

## RESOLUTION 22 - 22

### RESOLUTION AMENDING THE 2015 PERSONNEL POLICY

**WHEREAS**, the Employee Policy Manual last updated December 13, 2021 by Resolution 22 - 01; and


**WHEREAS**, the Employee Policy Manual may be amended by the Ford County Board, at its discretion, at any duly constituted regular County Board Meeting; and


**WHEREAS**, the Insurance and Personnel Committee has consulted with Counties of Illinois Risk Management Agency (CIRMA) and they are recommending that the Ford County Board adopt a revised Personnel Handbook dated February 2022; and


**WHEREAS**, the Insurance and Personnel Committee has voted to recommend adoption of the attached Employee Policy Manual at it's February 9, 2022 meeting; and

**BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED** that the Ford County Board adopts a revised Personnel Handbook dated February 2022 and that said handbook supersedes all previous handbooks and resolutions.

Date: February 14, 2022

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
~~Debbie Smith~~ *Cindy Threlk*  
Ford County Board Chairman  
*Vice chairman*

ATTEST:   
\_\_\_\_\_  
Amy Frederick  
Ford County County Clerk & Recorder



# FORD COUNTY, ILLINOIS EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

FEBRUARY  
2022

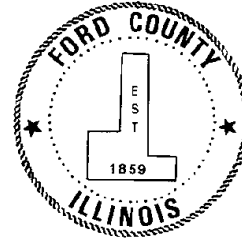


**FORD COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
200 WEST STATE STREET  
PAXTON, IL. 60957**

# History of Ford County

## 468 Square Miles

## 2020 Population: 13,534



In 1818, Illinois, the 21st State, embracing an area of more than 55,000 square miles was organized and admitted to the Union. Two years later, when a general Census was taken, Illinois ranked 24th in population. Shortly after the organization of the Illinois Territory, 2 counties, St. Clair, and Randolph, were formed. Over the years these counties were divided until now there are 102 counties represented within the boundaries of the state.

Ford County was the last to be formed, organized on February 17, 1859. It is shaped like an inverted "T" and was named after Governor Thomas Ford. It is 41 miles long from North to South and 27 miles wide from East to West consisting of 486 square miles. The population in 1860 was 1,197; in 1880 the population was 5,105. The 1980 Census indicated the population at 15,265, the 1990 Census recorded a population of 14,275, the 2000 Census recorded a population of 14,241, the 2010 Census recorded a population of 14,081 and the 2020 Census recorded a population of 13,534.

Ford County's first National Election was held in November of 1860, when Lincoln was Elected President of the United States. On January 16, 1860, the location of the Courthouse and Jail were decided on the block where they now stand. The first Courthouse was completed on February 15, 1862. The Sheriff's residence and Jail were completed in 1872. The decision to repair and rebuild the old Courthouse was made on June 11, 1908. The Ford County Courthouse is in the City of Paxton. It is a two-story and basement building approximately 94 feet by 80 feet. The building is surmounted by a distinctive copper covered dome.

A new Correctional Facility and Sheriff's Office was completed in 1993. The Courthouse was repaired and remodeled to make it comply with ADA requirements in 1996. Ford County adopted the Township form of Government at an Election held November 6, 1860. There are currently 12 Townships - Rogers, Mona, Pella, Brenton, Lyman, Wall, Peach Orchard, Sullivan, Drummer, Dix, Patton, and Button. Each has a Governing body consisting of a Supervisor, Clerk, 4 Trustees and a Road Commissioner. Other units of local Government in Ford County include 83 Drainage Districts, 13 Fire Protection Districts, 1 Park District, 7 Villages, 2 Cities, 7 School Districts, 4 Junior College Districts, 5 Public Library Districts, 4 Regional Office of Education Districts, 2 Land Commissions, 4 Cemetery Districts and 4 Multi - Township Assessment Districts.

The County of Ford, one of the largest Employers in the County, has approximately 100 Employees dedicated to the on-going service of the citizens of the County.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>FOREWORD</b>	<b>5</b>
APPLICATION OF HANDBOOK	6
<b>DIVERSITY</b>	<b>6</b>
AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) AND THE ADA AMENDMENTS ACT (ADAAA)	6
ANTI-HARASSMENT & DISCRIMINATION POLICY	7
SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY	7
EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT	12
IMMIGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT	13
PROBLEM OR GRIEVANCE RESOLUTION PROCEDURE	14
<b>EMPLOYMENT</b>	<b>16</b>
ATTENDANCE	16
ATTIRE AND GROOMING	16
BACKGROUND CHECKS	16
<b>GUIDELINES FOR ACCEPTABLE USE OF COUNTY TECHNOLOGY SYSTEM BY EMPLOYEES</b>	<b>19</b>
CONFIDENTIALITY	21
ELECTRONIC DEVICES CELL PHONES & SMARTPHONES	22
EMPLOYEE CLASSIFICATION CATEGORIES	23
EMPLOYEE RELATIONS	24
EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION AND REFERENCE CHECKS	24
ETHICAL CONDUCT / CONFLICT OF INTEREST	25
INTRODUCTORY PERIOD	26
JOB POSTING / INTERNAL TRANSFERS AND PROMOTIONS	26
LAYOFF AND RECALL	27
MEDICAL EVALUATIONS	28
NEPOTISM, EMPLOYMENT OF RELATIVES AND PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS	28
OFFICE CLOSURE	29
OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT	29
PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS	30
PERFORMANCE STANDARDS	30
PERSONNEL DATA CHANGES	31
PERSONAL SERVICES	31
PERSONNEL FILES	31
PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE	32
RECYCLING	33
REHIRE	33
RETURN OF COUNTY PROPERTY AND TERMINATION PROVISIONS	34
RIGHT TO MONITOR	34
SEPARATION OF EMPLOYMENT	34
SOCIAL MEDIA—ACCEPTABLE USE	35
SOLICITATIONS, DISTRIBUTIONS AND POSTING OF MATERIALS	36
USE OF COUNTY VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT	37
VISITORS IN THE WORKPLACE	38
<b>COMPENSATION</b>	<b>38</b>
ADMINISTRATION AND REVIEW OF SALARY AND WAGES	38
BUSINESS TRAVEL EXPENSES	38
OVERTIME	39
PAYMENT OF WAGES	39
WORK HOURS AND TIMEKEEPING	40
<b>TIME OFF/LEAVES OF ABSENCE</b>	<b>41</b>
BEREAVEMENT LEAVE	41

