board to enable permanent employees who have completed one year of satisfactory service, to attend job related courses at accredited educational institutions (including vocational education), of their own choosing and obtain reimbursement for their tuition within the limitations of established agency regulations, manpower requirements, and the availability of funds. Each course is evaluated individually and must be related to agency related promotional opportunities and matriculation in a specific degree program. For more information on Tuition and Educational Leave, refer to the Human Resource Development Policy.

## **9:21 Deferred Compensation**

Employees have the option of joining Met Life, Nationwide, and AIG VALIC deferred compensation programs. Representatives from each company are available to meet with employees interested in these programs during open enrollment periods. Employees will be notified of open enrollment periods.

## **9:22 Credit Unions**

Employees have the option of joining the Andrews Federal Credit Union and the Credit Union of NJ. Employees may authorize the direct deposit of payroll deductions to their credit union. For more information, contact the Human Resource Department.

## **9:23 Savings Bonds**

Employees have the option of purchasing United States Savings Bonds through pay roll deductions. For more information, contact the Human Resource Department.

## **Section 10: Use of Board Property**

### **10:1 Use of Board Property**

Employees shall take care of Board property and report any problems to their immediate supervisor. If a piece of equipment or property is unsafe for use, report it immediately.

Employees shall use property only in the manner intended.

The Mercer County Board of Social Services does not allow personal use of Board property unless specifically authorized.

Failure to use Board property appropriately, and failure to report problems or unsafe conditions, may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

For information on use of telephones and the voice mail system, see Section 10:4 and 10:5 of the Handbook.

For information on use of computers and software, the Internet, email and instant messaging, see Section 16 of this Handbook.

### **10:2 Use of Board Vehicles**

Only authorized employees may use Board vehicles, and they may do so only on Board business.

Employees must have a valid driver's license to use Board vehicles, and the Mercer County Board of Social Services expects employees will drive in a safe and courteous manner and follow all motor vehicle laws, regulations and ordinances. Drivers are responsible for tickets received for parking or moving violations.

Employees may not use Board vehicles while under the influence of controlled substances or alcohol or while otherwise impaired.

All occupants in Board vehicles shall use a properly adjusted and fastened seat belt system, child passenger restraint system, or booster seat system, at all times while vehicles are in transit regardless of the person's age or where the passenger is seated in the vehicle.

All occupants in Board vehicles shall not eat, drink, or smoke while in Board vehicles.

Employees shall keep vehicles clean and remove any trash or personal items when finished using the vehicles.

Employees shall immediately report any mechanical problems or other problems to the Motor Pool.

Employees who are in an accident shall follow accident-reporting procedures located in the glove compartment of the vehicle. All accidents shall be reported to the police, motor pool and the employees' supervisor as outlined in the accident reporting procedures.

Employees who violate this policy will face discipline, up to and including termination.

For further information on use of Board vehicles or personal vehicles for business use, see the Mercer County Board of Social Services Automobile policy.

### **10:3 Return of Board Property**

Upon termination of employment, employees must return all Mercer County Board of Social Services property in clean and in good repair. Employees will be expected to return all Board property to their Supervisors.

The Mercer County Board of Social Services reserves the right to take any lawful action to recover or protect Board property.

## **10:4 Telephone System**

The Mercer County Board of Social Services' telephone system is for business use only. Personal calls must be kept brief. Employees must reimburse toll calls utilized for personal business to the Mercer County Board of Social Services, within two weeks of the receipt of the bill. Please see the Principal Clerk in Administrative/General Service concerning reimbursements. Extensive personal use of the Board's telephone system is grounds for discipline.

All employees are expected to conduct themselves professionally while on the telephone in order to convey a businesslike image to our customers. Employees who act unprofessionally will face discipline, up to and including termination.

For information on Professional Conduct, see Section 14:2.

## **10:5 Voice Mail**

The voice mail system is for business use only. Use of the voice mail system for personal use is prohibited. All communications and information transmitted by, received from, or stored in this system are company records and property of the Mercer County Board of Social Services.

Employees have no rights of personal privacy or confidentiality in any matter stored in, created, received, or sent over the voice mail system.

The Board reserves and may exercise the right to monitor, access, retrieve, copy and delete any matter stored in, created, received, or sent over the voice mail system, for any reason without the permission of any employee and without notice.

All passwords to the voice mail system are assigned by the Administrative/General Services Division and shall not be changed by employees.

The Board's policies on integrity, professional conduct, violence, and policy prohibiting discrimination, harassment or hostile work environment in the workplace apply fully to the voice mail system, and any violation of those policies is grounds for discipline up to and including termination.

Users should routinely delete outdated or otherwise unnecessary voice mails to keep the system running smoothly and effectively.

Any employee who discovers misuse of the voice mail system should immediately contact their supervisor. Employees who violate the voice mail policy will face discipline, up to and including termination.

## **10:6 Use of Black Ink Pens for Official Work**

Unless otherwise prescribed, black ink shall be used on all official documents.

## **Section 11: Parking**

### **11:1 Parking**

Through our lease agreement with the property owner, the Mercer County Board of Social Services has provided for parking for employees, customers and visitors.

#### **Disclaimer**

The Mercer County Board of Social Services shall not be responsible for loss or damage to vehicles, accessories, or the contents thereof caused by fire, theft, collision, water or other causes to any vehicle parked in any Board parking area.

#### **Parking Permits**

Customers and visitors are not required to obtain parking permits. Employees that wish to park in the parking area must register their vehicles, obtain and display a valid permit at all times. One permit will be issued to an employee and there is no cost for the permit. Employees must provide the license plate number of the vehicle that they wish to register and permits are non-transferable. Permits are to be placed on the rearview mirror, with the permit number facing outward and must be visible from the outside of the vehicle.

Employees wishing to park an unregistered vehicle must obtain a temporary permit through security. Temporary permits must be visible from the outside of the vehicle.

If a permit needs to be replaced due to loss or damage it must be replaced immediately. There is no cost for a replacement.

The Mercer County Board of Social Services reserves the right to change the number and allocation of parking spaces and/or permits at any time.

#### **Employee Designated Areas**

Employees may only park in designated areas as described in Section 11:2 Allocation of Parking. Employee parking on neighborhood streets is not permitted.

#### **Customers and Visitor Parking**

Parking is available for customers and visitors in the courtyard in the front of the building near the customer and visitor entrances. Customers and visitors shall not park in areas that are marked reserved.

#### **Handicapped Parking**

Handicapped parking is available in the parking area near each entrance of the building. The handicapped space near the customer entrance ramp is for customer/visitor parking only. All vehicles parked in handicapped parking must display valid state issued permits or license plates. Employees must also display a valid Board issued parking permit.

#### **Additional Parking**

Additional parking is available for customers, visitors and employees in the Mercer County Parking Lot accessible from Hudson Street or South Broad Street.

## No Parking Areas

Vehicles parked illegally in fire lanes, blocking a walkway, fire hydrant, or anywhere that creates a hazard for other drivers or pedestrians may be towed at the owner's expense. The exception to this rule is emergency or any other authorized vehicles.