DISABILITY LEAVE.....	42
FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT.....	44
HOLIDAYS.....	47
JURY DUTY.....	48
LACTATION/BREASTFEEDING.....	49
MILITARY LEAVE OF ABSENCE.....	49
PERSONAL TIME.....	49
PREGNANCY RIGHTS AND ACCOMMODATIONS.....	49
SCHOOL VISITATION RIGHTS.....	51
SICK LEAVE.....	51
TELECOMMUNICATING POLICY AND PROCEDURES.....	52
UNPAID LEAVE OF ABSENCE.....	55
VACATION.....	55
VICTIMS ECONOMIC AND SAFETY ACT (VESSA).....	56
VOTING LEAVE.....	57
<b>BENEFITS.....</b>	<b>57</b>
CONTINUATION OF BENEFITS (COBRA).....	57
RETIREMENT, INSURANCE AND OTHER BENEFITS.....	58
<b>WORKPLACE SAFETY.....</b>	<b>59</b>
DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE.....	59
SAFETY AND HEALTH.....	63
INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL POLICY.....	64
SMOKE AND VAPE FREE WORKPLACE.....	65
VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE.....	66
WEAPONS.....	66
WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATIONS / LIGHT DUTY.....	67
WORKPLACE BULLYING.....	67
WORKPLACE CONTRABAND AND SECURITY INSPECTIONS.....	67
WORK-RELATED ACCIDENT, INJURY OR ILLNESS.....	68
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND RECEIPT.....</b>	<b>70</b>

## FOREWORD

Whether you have just joined our staff or have been with Ford County, Illinois (hereinafter “Ford County” or “County”) for a while, we are confident that you will find this a dynamic and rewarding place in which to work, and we look forward to a productive and successful association. We consider the employees of Ford County to be one of its most valuable resources. This handbook has been written to serve as the guide for the employer/employee relationship.

There are several things to keep in mind about this handbook. First, it contains only general information and guidelines. It is not intended to be comprehensive or to address all the possible applications of, or exceptions to, the general policies and procedures described. For that reason, if you have any questions concerning eligibility for a particular benefit or the applicability of a policy or practice to you, you should address your specific questions with the Elected Official/Appointed Official. Neither this handbook nor any other document confers any contractual right, either express or implied, to remain in the County’s employ. Nor does it guarantee any fixed terms and conditions of your employment. Your employment is not for any specific time and may be terminated at will with or without cause and without prior notice by the County, or you may resign for any reason at any time. No supervisor or other representative of the County, other than the County Board, has the authority to enter into any agreement for employment for any specified period or to make any agreement contrary to the above. Any such agreement with the Board must be by specific individual agreement in writing and signed by the Chairperson and the employee. No one has the authority to make any oral statements that should be considered or construed as a contract or guarantee of employment or compensation or guarantee of employment in a particular position with the County.

The procedures, practices, policies, and benefits described here may be modified or discontinued at any time, with or without notice. We will try to inform you of any changes as they occur. This handbook supersedes all previous versions of the Ford County Employee Handbook. It is effective upon adoption and will not apply retroactively.

Some subjects described in this handbook are covered in detail in official policy documents. Refer to these documents for specific information because the handbook only briefly summarizes those guidelines and benefits. Please note that the terms of the written insurance policies are controlling and override any statements made in this or other documents.

This handbook applies to all employees listed in the Application of Handbook section herein unless otherwise provided under the terms of any applicable collective bargaining agreement. Additionally, in the event of any conflict between the provisions of this handbook and the terms of any collective bargaining agreement, the terms of the agreement will control as to the employees covered by such agreement.

## **APPLICATION OF HANDBOOK**

The provisions of this Employee Handbook shall apply to all County employees, including the staff of the County Sheriff, except as provided below. In the case of an inconsistency with this handbook and the policies of the County Sheriff Merit Board or the Fraternal Order of Police Union, in which case those policies shall prevail.

This Employee Handbook does not apply to Elected and Appointed Officials and County Board Members, except as mandated by federal or state statutes. In addition, this handbook does not apply to employees of other agencies related to but not directly under the direction of the county including, but not limited to Secretary of the 708 Board, Animal Control Officer, Regional Office Education, and Community Resources and Counseling Center.

"Elected Official" shall include the Ford County Circuit Clerk, Clerk and Recorder, Coroner, Sheriff, State's Attorney, Treasurer, as well as all elected members of the Ford County Board, and any individual appointed to any of the above-listed positions.