## Non-compliance

Non-compliance with any parking policy may result in the revocation of parking privileges in all Board parking areas and employees who violate this policy will face discipline, up to and including termination.

## 11:2 Allocation of Parking

- **Administrators and Administrative Secretary:** spaces 1-7, 31-33, and 53-70.
- **Attorneys:** spaces 1-7, 31-33, and 53-70.
- **Board Members:** spaces 193-201 (note these spaces will normally be reserved in advance for board members).
- **County Cars:** spaces 16-25 and 34-42.
- **Customers/Visitors:** spaces 10-30 and 34-52.
- **Handicapped Parking:** spaces 97-101, one space along front of building near the employee entrance and one space along front of building near the client entrance. The handicapped space near the client entrance is for clients/visitors only.
- **Overflow Parking:** Mercer County Parking Lot.
- **Other Employees and Others with Permanent Parking Privileges:** spaces 102-173 and 214-400.
- **Seasonal Employees:** Mercer County Parking Lot.
- **Security Officers:** spaces 210-213.
- **Supervisors and Secretarial Assistants:** spaces 73-96 and 174-208.

## **Section 12: Leave and Time Off**

### **12:1 Holidays**

The Mercer County Board of Social Services observes the following holidays each year:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Day
- Lincoln's Birthday
- Washington's Birthday
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Columbus Day
- Election Day
- Veteran's Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Day

Ordinarily, holidays falling on a Saturday will be observed the preceding Friday; holidays falling on a Sunday will be observed the following Monday.

Additional holidays observed as approved by the Mercer County Board of Social Services.

### **12:2 Leaves of Absence**

Permanent employees may request up to a maximum of six (6) months without pay at one time and up to one year total.

Provisional employees may be granted sixty (60) days without pay and the leave may not be renewed or extended consecutively.

A leave of absence is required when:

- An employee is out of work without pay for more than three (3) consecutive working days or
- An employee is out of work with pay for more than ten (10) consecutive working days.

Holidays are not considered working days when determining the need for a leave of absence.

Supervisors must approve all requests for leave and certain types of leave requests may require administrative approval. Employees should submit a request for a leave prior to beginning the leave. Failure by an employee to obtain proper approval for any type of leave could result in loss of pay for the leave time used and employees will face discipline, up to and including termination.

Employees should refer to the appropriate leave guidelines as explained in their applicable labor agreement.

Employees who violate leave procedures or abuse leave usage will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

### **12:3 Vacation Leave**

All full-time employees are eligible for paid vacation. During the first calendar year of employment, full-time employees earn one working day for each month of service.

After the first calendar year of employment, all full-time employees earn vacation time according to the following schedule:

- First full year of employment to the completion of five years, twelve days (12).
- Beginning of sixth year to completion of tenth year, fifteen days (15).
- Beginning of eleventh year to completion of fifteenth year, twenty days (20).
- Completion of the fifteenth year, twenty-five days (25).

Up to one year of earned vacation days may be carried over into the next year.

For more information, refer to one's appropriate labor agreement (Article 7 of Agreement between Mercer County Board of Social Services and Local 2285 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees AFL-CIO; Article 7 of Agreement between Mercer County Board of Social Services and Local 3390 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees AFL-CIO; Non-Collective and Non-Limited Salary and Benefits Package).

## **12:4 Personal Leave**

All full-time employees who have been employed for more than one calendar year are eligible for three paid personal leave days per year, to be used for personal business. Unused personal leave cannot be carried over to the next calendar year.

For more information, refer to one's appropriate labor agreement (Article 14 of Agreement between Mercer County Board of Social Services and Local 2285 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees AFL-CIO; Article 8 of Agreement between Mercer County Board of Social Services and Local 3390 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees AFL-CIO; Non-Collective and Non-Limited Salary and Benefits Package).

## **12:5 Family and Medical Leave Act and New Jersey Family Leave Act**

Under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and the New Jersey Family Leave Act (NJFLA) employees may be eligible for up to 12 workweeks of unpaid, job-protected leave for certain family and medical reasons. For more information, contact the Human Resources Department.

## **12:6 Sick Leave**

Full-time employees earn sick time according to the following schedule:

- One sick day for each month of service during the remainder of the calendar year following the date of appointment.
- First full year of employment, fifteen days.

Employees may use sick leave when they are unable to work due to: Personal illness or injury; exposure to contagious disease; care, for a reasonable period of time, or a seriously ill member of the employee's immediate family; or death in the employee's immediate family, for a reasonable period of time.

Sick leave may be used by an employee with a disability for absences related to the acquisition or use of an aid for the disability when the aid is necessary to function on the job. In such cases, reasonable proof may be required.

Sick leave may be accrued.

For more information, refer to one's appropriate labor agreement (Article 9 of Agreement between Mercer County Board of Social Services and Local 2285 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees AFL-CIO; Article 9 of Agreement between Mercer County Board of Social Services and Local 3390 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees AFL-CIO; Non-Collective and Non-Limited Salary and Benefits Package).

## **12:7 Pregnancy-Disability and Childcare Leave**

Employees in the career or unclassified service are eligible for leaves with or without pay for reason of disability due to pregnancy. The Board requires a physicians' certification as

evidence that employees are unable to perform job duties because of disability due to pregnancy.

Employees may use Childcare Leave as an extension of Pregnancy-Disability Leave.

### **12:8 Bereavement Leave**

Full-time employees, who suffer the death of an immediate family member, are entitled to take up to five consecutive days paid leave for bereavement. Immediate family members are father, mother, brother, sister, spouse, natural children, adopted children, step or foster children, grandchildren, present mother-in-law, present father-in-law, and grandparent.

Full-time employees who suffer the death of step or foster parents, stepbrother, stepsister, legal guardian, aunt, uncle, employee's spouse's grandparents, present son-in-law, present daughter-in-law, present brother-in-law, present sister-in-law, and other relatives residing in the employee's household are entitled to take up to one day paid leave for bereavement.

For more information, refer to one's appropriate labor agreement (Article 14 of Agreement between Mercer County Board of Social Services and Local 2285 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees AFL-CIO; Article 8 of Agreement between Mercer County Board of Social Services and Local 3390 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees AFL-CIO; Non-Collective and Non-Limited Salary and Benefits Package).

### **12:9 Educational Leave**

Full and Part-Time educational leaves may be available to permanent employees who have completed at least one year of satisfactory service for obtaining knowledge that is of value to the Board. For more information, contact the Training Supervisor.

### **12:10 Military Leave**

In accordance with state and federal law, employees who must be absent from work for military service are entitled to take a military leave of absence.

The Mercer County Board of Social Services has adopted Executive Order 2003-1 from the Office of the Mercer County Executive with the following two amendments.

The Mercer County Board of Social Services' policy includes all military action, not just Operation Enduring Freedom, and authorizes the Human Resources Department and payroll staff to insure that disbursements are made correctly.

### **12:11 Jury Duty**

Employees who are called for jury duty are entitled to take time off, as necessary, to fulfill jury obligations. This time off will be paid. Employees are required to reimburse the Board for any jury fees or compensation paid while serving on jury duty.