"Appointed Official" shall include the Ford County Animal Control Officer, Chief Probation Officer, EMA Director, Engineer, Supervisor of Assessments, Zoning Officer, and Health Department Administrator.

"Supervisor" shall mean an individual that has the authority to hire, transfer, suspend, lay off, recall, promote, discharge, discipline, and handle grievances, of other employees, by exercising independent judgement, regardless of whether the supervisor holds those powers over the employee alleging a violation of the policy. (See Sangamon County Sheriff's Department v. Illinois Human Rights Commission, 233 Ill.2d 125, 908 N.E.2d, 39, 330 Ill.Dec187 (2009)).

For purposes of this policy, the term "employee" includes individuals other than individual contractors, who receive compensation from the County for services, and unpaid volunteers when involved in activities covered by County provided liability insurance.

## **DIVERSITY**

### **AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) AND THE ADA AMENDMENTS ACT (ADAAA)**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act, known as the ADAAA, are federal laws that prohibit employers with 15 or more employees from discriminating against applicants and individuals with disabilities and that when needed provide reasonable accommodations to applicants and employees who are qualified for a job, with or without reasonable accommodations, so that they may perform the essential job duties of the position.

"Disability" refers to a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of an individual. An individual who has such an impairment, has a record of such an impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment is a "disabled individual". A "qualified person with a disability" means an individual with a disability who, with or without reasonable accommodation, can perform the essential functions of the employment position that the individual holds or has applied for.



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

In accordance with the ADA, reasonable accommodations will be provided to qualified individuals with disabilities to enable them to perform the essential functions of their jobs or to enjoy the equal benefits and privileges of employment. An employee with a disability may request an accommodation from the Clerk & Recorder's Office and engage in an informal process to clarify what the employee needs and to identify possible accommodations. If requested, the employee is responsible for providing medical documentation regarding the disability and possible accommodations. All information obtained concerning the medical condition or history of an applicant or employee will be treated as confidential information, maintained in separate medical files, and disclosed only as permitted by law.

It is the policy of Ford County to prohibit harassment or discrimination based on disability or because an employee has requested a reasonable accommodation. Ford County prohibits retaliation against employees for exercising their rights under the ADA or other applicable civil rights laws. Employees should use the procedures described in the Harassment and Complaint Procedure to report any harassment, discrimination, or retaliation they have experienced or witnessed.

## **ANTI-HARASSMENT & DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

Ford County is committed to a work environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Everyone has the right to work in a professional atmosphere that promotes equal employment opportunities and prohibits unlawful discriminatory practices, including harassment. Therefore, Ford County expects that all relationships among persons in the office will be business-like and free of bias, prejudice, and harassment.

It is the policy of Ford County to ensure equal employment opportunity without discrimination or harassment based on race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, marital status, amnesty, or status as a covered veteran. Ford County prohibits any such discrimination or harassment.

Ford County encourages reporting of all perceived incidents of discrimination or harassment. It is the policy of Ford County to investigate such reports promptly and thoroughly. Ford County prohibits retaliation against any individual who reports discrimination or harassment or who participates in an investigation of such reports.

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY**

Ford County is committed to providing a workplace that is free from all forms of discrimination, including sexual harassment. Any employee's behavior that fits the definition of sexual harassment is a form of misconduct which may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Sexual



harassment could also subject this the County and, in some cases, an individual to substantial civil penalties.

The County's policy on sexual harassment is part of its overall affirmative action efforts pursuant to federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination based on age, race, color, religion, national origin, citizenship status, unfavorable discharge from the military, marital status, disability, and gender. Specifically, sexual harassment is prohibited by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Illinois Human Rights Act.

Each employee of the County must refrain from sexual harassment in the workplace. No employee - male or female - should be subjected to unsolicited or unwelcome sexual overtures or conduct in the workplace. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of all Elected Officials/Dept. Heads to make sure that the work environment is free from sexual harassment. All forms of discrimination and conduct which can be considered harassing, coercive, or disruptive, or which create a hostile or offensive environment must be eliminated. Instances of sexual harassment must be investigated in a prompt and effective manner.

All employees of Ford County, particularly those in a supervisory or management capacity, are expected to become familiar with the contents of this policy and to abide by the requirements it establishes.

**Definition of Sexual Harassment:** According to the Illinois Human Rights Act, sexual harassment is defined as: Any unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors or any conduct of a sexual nature when:

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

The courts have determined that sexual harassment is a form of discrimination under Title VII of the U.S. Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended in 1991.

One example of sexual harassment is a case where a qualified individual is denied employment opportunities and benefits after rejecting the supervisor's sexual advances or request(s) for sexual favors or the individual is terminated. Another example is when an individual is subjected to unwelcome sexual conduct by co-workers because of his or her gender which makes it difficult for the employee to perform his or her job.

**Other conduct, which may constitute sexual harassment, includes:**

- **Verbal:** Sexual innuendos, suggestive comments, insults, humor, and jokes about sex, anatomy, or gender-specific traits, sexual propositions, threats, repeated requests for dates, or statements about other employees, even outside of their presence, of a sexual nature.

- **Non-Verbal:** Suggestive or insulting sounds (whistling), leering, obscene gestures, sexually suggestive bodily gestures, "catcalls", "smacking" or "kissing" noises.
- **Visual:** Posters, signs, pin-ups, or slogans of a sexual nature, viewing pornographic material or websites.
- **Physical:** Touching, unwelcome hugging or kissing, pinching, brushing the body, any coerced sexual act, or actual assault.
- **Textual/Electronic:** "Sexting" (electronically sending messages with sexual content, including pictures and video), the use of sexually explicit language, harassment, cyber stalking, and threats via all forms of electronic communication (e-mail, text/picture/video messages, intranet/on-line postings, blogs, instant messages and social network websites like Facebook and Twitter).