Employees must immediately inform their supervisor when they receive their jury duty summons. Employees chosen to sit on a jury must inform their supervisor how long the trial is expected to last. If excused by the Court on or before 12:30 p.m., the employee shall return to work for the remainder of the day. At the conclusion of jury duty, employees must provide written verification of attendance.

For more information, refer to one's appropriate labor agreement (Article 11 of Agreement between Mercer County Board of Social Services and Local 2285 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees AFL-CIO; Article 17 of Agreement between Mercer County Board of Social Services and Local 3390 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees AFL-CIO; Non-Collective and Non-Limited Salary and Benefits Package).

## Section 13 Performance

### 13:1 Performance Evaluations

The job performance of all Mercer County Board of Social Services employees will be evaluated by his or her supervisor on an annual basis.

#### Employee Performance Evaluation Form

An Employee Performance Evaluation form is used to record the performance evaluation. For more information concerning the Employee Performance Evaluation form, contact the Human Resources Department.

#### Schedule

All newly hired or promoted provisional, interim or temporary employees will have a probationary evaluation review based on at least the first thirty days of performance. The purpose of this evaluation is to determine whether or not to retain provisional, interim or temporary employees, subject to Civil Service examination procedures. This does not preclude management's right to remove an employee for cause prior to completion of the thirty (30) day evaluation period.

Performance evaluations will be conducted at least monthly during work test periods. Additional performance evaluations may be conducted after a working test period as deemed necessary by administration.

All other performance evaluations will be conducted as follows:

If an Employees' Anniversary Date is:	January	April	July	October
The Evaluation Period is:	10/1 through 9/30	1/1 through 12/31	4/1 through 3/31	7/1 through 6/30
The Evaluation Report form will be turned in to the Human Resources Office by the end of the second Week in:	October	January	April	July

For information on determining anniversary dates, employees may refer to their appropriate labor agreement.

#### Annual Merit Increments

Employees who are eligible (not at the maximum of the salary range) and whose performance is at least satisfactory shall receive a normal annual merit increment.

Any employee who receives an unsatisfactory performance evaluation rating shall not be entitled to an annual merit increment for that year. Employees who have been rated unsatisfactory may be granted a deferred anniversary merit increment providing:

- The employee has achieved a sustained level of satisfactory performance in the subsequent rating period
- The Director of Welfare certifies that the employee has achieved a sustained level of satisfactory performance in the subsequent rating period.

## **Employee Changing Departments during Review Period**

In the event an employee changes departments and is supervised by two or more persons during the annual evaluation period, each supervisor will complete the Employee Performance Evaluation for the period of time they supervised that employee during the annual evaluation period.

## **Retention**

Performance evaluation forms will be retained in the employee's personnel file.

## **Signing**

Employees are required to sign the Employee Performance Evaluation Form. The employee's signature does not necessarily indicate agreement with the evaluation, but merely indicates receipt of it.

## **Section 14: Workplace Behavior**

### **14:1 Integrity**

The Mercer County Board of Social Services is committed to providing economic and social services to individuals and families residing in Mercer County, based upon financial need, with the highest standards of integrity. We pursue our mission with honesty and fairness and treat each person with dignity and respect. Employees are committed to act in good faith and to comply with applicable laws, regulations, ordinances and Board policies and procedures.

Although it is impossible to give an exhaustive list of everything that integrity means, it does, at a minimum, include, but is not limited to, the following:

- complying with all applicable laws, regulations, ordinances and Board policies and procedures
- using one's status with the Board solely to perform assigned duty
- refraining from having any interest, financial or otherwise, direct or indirect, or engaging in any business or transaction or professional activity, which is in conflict with the proper discharge of one's duties
- refraining from using or attempting to use one's official position(s) to secure unwarranted privileges or advantages for oneself or others
- refraining from undertaking any employment or service, whether compensated or not, which might reasonably be expected to impair objectivity and independence of judgment in the exercise of duties
- avoiding the appearance of impropriety by avoiding involvement in situations that persons of ordinary intelligence could interpret as questionable, improper or as a breach of trust of an Official or Employee based solely on the facts of a given situation
- refraining from using and/or allowing the use of Board property or personnel for other than officially approved activities, and
- refraining from the conversion of any Board asset to personal use.

Employees who violate this policy will face discipline, up to and including termination.

### **14:2 Professional Conduct**

People who work together have an impact on each other's performance, productivity and personal satisfaction in their jobs. In addition, how our employees act toward customers and vendors will influence whether those relationships are successful for the Mercer County Board of Social Services.

Because one's conduct affects many more people than oneself, the Mercer County Board of Social Services expects employees to act in a professional manner whenever on Board property, at an outstation, conducting fieldwork, conducting Board business or representing the Board at business or social functions.

Although it is impossible to give an exhaustive list of everything that professional conduct means, it does, at a minimum, include, but is not limited to, the following:

- following all Board policies and procedures
- refraining from rude, offensive or outrageous behavior
- refraining from ridicule and hostile jokes
- treating coworkers, customers and vendors with patience, respect and consideration
- being courteous and helpful to others
- using one's status with the Board solely in the performance of assigned duties, and
- communicating openly with supervisors, managers and coworkers.

Employees who violate this policy will face discipline, up to and including termination.

### **14:3 Political Activity**

No employee shall use or seek to use his or her position to control or affect the political action of another person or engage in political activity during working hours or on Board property.

Employees shall not engage in any prohibited activities under the Hatch Act. Board employees may not:

- be candidates for public office in a partisan election;
- use official authority or influence to interfere with or affect the results of an election or nomination for office; or
- directly or indirectly coerce contributions from subordinates in support of a political party or candidate.

Employees who violate this policy will face discipline, up to and including termination.

### **14:4 Gifts and Wills**

Employees of the Mercer County Board of Social Services are prohibited from accepting gifts from clients and other individuals, corporations, associations and partnerships that the employee has business dealings with in the course of his/her employment. Employees are also prohibited from accepting proceeds from a non-related client's estate.

Employees who violate this policy will face discipline, up to and including termination.

### **14:5 Employee Related Cases**

Cases involving clients who are employees of the Mercer County Board of Social Services, related to, or are friends of employees shall be determined for eligibility in conformity with all other cases.

In the event an employee is assigned work on a case where the recipient is a friend or relative, the employee shall immediately notify his/her supervisor. The supervisor shall reassign the work to another employee.

Employees who violate this policy will face discipline, up to and including termination.

## 14:6 Confidential Nature of Work

As an employee of the Mercer County Board of Social Services, employees are expected to maintain the security and confidentiality of all materials in their care. Employees may have access to confidential materials, such as, but not limited to, customer records, information contained in computer systems, personnel records and other non-public information. Employees shall not disclose any confidential materials to any unauthorized persons internal or external to the Board. Disclosure of confidential materials shall be made to authorized persons on a need to know basis in order to perform assigned duties on behalf of the Mercer County Board of Social Services. In addition, employees shall only access confidential records and information in the ordinary course of performing assigned duties on behalf of the Mercer County Board of Social Services.

All confidential records and information will be handled with the utmost care at all times and shall be secured at the end of the workday. No confidential documents, notes, files, records, oral information, computer files or similar materials (except in the ordinary course of performing assigned duties on behalf of the Mercer County Board of Social Services) shall be reproduced by any means. No confidential documents, notes, files, records, oral information, computer files or similar materials (except in the ordinary course of performing assigned duties on behalf of the Mercer County Board of Social Services) shall be removed from the premises without permission of a supervisor. All case records require such permission.

Employees who are unsure about the confidential nature of specific information must ask their supervisor for clarification. Employees who violate this policy will face discipline, up to and including termination.

After an employee leaves the Mercer County Board of Social Services, he or she is still legally prohibited from disclosing confidential materials. If an employee discloses such information, the Mercer County Board of Social Services will seek legal remedies.

All employees are required to acknowledge in writing that they have read the above policy and agree to abide by it in all respects. By law, this acknowledgement and agreement are required of employees as a condition of employment.

I hereby acknowledge that I have read and understand the Mercer County Board of Social Services Confidential Nature of Work Policy.

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Employee's Signature

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Date

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Print Name

## **14:7 Punctuality and Attendance**

Employees are expected to be on time and ready to work at the beginning of each scheduled workday. It is an employee's responsibility to notify his/her supervisor if he/she will be late or absent from work. Employees who are late for work or fail to appear without calling will face discipline, up to and including termination.

Any employee who is absent from work for five or more consecutive working days without the approval of their Supervisor shall be considered to have resigned from their position. Such resignation is considered not in good standing.

For further information on Unexcused Absenteeism, tardiness and leaving early see Section 14:8 Unexcused Absenteeism, Tardiness and Leaving Early.

## **14:8 Unexcused Absenteeism, Tardiness and Leaving Early**

### **Unexcused Absence**

An "UNEXCUSED ABSENCE" is any absence that does not comply with the existing labor contract, regardless of the number of hours involved.

A progressive reprimand system is used on a yearly basis. If there were no unexcused absences for a period of one year from the date of the first unexcused absence, the progressive system would then start over. Violators will be subject to the following progressive reprimand:

1. First unexcused absence. Verbal warning by immediate supervisor to be documented in personnel file.
2. Second unexcused absence within one year of the date of the first unexcused absence. Written reprimand and counseling by the immediate supervisor, with a shop steward present, to be documented in personnel file.
3. Third unexcused absence within one year of the date of the first unexcused absence. Suspension without pay not to exceed three days.
4. Fourth unexcused absence within one year of the date of the first unexcused absence. Suspension without pay not to exceed six days.
5. Fifth unexcused absence within one year of the date of the first unexcused absence. Termination.

### **Unexcused Tardiness and Unexcused Leaving Early**

Unexcused tardiness or unexcused leaving early, individually or combined, shall be dealt with as follows:

1. Unexcused tardiness or unexcused leaving early occurring three times in one month. Verbal warning by immediate supervisor to be documented in personnel file.
2. Fourth unexcused tardiness or unexcused leaving early within one month of the date of first unexcused tardiness or unexcused leaving early. Written reprimand and counseling by the immediate supervisor, with a shop steward present, to be documented in personnel file.

3. Fifth unexcused tardiness or unexcused leaving early within one month of the date of first unexcused tardiness or unexcused leaving early. Suspension without pay not to exceed three days.
4. Sixth unexcused tardiness or unexcused leaving early within one month of the date of the first unexcused tardiness or unexcused leaving early. Suspension without pay not to exceed six days.
5. Seventh unexcused tardiness or unexcused leaving early within one month of the date of first unexcused tardiness or unexcused leaving early. Termination.

## **14:9 Appropriate Attire**

All employees are expected to dress in an appropriate manner for their position and job duties and are expected to be neat and clean at all times to convey a businesslike image to our customers.

Although it is impossible to give an exhaustive list of inappropriate attire, which is forbidden at the Mercer County Board of Social Services, it does, at a minimum, include, but is not limited to the following:

- micro/miniskirts
- shorts/cut-offs
- tank tops
- jogging/athletic suits
- worn, frayed, torn or dirty clothing
- clothing bearing off-color slogans, cartoons, etc.
- bare midriffs
- see-through shirts or blouses, and
- bare feet or stocking/sock feet.

Employees found wearing inappropriate attire may be sent home to change into appropriate attire. Employees sent home to change into appropriate attire will be docked for any time spent away from their work site and will be charged with unauthorized absenteeism according to the Unexcused Absenteeism, Tardiness, and Leaving Early Policy (Section 14:8).

For more information on appropriate attire for one's position, contact the Assistant Personnel Officer. The Board will try to reasonably accommodate an employee's special dress or grooming needs that are a result of religion, ethnicity, race or disability.

## **14:10 Use of Cell Phones**

### **Use of Cell Phones at Work**

Cell phone use at work shall not disrupt business operations or present a hazard or distraction to the user, co-employees, or customers.

### **Use of Cell Phone Functions and Services**

In addition to telephone service, many cell phones or cellular providers offer a variety of additional functions and/or services, including but not limited to email, text messaging and digital photography. Unless otherwise authorized, employees are prohibited from using any of these services while at work.

### **Use of Company Provided Cell Phones**

Board provided cell phones shall be used only for business purposes. Employees must reimburse the Board for any personal use of a Board provided cell phone.

### **Use of Cell Phones While Driving**

The use of a cell phone while driving may present a hazard or distraction to the driver and the public. This policy is meant to ensure the safe operation of Board vehicles and the operation of personal vehicles for business use.

The Mercer County Board of Social Services prohibits employees from using a communication device while the vehicle is in motion. Employees must pull to the side of the road to a safe location to make or respond to a phone call, unless the vehicle operator is calling for emergency services.

### **Non-compliance**

Employees who violate this policy will face discipline, up to and including termination.

## **Section 15: Health and Safety**

### **15:1 Workplace Safety**

The Mercer County Board of Social Services' safety goal is to minimize injury or illness and property loss or business interruption caused by accidents, fire, or other hazards. Mercer County Board of Social Services believes that this will be achieved to the degree that all employees accept and fulfill the safety and health responsibilities inherent in each job.

The cooperation of every employee is necessary to make the Board a safe place in which to work. In order to provide a safe workplace, every employee must follow the following safety rules:

- Horseplay, roughhousing and other physical acts that may endanger employees or cause accidents are prohibited.
- Employees in certain positions may be required to wear protective equipment, such as safety glasses, work boots, earplugs. Supervisors will let employees know if their position requires protective gear.
- All equipment and machinery must be used properly. This means all guards, restraints and other safety devices must be used at all times. Equipment should not be used for other than its intended purpose.
- Employees must keep their work area clean.
- Employees must not block access to fire exits, fire doors or fire extinguishers.
- Employees must recognize hazards, anticipate possible exposures and risks, and act to eliminate or control them.
- Employees must give their best effort to prevent accidents and diseases.
- Employees are expected to cooperate wherever safety is a consideration.
- Employees must not engage in such other practices as may be inconsistent with ordinary and reasonable common sense safety rules.
- Employees are responsible to report any workplace condition or practices that they believe to be unsafe to their supervisor. The Board will look into the matter promptly.
- Employees are responsible to report any workplace accident or injury immediately to their supervisor. The employee may be required to fill out an accident report.