While the most recognized forms of sexual harassment involve the types of conduct described above, non-sexual conduct can also constitute a violation of the applicable laws when that conduct is directed at the victim because of his or her gender (for example, a female employee who reports to work every day and finds her tools stolen, her work station filled with trash and her equipment disabled by her male co-workers because they resent having to work with a woman).

The most severe and overt forms of sexual harassment are easier to determine. On the other end of the spectrum, some sexual harassment is more subtle and depends, to some extent, on individual perception and interpretation. The courts will assess sexual harassment by a standard of what would offend a "reasonable person."

For this reason, every manager, supervisor, and employee must remember that seemingly "harmless" and subtle actions may lead to sexual harassment complaints. The use of terms such as "honey", "darling" and "sweetheart" is objectionable to many women who believe that these terms undermine their authority and their ability to deal with men on an equal and professional level. And while use of these terms by an individual with authority over a female employee will rarely constitute an adverse employment action, it may lead to the creation of a hostile work environment.

Another example is the use of a compliment that could potentially be interpreted as sexual in nature. Below are three statements that might be made about the appearance of a woman in the workplace:

"That's an attractive dress you have on."

"That's an attractive dress. It really looks good on you."

"That's an attractive dress. You really fill it out well."

The first statement appears to be simply a compliment. The last is the most likely to be perceived as sexual harassment, depending on individual perceptions and values. To avoid the possibility of offending an employee, it is best to follow a course of conduct above reproach or to err on the side of caution.

Sexual harassment is unacceptable misconduct, which affects both genders. Sexual harassment will often involve a man's conduct directed at a woman. However, it can also involve a woman harassing a man or harassment between members of the same gender.

**Responsibility of Individual Employees:** Each individual employee has the responsibility to refrain from sexual harassment in the workplace. An individual employee who sexually harasses a fellow worker is, of course, liable for his or her individual conduct. The harassing employee will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including discharge in accordance with County policy or any applicable collective bargaining agreement, as appropriate.

**Responsibility of Supervisory Personnel:** Each supervisor is responsible for maintaining the workplace free of sexual harassment. This is accomplished by promoting a professional environment and by dealing with sexual harassment as with all other forms of employee misconduct. It must be remembered that supervisors are the first line of defense against sexual harassment. By setting the right example, a supervisor may discourage his or her employees from acting inappropriately. In addition, supervisors will often be the first to spot objectionable conduct or the first to receive a complaint about conduct which he or she did not observe.

The courts and the Illinois Human Rights Commission have found that organizations as well as supervisors can be held liable for damages related to sexual harassment by a manager, supervisor, employee, or third party (an individual who is not an employee but does business with an organization, such as a contractor, customer, sales representative, or repair person).

Liability is either based on an organization's responsibility to maintain a certain level of order and discipline among employees, or on the supervisor, acting as an agent of the organization. It should be noted that recent United States Supreme Court cases involving sexual harassment claims against supervisors have made the employer's liability for supervisors' actions even stricter. Therefore, supervisors must understand that their adherence to this policy is vitally important; both about their responsibility to maintain a work environment free of harassment and, even more importantly, about their own individual conduct. The law continues to require employers to remain vigilant and effectively remedy sexually harassing conduct perpetrated by individual(s) on their coworkers. Supervisors must act quickly and responsibly not only to minimize their own liability but also that of the County.

Specifically, a supervisor must address an observed incident of sexual harassment or a complaint, with equal seriousness, report it, take prompt action to investigate it, implement appropriate disciplinary action, take all necessary steps to eliminate the harassment and observe strict confidentiality. This also applies to cases where an employee tells the supervisor about behavior considered sexual harassment but does not want to make a formal complaint.

Also, supervisors must ensure that no retaliation will result against an employee making a sexual harassment complaint.

Furthermore, Elected Officials/Dept. Heads should remind employees, on a regular basis, that their incoming and outgoing electronic messages on employer owned/issued equipment are subject to monitoring and that employees have no expectation of privacy on employer owned/issued electronic equipment. Inform employees that if they are subjected to inappropriate electronic communications while at work or on employer-owned equipment, or even on their personal cell phones and computers, that they should contact their supervisor or the Clerk & Recorder immediately. Advise Elected Officials/Dept. Heads and employees not to "friend" each other on social networks and to limit their electronic messages to relevant business matters. Investigate complaints on a case-by case basis and

remind employees of the County's code of conduct and ethics rules if applicable.

**Procedures for Filing a Complaint:** An employee who either observes or believes herself/himself to be the object of sexual harassment should deal with the incident(s) as directly and firmly as possible by clearly communicating her/his position to the offending employee, her/his supervisor, and County contact.

It is not necessary for sexual harassment to be directed at the person making a complaint. The following may also be taken document or record each incident (what was said or done, the date, the time, and the place). Documentation can be strengthened by written records such as letters, notes, memos, and telephone messages.

All charges, including anonymous complaints, will be accepted, and investigated regardless of how the matter comes to the attention of the County. However, because of the serious implications of sexual harassment charges and the difficulties associated with their investigation and the questions of credibility involved, the claimant's willing cooperation is a vital component of an effective inquiry and an appropriate outcome.

No one making a complaint will be retaliated against even if a complaint made in good faith is not substantiated. In addition, any witness will be protected from retaliation.