The Mercer County Board of Social Services takes employee safety seriously and any willful or habitual violation of safety rules will result in discipline, up to and including termination.

### **15:2 New Jersey Worker and Community Right to Know Act**

The New Jersey Worker and Community Right to Know Act require public and private employers to provide information about hazardous substances at their workplaces.

The Mercer County Board of Social Services maintains a Right to Know Central File that contains information about hazardous substances at the Board.

For more information about the Right to Know Act, contact the Human Resource Office.

### **15:3 Violence**

The Mercer County Board of Social Services will not tolerate violence in the workplace. Violence includes, but is not limited to, physical altercations, coercion, pushing or shoving, horseplay, intimidation, stalking and threats of violence. Any threats or actual incidents of violence will be taken seriously. Employees who violate this policy will face discipline, up to and including termination.

## WHAT TO DO IN CASE OF VIOLENCE

Employees who observe an incident or threat of violence that is immediate and serious, should immediately dial extension 4589 (employee entrance) or 4595 (customer entrance) and report it to security. If the incident or threat does not appear to require immediate intervention, contact one's supervisor as soon as possible. Supervisors will make a written report to the Chief of Administrative Services. All complaints will be investigated and appropriate action taken.

### 15:4 Weapons

In order to ensure a safe environment for employees, customers and visitors, no weapons are allowed in the workplace, regardless of whether or not a person is licensed to carry the weapon. A "Weapon" means anything readily capable of lethal use or of inflicting bodily injury.

Employees are prohibited from possessing or using weapons while in the workplace or while otherwise fulfilling job responsibilities. If employees have an item that might qualify as a weapon, he or she must have prior authorization from the Chief of Administrative Services to possess or use that item while in the workplace or while otherwise fulfilling job responsibilities.

The only exceptions to this policy will be for law enforcement officers or security personnel and armed courier service or armored car service personnel who have legal cause to carry a weapon while engaged in official duties.

**All persons entering the Mercer County Board of Social Services may be required to submit to a screening.**

Employees who violate this policy will face discipline, up to and including termination.

### 15:5 Visitors

The Mercer County Board of Social Services is committed to providing a safe environment for its visitors and employees.

All visitors who enter the building shall provide current government issued photo identification or other appropriate identification and are required to sign in with security to record the reason for visiting. Visitors shall be issued identification that must be visibly worn while in the building.

All persons are prohibited from bringing weapons [as defined in the Weapons Policy] into the building and may be required to submit to a screening. If a conducted screening yields a weapon the procedure will be governed by the Screening Procedures.

Visitors shall be escorted throughout the building by the person they are visiting unless the visitor has prior permission by administration to visit unescorted. The person escorting the visitor shall be accountable for the visitor's whereabouts.

Employees are expected to keep any personal visits to a minimum. Employees who have personal visits will conduct the visit on their approved time.

Visitors are prohibited from entering worksites that are accessible only to authorized personnel unless prior authorization is given by administration. Administrators and supervisors have the right to limit access to any areas of the building.

Visitors, who compromise or may compromise the security and the well-being of the Board, its customers, or staff, may be removed from the building and denied access to the building.

Employees who have questions about escorting visitors or concerns about worksites that are accessible only to authorized personnel, should contact the office of the Chief of Administrative Services.

Employees who violate this policy will face discipline, up to and including termination.

## **15:6 Identification and Access Cards**

This policy establishes guidelines for the issuance and use of Mercer County Board of Social Services Identification (ID) and Access Cards for employees and other affiliated individuals. This policy excludes Identification cards issued to customers of the Board.

### **Issuance to Employees**

The Mercer County Board of Services issues an Employee ID card with an attached Access card to each employee at the time of hire. The purpose is to provide evidence of employment to supervisory staff, security, and the public. In addition, the ID cards are used to gain entry into the building and other secured areas within the building. The Human Resource Department will instruct new employees on obtaining an Employee ID card.

### **Issuance to Affiliated Individuals**

ID cards with/without Access cards will be issued to individuals affiliated with the Board as deemed appropriate and necessary by Administration. For information and or issuance contact the office of the Chief of Administrative Services.

### **Issuance to Visitors**

Visitors will be issued Visitor ID cards. Visitors must present a photo ID or appropriate ID and sign in with the security guard. Visitor ID cards shall be turned into the Security Desk at the Employees Entrance at the end of the day they were issued.

### **Use of ID Cards**

An ID/Access card is to be used solely by the individual to whom it was issued and may not be loaned or otherwise transferred to another individual.

Employees are expected to display their ID card visibly on their person whenever they are in the building, at an outstation, conducting fieldwork or conducting Board business.

Employees should use their ID/Access card to enter the building through the Lobby entrances. Employees who enter the building without an Employee ID Card shall obtain a Temporary Employee ID card at the security desk. Employees will be required to present photo or other appropriate identification and sign in with security to obtain a Temporary Employee ID card. Temporary Employee ID cards shall be turned into the Security Desk at the Employees Entrance at the end of the day it was issued.

Other affiliated individuals and visitors must display their ID card visibly on their person whenever they are in the building. Affiliated individuals entering the building without their ID card shall be issued a visitor ID card.

### **Safeguarding ID/Access Cards**

It is the responsibility of individuals to safeguard their ID/Access Card. Individuals shall immediately report the loss of their ID/Access Card to their supervisor and the Supervising Computer Operator.

Lost or stolen ID/Access Cards will be deactivated. Individuals will be responsible to complete a Request to Replace Lost Key Card form and be responsible to pay a \$5.00 replacement fee.

Individuals shall not tamper with or alter their ID/Access Card. ID/Access cards remain the property of the Board and all employees are required to return their ID/Access Card to the Human Resources Department upon termination of employment. Affiliated individuals are also required to return their ID/Access upon termination of the affiliation to the Human Resources Department.

Photo Identification/Access Cards will be replaced at Agencies' expense if an individual's name legally changes, if an employee's job title changes, or if the card malfunctions.

### **Non-compliance**

Employees who violate this policy will face discipline, up to and including termination.

Other affiliated individuals who violate this policy will have their issued ID/Access cards deactivated and will be required to obtain a visitor ID card on a daily basis.

### **15:7 Smoking**

Public Law # 548, Chapter 381 of the Laws of New Jersey of 1985 requires that employers adopt a smoking policy. The Board recognizes the right of individuals working or visiting the Board to work or visit in an environment reasonably free of dangerous or harmful atmosphere. The Board also recognizes the right of individuals wishing to smoke. However, this right to smoke should not endanger the health of non-smokers or infringe on the rights of non-smokers. The following shall apply to all Mercer County Board of Social Services employees and visitors to the Board while in the Board's premises:

Smoking shall only be permitted outside the building at the designated smoking gazebo outside the rear employee entrance of the building and parking areas.

Violations of this policy shall result in a progressive disciplinary system on a yearly basis. If there is no violation for a period of one year from the date of the first violation, the progressive disciplinary system would then start over. Violators will be subject to the following progressive disciplinary systems:

1. First violation. Verbal warning by immediate supervisor to be documented in employee's personnel file.
2. Second violation within one year of the first violation. Written reprimand. A copy of the reprimand to be placed in employee's personnel file.
3. Third violation within one year of the date of the first violation. Suspension without pay not to exceed three (3) days.
4. Fourth violation within one year of the date of the first violation. Suspension without pay not to exceed five (5) days.
5. Fifth violation within one year of the date of the first violation. Termination.

### **15:8 Emergency/Storm Delays or Closings**

Employees can obtain information on emergency/storm delays or closings on the following radio stations:

**1040 AM - WCHR**  
**1260 AM – WBUD**  
**1300 AM – WIMG**  
**94.5 FM – WPST (Website: [www.wpst.com](http://www.wpst.com))**  
**101.5 FM (Website: [www.NJ1015.com](http://www.NJ1015.com))**

If the station announces "County of Mercer/Mercer County Offices", this is to be interpreted as including the offices of the Mercer County Board of Social Services.

## **Section 16: Computers and Software, the Internet, Email and Instant Messaging**

### **16:1 Computer and Software Use**

All computer, computer system, peripheral device, software, information technology and information infrastructure use is for official Board business. "Information technology" means all electronic information processing hardware and software, including telecommunications. "Information infrastructure" means telecommunications, cable, and computer networks and the Internet, including the World Wide Web, E-mail, File Transfer Protocol, Usenet, bulletin board systems, on-line systems, and telephone networks. This includes the use of all State of New Jersey-furnished computers, computer systems, peripheral devices, software, information technology and information infrastructures. The term "Board computers" include all computers, computers systems, peripheral devices, and information technologies owned by the board or furnished by the State of New Jersey for Board use.

It is the policy of the Mercer County Board of Social Services to use licensed software only in accordance with the terms of its license agreement.

Employees may not do any of the following without permission from their Supervisor and Management Information Systems Administration (MIS):

- Copy any software programs, for any reason.
- Install Board software programs, files or databases on non-Board computers, computer systems, peripheral devices or information technologies.
- Install or use personal software programs (that is, software owned by the employee) on any Board computer.
- Download any software programs from the Internet on any Board computer.
- Install or use unauthorized computer software on any Board computer.
- Use non-Board computers and peripheral devices in the Board or worksite.
- Attach or use non-Board computers, computer systems, peripheral devices, information technologies and information infrastructure with any Board Computer.
- Supply software that is the property of the Board to anyone outside of the Board.
- Access a computer assigned to another employee.

Employees shall keep all passwords for all systems confidential.

Employees shall turn off all computers and modems when they are not in use to protect against potential security intrusions.

MIS Administration shall only change computer or computer system configurations or install software.

The Mercer County Board of Social Services will be held harmless in cases where there is a violation of computer software copyright laws by employees. Violating a license agreement is illegal and can subject an employee to prosecution and/or substantial monetary penalties.

### **Board Computer Use is Not Private**

Employees have no rights of personal privacy or confidentiality in their use of Board computers.

The Board reserves and may exercise the right to monitor, access, retrieve, read and delete any matter stored in, created, received, or sent over Board computers, for any reason without the permission of any employee and without notice.

### **Non-compliance**

Employees who violate this policy will face discipline, up to and including termination.

## **16:2 Internet**

Internet access is for official Board business only. Employees may not access the Internet for personal use at any time. When using the Internet, employees shall identify themselves properly (The use of an alias identifier, name, or pseudonym is prohibited). The use of File Transfer Protocol Services for downloading files from the Internet is limited to information related to work activities performed at the Board. Any employee who uses the Board's Internet access for personal reasons, or who violates any other provision of this policy, will be subject to discipline.

### **Use of State Internet System**

Employees who access or use the Internet through the State of New Jersey system shall also follow the State of New Jersey policy Acceptable Use of the Internet for New Jersey State Agency Employees and Other Users. This policy may be found at: <http://www.state.nj.us/it/ps/p2ius.html>.

### **Prohibited Uses of the Internet**

Employees may not, at any time access the Internet using Board equipment or links for any of the following purposes:

- To visit websites that feature pornography, gambling or violent images, or are otherwise inappropriate in the workplace.
- To operate an outside business, solicit money for personal purposes or to otherwise act for personal financial gain-this includes running online auctions.
- To download software, articles or other printed material in violation of copyright laws.
- To download software programs without the express consent of one's Department Head and Management Information Systems Administration.
- To participate in electronic discussion/newsgroup services on the Internet without the express consent of one's Department Head and Management Information Systems Administration.
- To use fee-for-service providers on the Internet without the express consent of one's Department Head and Management Information Systems Administration.
- To use Telnet Services on the Internet without the express consent of one's Department Head and Management Information Systems Administration.
- To transmit confidentially-sensitive information, without encrypting to ensure security.

### **Internet Use is Not Private**

Employees have no rights of personal privacy or confidentiality in their use of the Internet.

The Board reserves and may exercise the right to monitor employee use of the Internet, for any reason without the permission of any employee and without notice.

### **Non-compliance**

Employees who violate this policy will face discipline, up to and including termination.

## **16:3 Email**

The email system is intended for official Board business. Although employees may use the email system for personal message, they may do so during non-working hours only. Extensive personal use of the email system is grounds for discipline. Any employee who abuses this privilege may be subject to discipline up to and including termination.

### **Use of Email is Not Private**

Email messages sent using Board communications equipment are the property of the Board.

Employees have no rights of personal privacy or confidentiality in any matter stored in, created, received, or sent over the email system.

The Board reserves and may exercise the right to monitor, access, intercept, retrieve, read, copy and delete any matter stored in, created, received, or sent using the email system, for any reason without the permission of any employee and without notice.

## **16:4 Instant Messaging**

This policy governs an employees' use of the instant messaging regardless of service provider.

Instant messaging is prohibited.

Employees who violate this policy will face discipline, up to and including termination.

## **16.5 Computer and Software, Internet, Email and Instant Messaging Policy Acknowledgement**

My signature on this form indicates that I have read the Mercer County Board of Social Services' computer and software use, Internet, email, and instant messaging policies and I agree to abide by their terms. I understand that I have no rights of personal privacy or confidentiality in the use of Board owned or state furnished computers, computer systems, information technology and information infrastructure use, and that such monitoring may occur at any time, for any reason. I also understand I have no rights of personal privacy or confidentiality in any matter stored in, created, received, or sent using the email system and that the Board may access, monitor, intercept, retrieve, read, copy and delete those messages at any time, for any reason.

The Board may disclose or use any information monitored, intercepted, read, copied or captured to authorized personnel or law enforcement to be used for disciplinary or civil action or criminal prosecution.

By law, this acknowledgement and agreement are required of employees as a condition of employment.

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Employee's Signature

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Date

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Print Name

## **Section 17 Drugs and Alcohol**

### **17:1 Drug-free Workplace**

#### **Purpose and Goal**

The Mercer County Board of Social Services is committed to providing a safe, comfortable and productive work environment for its employees. The Board recognizes that employees who abuse drugs or alcohol at work – or who appear at work under the influence of an illegal drug or alcohol – harm both themselves and the work environment. The Board expects its employees to report to work fit for duty with no illegal drugs or alcohol in their bodies.