**Proper responses to conduct which is believed to be sexual harassment may include the following:**

- **Electronic/Direct Communication.** If there is sexual harassing behavior in the workplace, the harassed employee should directly and clearly express her/his objection that the conduct is unwelcome and request that the offending behavior stop. The initial message may be verbal. If subsequent messages are needed, they should be put in writing in a note or a memo.
- **Contact with Supervisory Personnel.** At the same time direct communication is undertaken, or in the event the employee feels threatened or intimidated by the situation, the problem must be promptly reported to the immediate supervisor or if the harasser is the immediate supervisor; the problem should be reported to the next level of supervision or;
- **Formal Written Complaint.** An employee may also report incidents of sexual harassment directly to the Clerk & Recorder. Clerk & Recorder will counsel the reporting employee and be available to assist with filing a formal complaint. The County will fully investigate the complaint and advise the complainant and the alleged harasser of the results of the investigation.
- **Resolution Outside Ford County.** The purpose of this policy is to establish prompt, thorough and effective procedures for responding to every complaint and incident so that problems can be identified and remedied internally. However, an employee has the right to contact the Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR) or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) about filing a formal complaint. An IDHR complaint must be filed within 180 days of the alleged incident(s) unless it is a continuing offense. A complaint with the EEOC must be filed within 300 days. In addition, an appeal process is available through the Illinois Human Rights Commission,

(IHRC) after IDHR has completed its investigation of the complaint. Where the employing entity has an effective sexual harassment policy in place and the complaining employee fails to take advantage of that policy and allow the employer an opportunity to address the problem, such an employee may, in certain cases, lose the right to further pursue the claim against the employer.

**Administrative Contacts:**

- Illinois Department of Human Rights  
(IDHR) Chicago: 312-814-6200 or 800-662-3942  
Chicago TTY: 866-740-3953  
Springfield: 217-785-5100  
Springfield TTY: 866-740-3953  
Marion: 618-993-7463  
Marion TTY: 866-740-3953
- Illinois Human Rights Commission  
(IHRC) Chicago: 312-814-6269  
Chicago TTY: 312-814-4760  
Springfield: 217-785-4350  
Springfield TTY: 217-557-1500
- United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission  
(EEOC) Chicago: 800-669-4000  
Chicago TTY: 800-869-8001

An employee, who is suddenly transferred to a lower paying job or passed over for promotion after filing a complaint with IDHR or EEOC, may file a retaliation charge, also due within 180 days (IDHR) or 300 days (EEOC) of the alleged retaliation. An employee who has been physically harassed or threatened while on the job may also have grounds for criminal charges, such as assault or battery.

**False and Frivolous Complaints:** False and frivolous charges refer to cases where the accuser is using a sexual harassment complaint to accomplish some end other than stopping sexual harassment. It does not refer to charges made in good faith which cannot be proven. Given the seriousness of the consequences for the accused, a false and frivolous charge is a severe offense that can itself result in disciplinary action.

**Individual and Conduct Covered:** These policies apply to all applicants and employees, whether related to conduct engaged in by fellow employees or someone not directly connected to Ford County (e.g., an outside vendor, consultant, or customer). Conduct prohibited by these policies is unacceptable in the workplace and in any work-related setting outside the workplace, such as during business trips, business meetings and business-related social events.

## **EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT**

Ford County provides equal employment opportunities to all employees and applicants for

employment without regard to a person's actual or perceived race, color, creed, ancestry, national origin, amnesty, citizenship, sex or gender (including pregnancy, childbirth, and pregnancy-related conditions), gender identity or expression (including transgender status), sexual orientation, marital status, religion, age, disability, genetic information, order of protection status, service in the military, or any other characteristic protected by applicable federal, state, or local laws and ordinances. Equal employment opportunity applies to all terms and conditions of employment, including hiring, placement, promotion, termination, layoff, recall, transfer, leave of absence, compensation, and training.

Ford County expressly prohibits any form of unlawful employee harassment or discrimination based on any of the characteristics mentioned above. Improper interference with the ability of other employees to perform their expected job duties is not tolerated.

Ford County will endeavor to make a reasonable accommodation of an otherwise qualified applicant or employee related to an individual's physical or mental disability, sincerely held religious beliefs and practices, and/or any other reason required by applicable law, unless doing so would impose an undue hardship upon Ford County's business operations.

Any employees with questions or concerns about equal employment opportunities in the workplace are encouraged to bring these issues to the attention of the Clerk & Recorder. The County will not allow any form of retaliation against individuals who raise issues of equal employment opportunity. Employees who feel they have been subjected to any such retaliation should bring it to the attention of the Clerk & Recorder.

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

- 1) Shunning and avoiding an individual who reports harassment, discrimination, or retaliation;
- 2) Express or implied threats or intimidation intended to prevent an individual from reporting harassment, discrimination, or retaliation; or
- 3) Denying employment benefits because an applicant or employee reported harassment, discrimination, or retaliation or participated in the reporting and investigation process.

Other examples of retaliation include firing, demotion, denial of promotion, unjustified negative evaluations, increased surveillance, harassment, and assault. Complaints of discrimination should be filed according to the procedures described in the Harassment and Complaint Procedure.

## **IMMIGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT**

It is the policy of Ford County to employ only those individuals that are legally authorized to work in the United States. In complying with the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, it is against Ford County policy to discriminate because of an individual's national origin, citizenship, or intent to become a US citizen.