#### **Prohibited Behavior**

As a result, the Board prohibits employees from doing the following:

- appearing at work under the influence of controlled substances or alcohol
- conducting Board business while under the influence of a controlled substance or alcohol
- using controlled substances or alcohol in the workplace or while conducting Board business
- using Board vehicles or personal vehicles for Board business use while under the influence of controlled substances or alcohol or otherwise impaired
- manufacturing, distributing, dispensing, possessing, buying or selling controlled substances or alcohol in the workplace or while conducting Board business

Controlled substance use includes more than just outlawed drugs such as marijuana, cocaine or heroin. It also includes the misuse of otherwise legal prescription and over-the-counter drugs.

#### **Notifications of Convictions**

Any employee who is convicted of a criminal drug violation in the workplace must notify the Board in writing within five calendar days of the conviction. The Board will take appropriate action within 30 days of notification. Federal contracting agencies will be notified when appropriate.

#### **Non-Compliance**

Employees who violate this policy will face discipline, up to and including termination.

## **Section 18: Discrimination and Harassment**

### **18:1 Prohibiting Discrimination, Harassment or Hostile Work Environment**

#### **I. Prohibiting Discrimination, Harassment or Hostile Work Environment**

The Mercer County Board of Social Services is committed to providing every employee with a workplace free from unlawful discrimination. All forms of unlawful employment discrimination based upon race, creed, color, national origin, nationality, ancestry, age, religion, sex (including pregnancy), marital status, domestic partnership status, familial status, affectional or sexual orientation, atypical hereditary cellular or blood trait, genetic information, liability for service in the Armed Forces of the United States, and mental or physical disability (including perceived disability, and AIDS and HIV status) or any other characteristic protected by law are prohibited and will not be tolerated. Sexual harassment is a form of unlawful gender discrimination and, likewise, will not be tolerated.

Unlawful discrimination/harassment undermines the integrity of the employment relationship, compromises equal employment opportunity, debilitates morale and interferes with work productivity. This policy applies to all employees and applicants for employment in the Mercer County Board of Social Services. The Mercer County Board of Social Services will not tolerate harassment or discrimination by anyone in the workplace including supervisors, co-workers, or non-employees. This policy applies to conduct which occurs in the workplace and also extends to conduct which occurs at any location that can be reasonably regarded as an extension of the workplace, such as any field location, any off-site business-related social function, or any facility where Mercer County Board of Social Services business is being conducted and discussed.

This policy also applies to third party harassment. Third party harassment is unwelcome behavior of a sexual, racial or derogatory nature regarding any protected category, that is not directed at an individual but is a part of that individual's work environment. Third party harassment based upon any of the aforementioned protected categories is prohibited by this policy.

This policy pertains to all employment practices such as recruitment, selection, hiring, training, promotion, transfer, assignment, layoff, return from layoff, termination, compensation, fringe benefits, working conditions and career development.

Racial, gender, national origin or ancestry, age, religious, disability, affectional or sexual orientation, marital status, familial status, domestic partnership status, atypical hereditary cellular or blood trait, genetic information, liability for service in the Armed Forces of the United States discrimination or any other characteristic protected by law discrimination or harassment is prohibited.

It is a violation of this policy to engage in any employment practice or procedure which treats an employee less favorably based upon a person's race, gender, national origin or ancestry, religion, age, disability, affectional or sexual orientation, marital status, domestic partnership status, familial status, atypical hereditary cellular or blood trait, genetic information, or liability for service in the Armed Forces of the United States, or any other characteristic protected by law.

It is also a violation of this policy to use derogatory or demeaning slurs to refer to a person's race, gender, age, religion, disability, affectional or sexual orientation, or ethnic background which have the effect of harassing an employee or creating a hostile work environment. Harassment or the creation of a hostile work environment can occur even if there was no intent on the part of an individual to harass or demean another.

Examples of behaviors that may constitute prohibited workplace discrimination or harassment include, but are not limited to:

- i. Discriminating against an individual with regard to terms and conditions of employment because of that individual's race, gender, age, religion, disability, affectional or sexual orientation, place of origin, or his or her ancestors' place of origin;

- ii. Treating an individual differently because of race, gender, age, religion, disability, affectional or sexual orientation, place of origin, or his or her ancestors' place of origin, or because an individual has the physical, cultural or linguistic characteristics of a racial or national origin group;
- iii. Treating an individual differently because of marriage to, domestic partnership with, or association with persons of a racial, religious or national origin group; or due to membership in or association with an organization identified with the interests of a racial, religious or national origin group; or because an individual's name, domestic partner's name, or spouse's name is associated with a racial, religious or national origin group;
- iv. Calling another by an unwanted nickname which refers to one or more of the above characteristic, or telling ethnic jokes which harass an employee or create a hostile work environment;
- v. Using derogatory references regarding any of the above characteristics in any job-related communication;
- vi. Engaging in threatening, intimidating, or hostile acts, in the workplace, based on the foregoing classifications; or
- vii. Displaying or distributing material in the workplace that contains language or images that are derogatory or demeaning, based upon any of the foregoing classifications.

## **II. Sexual Harassment**

It is a violation of this policy to engage in sexual harassment of any kind. For the purposes of this policy, sexual harassment, with or without sexual conduct, is defined, as in the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Guidelines, as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when, for example:

- i. Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment;
- ii. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual; or
- iii. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.

Sexual harassment generally falls into two categories: quid pro quo and hostile work environment harassment:

- i. Quid pro quo sexual harassment is a form of harassment that may include unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors or other verbal or physical conduct based on the gender of the affected employee when:
  - a. Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment; or
  - b. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for employment decisions.
- ii. It shall be a violation of this policy for any person to use his or her authority to make any sexual advance toward an individual over whom the person is authorized to make, recommend or otherwise to influence personnel actions; to grant, recommend, or refuse to take personnel action on the basis of an employee's gender or sexual orientation or in exchange for sexual favors; or to take or fail to take a personnel action as reprisal against any employee for rejecting or reporting a sexual advance. Sexual advances or requests for sexual favors can be in the form of either expressed or implied comments, writings, or actions.

Hostile work environment sexual harassment is a form of harassment that may include unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

Gender-based harassment may give rise to a claim of a hostile environment whether or not sexual activity or language is involved, if it has the purpose or effect of abusing, devaluing or subordinating the members of one sex and it adversely affects an individual's employment opportunities.

Third party sexual harassment is unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature or based on sex that is not directed at an individual but is a part of an individual's work environment.

Examples of prohibited behaviors that may constitute sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

- i. Generalized gender-based remarks and comments;
- ii. Unwanted physical contact such as intentional touching, grabbing, pinching, brushing against another's body or impeding or blocking movement;
- iii. Verbal or written sexually suggestive or obscene comments, jokes or propositions including letters, notes, e-mail, invitations, gestures or inappropriate comments about a person's clothing;
- iv. Visual contact, such as leering or staring at another's body, gesturing, displaying sexually suggestive objects, cartoons, posters, magazines or pictures of scantily-clad individuals;
- v. Explicit or implicit suggestions of sex by a supervisor or manager in return for a favorable employment action such as hiring, compensation, promotion, or retention;
- vi. Suggesting or implying that failure to accept a request for a date or sex would result in an adverse employment consequence with respect to any employment practice such as performance evaluation or promotional opportunity; or
- vii. Continuing to engage in certain behaviors of a sexual nature after an objection has been raised by the target of such inappropriate behavior.