Each new employee, as a condition of employment, must complete the Employment Eligibility

Verification Form I 9 and present documentation establishing identity and employment eligibility. These requirements must be fulfilled within three business days of the employee's first day of work. Former employees who are rehired must also complete the form if they have not completed an I 9 with Ford County within the past three years, or if their previous I 9 is no longer retained or valid.

If documentation is unavailable, and has been applied for by the employee, a receipt is required for verification. The employee must produce the receipt within three (3) business days of hire, and the actual document within ninety (90) calendar days of hire. The County cannot lawfully employ anyone who fails to comply with the employment eligibility verification and/or Form I-9 requirements.

## **PROBLEM OR GRIEVANCE RESOLUTION PROCEDURE**

Ford County realizes that employees of the County from time to time may have complaints or concerns regarding their jobs, working conditions, Supervisors, or fellow employees that the employee may be unable to resolve on an informal basis. Therefore, this formal procedure is designed to resolve such complaints or concerns as quickly as possible, and/or clearly communicate to the involved employee why the matter of concern cannot be resolved to their satisfaction.

**Procedure:** Any employee having a work-related concern, problem or grievance relating to his/her employment shall first discuss the concern, problem, or grievance with his/her Elected Official/Appointed Official. Many concerns can be resolved informally when an employee and supervisor take time to review the concern and discuss options to address the issue. If the problem is not settled to the employee's satisfaction, the employee may present his/her formal grievance in accordance with the following guidelines.

**No Retaliation Pledge:** No employee will be subject to reprisal due to his/her good faith involvement in a grievance. An employee may complete a grievance even if resignation, suspension, or termination occurs.

**Subject Matter of Grievance:** Only one subject matter shall be covered in any one grievance. A grievance shall contain in writing (email is acceptable) the following:

- A statement of the employee's position;
- The date the dispute occurred;
- The relief sought; and
- The date the grievance was given to the Elected Official/Appointed Official.

**Steps in Formal Grievance Procedure:** An employee's failure to submit a grievance to the next step/level within specified time limits shall mean that the employee has accepted the last answer given in this process:

**Step 1:** The employee shall present the grievance in writing to their Elected Official/Appointed Official, explaining its nature and circumstances, within thirty (30) department working days after learning of the circumstances or conditions which gave rise to the grievance. The Elected Official/Appointed Official shall schedule a conference to discuss the written grievance within ten (10) department working days of its presentation. The Elected Official/Appointed



Official shall respond to the grievance in writing as soon as possible, but not to exceed ten (10) working days after the conference.

**Step 2:**

If the grievance is not satisfactorily resolved or no answer is given within the time limit set forth in Step 1, the employee may submit a copy of the written statement of grievance submitted in Step 1 within ten (10) working days from the date the decision was due, to the Ford County State's Attorney and the Ford County Board Chairman for review and determination. The State's Attorney and the Ford County Board Chairman shall schedule a conference with all parties heretofore mentioned, within twenty (20) working days of receipt of the grievance and shall respond to the grievance in writing, as soon as possible, but not to exceed ten (10) working days of the conference. This step shall also apply to grievances lodged against the Elected Official/Appointed Official. At this and later steps, the employee may be represented or accompanied by an individual of his/her choice.

**Step 3:**

In the event the decision of the State's Attorney and the Ford County Board Chairman does not resolve the grievance to the employee's satisfaction, the aggrieved may request an appearance before the next regularly scheduled official meeting of the Ford County Board, such meeting may be held in closed session, in accordance with the Illinois Open Meeting Act. The decision of most of the members of the Ford County Board present at the meeting will be final. The results of their deliberations will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting and a copy of those results provided to the employee within thirty (30) working days after finalization.

In the discussions or meetings in Step 1, 2, and 3, the employee shall be present. The parties involved may present any relevant testimony during a grievance process. The parties may bring supporting documents to any grievance discussions or meetings. In each step of a grievance a formal written summary of the proceedings and outcome will be required; copies will be distributed to those involved. Accurate facts will be recorded from all involved and concerned. Time periods specified for County responses at each Step will be followed under normal circumstances; if the time frames cannot be met or new time frames cannot be agreed upon by both parties under the specific circumstances, the employee will be notified, and the remedy will be to advance to the next step.

If the employee's grievance is related to any Elected Official/Appointed Official, the grievance may be submitted to an Elected Official/Appointed Official as described in Step 1. If Step 1 does not resolve the grievance, a formal process may be developed based on the nature of the grievance.

The employee's right to prompt and equitable resolution of the complaint must not be impaired by his/her pursuit of other remedies, such as the filing of a complaint with the U.S. Department of Justice or any other appropriate federal agency. Furthermore, the filing of a lawsuit in state or federal district court can occur at any time. The use of this grievance procedure is not a prerequisite to the pursuit of other remedies.

## **EMPLOYMENT**

### **ATTENDANCE**

Employees are expected to report to their designated work location whenever scheduled and be at their workstation at starting time and again after lunch break at the prescribed time. Failure to observe working hours could result in disciplinary procedures.

When an employee is unable to report to work because of illness or emergency, the employee must notify his/her Elected Official/Appointed Official as far in advance as possible, but no later than one hour prior to his/her scheduled shift time, or in the event of an emergency, as soon as practical. If the Elected Official/Appointed Official is unavailable, employees should notify the other office staff. Such notification should include a reason for the absence or tardiness and an indication of when the employee can be expected to report to work. The absent employee is responsible for ensuring that proper advance notice of absent or late arrival is given to the employee's Elected Official/Appointed Official or another office staff. Failure to provide proper notification on an absence or lateness, as well as unexcused absences, late arrivals or early departures from work may result in disciplinary action, up to and including discharge unless otherwise prohibited by law.