### **III. Employee Responsibilities**

Any employee who believes that she or he has been subjected to any form of prohibited discrimination/harassment, including sexual harassment, or who witnesses others being subjected to such harassment or discrimination is encouraged to promptly report the incident(s) to either the Assistant Personnel Officer or Senior Personnel Technician in the Human Resources department. All employees are expected to cooperate with investigations undertaken pursuant to (V) below. Failure to cooperate in an investigation may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

### **IV. Supervisor Responsibilities**

Supervisors should make every effort to maintain a work environment that is free from any form of prohibited discrimination/harassment. Supervisors are expected to take all allegations of discrimination/harassment, including sexual harassment, seriously, and to immediately refer the matter to either the Assistant Personnel Officer or Senior Personnel Technician in the Human Resources department.

### **V. Investigation**

All investigations of discrimination/harassment claims shall be conducted by the Assistant Personnel Officer in a way that respects, to the extent possible, the privacy of all the persons involved. The investigations shall be conducted in a prompt, thorough and impartial manner. The results of the investigation shall be forwarded to the Director of Welfare to make a final decision as to whether a violation of the policy has been substantiated.

Where discrimination/harassment is found to have occurred, the Mercer County Board of Social Services shall take prompt and appropriate remedial action to stop the discrimination/harassment and deter its reoccurrence.

The remedial action taken may include counseling, training, intervention, mediation, and/or the initiation of disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

The Mercer County Board of Social Services shall maintain a written record of the discrimination/harassment complaints received. Written records shall be maintained as confidential records to the extent practicable and appropriate.

## **VI. Prohibition Against Retaliation**

Retaliation against any employee who alleges that she or he was the victim of discrimination/harassment, or against any employee who provides information in the course of an investigation into claims of unlawful discrimination/harassment in the workplace is prohibited by this policy. Any employee bringing a complaint, providing information for an investigation, or testifying in any proceeding under this policy shall not be subjected to adverse employment consequences based upon such involvement or be the subject of retaliation.

## **VII. False Accusations and Information**

If any employee knowingly makes a false accusation of unlawful discrimination/harassment or knowingly provides false information in the course of an investigation of a complaint, such conduct may be grounds for discipline. Complaints made in good faith, however, even if found to be unsubstantiated, shall not be considered a false accusation.

## **VIII. Confidentiality**

All complaints and investigations shall be handled, to the extent possible, in a manner that will protect the privacy interests of those involved. To the extent practical and appropriate under the circumstances, confidentiality shall be maintained throughout the investigatory process. In the course of an investigation, it may be necessary to discuss the claims with the alleged harasser and other persons who may have relevant knowledge. Therefore, it may be necessary to disclose information to persons with a legitimate need to know about the matter. All persons interviewed shall be directed not to discuss any aspect of the investigation with others in light of the important privacy interests of all concerned. Failure to comply with this confidentiality directive may result in disciplinary action.

## **IX. Disciplinary Action**

Any employee found to have violated this policy may be subject to appropriate disciplinary action which may include: reprimand, suspension, reassignment, or termination of employment. Referral to another appropriate authority for review for possible violation of State and Federal statutes may also be appropriate.

## **X. Education**

The Mercer County Board of Social Services should make efforts to provide employees with information regarding the prevention of unlawful discrimination/ harassment and the complaint procedure to be followed in filing complaints when unlawful harassment/discrimination has occurred. The Mercer County Board of Social Services should make efforts to provide supervisors and managers with training that will inform them of the appropriate steps to be taken to address complaints of unlawful discrimination/harassment.

## **Section 19 Employee Records**

### **19:1 Personnel Records**

The Mercer County Board of Social Services maintains a personnel file on each employee. The purpose is to allow the Board to make decisions and take actions that are important to employees.

The Board does not keep medical records or work eligibility forms in an employee's personnel file. Those are kept separately.

Personnel files are kept by the Human Resources Department. Employees may contact the Assistant Personnel Officer in Human Resources Department for questions regarding their personnel files.

### **19:2 Confidentiality of Personal Records**

Because the information in an employee's personnel file is by its nature personal, the Mercer County Board of Social Services keeps the file as confidential as possible. The Board allows access to an employee's file on a need-to-know basis.

### **19:3 Inspecting Your Personal Records**

An employee, by request for appointment, shall have access to examine his or her own personnel file during office hours at a reasonable time set by management. Employees are not allowed to remove any information from their personnel file.

For more information, refer to one's appropriate labor agreement (Article 30 of Agreement between Mercer County Board of Social Services and Local 2285 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees AFL-CIO; Article 21 of Agreement between Mercer County Board of Social Services and Local 3390 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees AFL-CIO; Non-Collective and Non-Limited Salary and Benefits Package).

### **19:4 Changes in Personal Information**

Because the Mercer County Board of Social Services uses the information in one's personnel file, it is important that the information in that file be accurate. Please notify the Human Resources Department of any changes in:

- name
- address
- phone number
- dependents
- W-4 deductions
- marital status
- name and phone number of the individual whom we should notify in case of an emergency.

### **19:5 Employee Medical Records**

The Mercer County Board of Social Services understands the sensitive nature of medical records, so the Board does not place those records in the employee's personnel file. The Board keeps those records in a separate and secure place. For information on the storage of medical records or inspecting medical records, contact the Human Resources Department.

## **Section 20: Ending Employment**

### **20:1 Resignation**

Employees must submit their resignation in writing at least two weeks prior to their resignation date. Notices are written to the Director of Welfare and submitted through the employee's supervisor and department head. Failure to provide proper advance notice and work satisfactorily through the notice period may result in a resignation that is not held in good standing.

If an employee is absent from work for five consecutive workdays without giving proper notice, the employee is considered to have resigned not in good standing.

### **20:2 Final Paychecks**

Employees who resign or who are terminated involuntarily will receive their final paycheck on the next payday.

Final paychecks will include all compensation earned but not paid through the date of termination. Final paychecks will also include all unused vacation that the employee has earned as of the date of termination. If there are unpaid obligations to the Mercer County Board of Social Services, the final paycheck will reflect the appropriate deductions.

### **20:3 Exit Interviews**

The Human Resources department will hold an exit interview with every employee who leaves the Mercer County Board of Social Services for any reason. During the interview, employees will have the opportunity to speak about their employment experience at the Board.

The exit interview also gives the Board a chance to handle some practical matters relating to the end of employment. Employees will also have an opportunity to ask any questions regarding insurance, benefits, final paychecks, references or any other matter relating to their employment.

### **20:4 References**

When the Mercer County Board of Social Services is contacted by prospective employers seeking information about a former employee, the Board will release the following information only:

- the position(s) the employee held
- the dates the employee worked for the Board.

The Board will respond only to written reference requests, and the Board will respond only in writing. Please direct all reference requests to the Assistant Personnel Officer in the Human Resources Department.