An employee who fails to report to work and who fails to notify his/her Elected Official/Appointed Official in advance for the reason of their absence for three or more consecutive shifts, will be considered to have voluntarily resigned his/her position with the County.

### **ATTIRE AND GROOMING**

It is important for all employees to project a professional image while at work by being appropriately attired. Ford County employees are expected to be neat, clean, and well-groomed while on the job. Clothing must be consistent with the standards for a business environment and must be appropriate to the type of work being performed. If uniforms or specific dress requirements are provided, the employee must wear the uniform or comply with the dress requirement during all scheduled working hours. All employees are expected to dress in a manner consistent with good hygiene, safety, and good taste. Please use common sense.

Recognizing that employees and visitors to our offices may have sensitivity or allergic reactions to various fragrant products, employees are prohibited from bringing onto the premises natural or artificial scents that could be distracting or annoying to others. Scented personal products (such as fragrances, colognes, lotions, and powders) that are perceptible to others should not be worn by employees. Other scented products (candles, potpourri, and similar items) are also not permitted in the workplace. Ford County is confident that employees will use their best judgment regarding attire and appearance. Management reserves the right to determine appropriateness. Any employee who is improperly dressed will be counseled or in severe cases may be sent home to change clothes. Work time missed by a non-exempt employee will not be compensated. Continued disregard of this policy may be cause for disciplinary action, which may result in termination.

### **BACKGROUND CHECKS**

To ensure that Ford County maintains a safe and productive work environment, it is our policy

to conduct pre-employment background checks on all applicants who accept an offer of employment. Background checks may include verification of any information on the applicant's resume or application form.

All offers of employment are conditioned on receipt of a background check report that is acceptable to Ford County. Background checks may include a criminal record check. All background checks are conducted in conformity with the Federal Fair Credit Reporting Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Illinois Human Rights Act, and state and federal privacy and antidiscrimination laws. Reports are kept confidential and are only viewed by the relevant Department head by individuals involved in the hiring process.

If information obtained in a background check would lead Ford County to preliminarily decide to deny employment, the County will comply with Public Act 101-0656 passed on March 23, 2021:

- a copy of the report;
- a notice of the disqualifying conviction and the reason for disqualification; and
- Explanation of the individual's right to respond before the decision becomes final

The applicant will have five business days following this notice to respond and provide evidence challenging the accuracy of the conviction record or evidence of mitigation. If proceeding with a final decision to take an adverse action solely or in part because of an individual's conviction record, employers required to send the individual a written notification of the final decision that contains the following:

- Notice of the disqualifying conviction(s) and the employer's reasoning of the disqualification;
- Any existing procedure the employer has for the individual to challenge the decision or request reconsideration; and
- The right to file a charge with the Illinois Department of Human Rights.

If an individual is hired by the County and convicted of a felony offense thereafter, the County will take appropriate disciplinary measures, which may include termination.

Additional checks such as a driving record or credit report may be made on applicants for job categories if appropriate and job related.

Ford County also reserves the right to conduct drug testing and a background check for current employees to determine eligibility for promotion or reassignment in the same manner as described above, or upon suspicion of post-hire criminal conviction (please refer to the most recently passed resolution set by the County Board). Ford County requires all prospective employees to pass a drug test before a final offer of employment is confirmed. See "Drug Free Workplace" starting on page 59.

**Computers, Internet, E-Mail, and Other Resources:** Ford County provides a wide variety of communication tools and resources to employees for use in running day-to-day business activities. Whether it is the telephone, voicemail, scanner, Internet, intranet, e-mail, text messaging, portable electronic devices, or any other County-provided technology, use should be reserved for business-related matters during working hours. All communication using these tools should be handled in a professional and respectful manner.

Employees should not have any expectation of privacy in their use of County computer, phone,

portable electronic devices, or other communication tools. All communications made using County-provided equipment or services, including e-mail and Internet activity, are subject to inspection by the County. Employees should keep in mind that even if they delete an e-mail, a voicemail, or another communication, a copy may be archived on the County's systems.

Employee use of County-provided communication systems, including personal e-mail and Internet use, that is not job-related has the potential to drain, rather than enhance, productivity and system performance. You should also be aware that information transmitted through e-mail and the Internet is not completely secure or may contain viruses or malware, and information you transmit and receive could damage the County's systems, as well as the reputation and/or competitiveness of the County. To protect against possible problems, delete any e-mail messages before opening that are received from unknown senders and advertisers. It also is against County policy to turn off antivirus protection software or make unauthorized changes to system configurations installed on County computers. Violations of this policy may result in termination for a first offense.

The County encourages employees to use e-mail only to communicate with fellow employees, suppliers, customers, or potential customers regarding County business. Internal and external e-mails are considered business records and may be subject to federal and state recordkeeping requirements, as well as to discovery in the event of litigation. Be aware of this possibility when sending e-mails within and outside the County.

All use of County-provided communications systems, including e-mail and Internet use, should conform to our County guidelines/policies, including but not limited to the Equal Opportunity, Harassment, Confidential Information, and Conflicts of Interest. So, for example, employees should not engage in harassing or discriminatory behavior that targets other employees or individuals because of their protected class status or make defamatory comments. Similarly, employees should not divulge confidential information such as trade secrets, client lists, or information restricted from disclosure by law on social media sites.

Because e-mail, telephone and voicemail, and Internet communication equipment are provided for County business purposes and are critical to the County's success, your communications may be accessed without further notice by IT department administrators and County management to ensure compliance with this guideline.

The electronic communication systems are not secure and may allow inadvertent disclosure, accidental transmission to third parties, etc. Sensitive information should not be sent via unsecured electronic means.

Employees should pay particular care to the use and security of portable electronic devices when used for business-related purposes, such as laptops, tablets, smartphones, and other data storage media, whether provided by the employer or the employee. Lost or stolen portable electronic devices containing County information may cause breaches of security that result in the loss of County confidential commercial data, the loss of vital research data, the unauthorized disclosure of sensitive employee data, lawsuits against the individual, and lawsuits against the County. Employees should use appropriate password protections for such devices and physically secure them as recommended by IT department administrators.

Office telephones are for business purposes. While the County recognizes that some personal

calls are necessary, these should be kept as brief as possible and to a minimum. Personal use of the County's cell phones, long-distance account, or toll-free numbers is strictly prohibited. Abuse of these privileges is subject to corrective action up to and including termination.

The County reserves the right to monitor customer calls to ensure employees abide by County quality guidelines and provide appropriate levels of customer service. Should the subject matter of any telephone conversation become personal while monitoring is taking place, monitoring of the call will immediately be discontinued.

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

## **GUIDELINES FOR ACCEPTABLE USE OF COUNTY TECHNOLOGY SYSTEM BY EMPLOYEES**

**Acceptable Use:** All users of the County technology system ("System") must comply with the County's Acceptable Use Guidelines.

The System shall include all computer hardware and software owned or operated by the County, the County electronic mail, the County web site, and the County on-line services and bulletin board systems. "Use" of the System shall include use or obtaining access to the System from any computer terminal whether owned or operated by the County.

Employees have no expectation of privacy in their use of the System. The County has the right to access, review, copy, delete, or disclose, as allowed by law, any message sent received, or stored on the County's electronic mail system. The County has the right to and does monitor use of the System by employees, including employees' access to the Internet, as part of System maintenance to determine whether the use is consistent with federal and state laws and County policies and guidelines.

Employees should be aware that their personal computer files or System use may be subject to public disclosure under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act. Access to the System is provided to employees primarily for work-related purposes. Incidental personal use should be minimized.

**Privileges:** Access to the System is provided as a privilege by the County and may be revoked at any time. Inappropriate use may result in discipline, including the loss of System use privileges.

The System, including all information and documentation contained therein, is the property of the County, except as otherwise provided by law.

**Prohibited Use:** Uses of the System listed below are prohibited and may result in discipline or other consequences provided in these guidelines. The System shall not be used to:

- Engage in activities which are inconsistent with the County's operations, or which interferes with an employee's performance of work responsibilities.
- Access, retrieve, or view obscene, profane, or indecent materials. "Indecent materials" are those materials which, in context depict or describe sexual activities or organs in

terms patently offensive, as measured by contemporary community standards, “Obscene materials” are those materials which, taken as a whole, appeal to the prurient interest in sex, which portray sexual conduct in a patently offensive way in which taken as a whole, do not have any serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.

- Access, retrieve, view, or disseminate any material in violation of any federal or state laws or regulation of County policy or rules. This includes but is not limited to improper use of copyrighted material; improper use of the system to commit fraud, or with the intent to commit fraud; improper use of passwords or access copied; or disclosing the full name, home address, or phone number of any student, district employee, or user.
- Transfer any software to or from the System without authorization from the System Administrator.
- Engage in for-profit or non-County sponsored commercial activities, including advertising or sales.
- Harass, threaten intimidate, or demean an individual or group of individuals because of sex, color, race, religion, disability, national origin, or sexual orientation.
- Disrupt the County’s operations, including use that is reasonably foreseeable to result in a disruption or interfere with the rights of others at any time, either during or after work hours.
- Disrupt or interfere with the System.
- Gain unauthorized access to or vandalize the data or files of another user.
- Gain unauthorized access to or vandalize the system, or the technology system of any other individual or organization.
- Forge or improperly alter electronic mail messages, use an account owned by another user without authorizations, or disclose the user’s individual password or that of another user.
- Invade the privacy of any individual, including violating federal or state laws regarding limitations on the disclosure of student records.
- Download, copy, print or otherwise store or possess any data which violates federal or state copyright laws or these Guidelines.
- Send nuisance electronic mail or other online messages such as chain letters, pyramid schemes or obscene, harassing, or other unwelcome messages.
- Send mass electronic mail to multiple users without prior authorization by the appropriate County Administrator.
- Conceal or misrepresent the user’s identity while using the system unless following specific department policy.
- Post material on the County web site without the authorization of the appropriate County administrator.

**Websites:** Any web site created by an employee using the system must be part of a County-sponsored activity, or otherwise be authorized by the appropriate County administrator. All content, including links, of any web site created by an employee using the System must receive prior approval by the appropriate County administrator. All contents of a web site created by an employee using the

system must conform with these Acceptable Use Guidelines. Employees may not place any personal or editorial material on the County web site, or any web site created by an employee using the System.

**Disclaimer:** The County makes no warranties of any kind whether express or implied for the System. The County is not responsible for any damages incurred, including the loss of data resulting from delays, non-deliveries, mis-deliveries, or service interruptions. Use of any information obtained via the System is at the user's own risk. The County is not responsible for the accuracy or quality of information obtained through the System. The County is not responsible for any user's intentional or unintentional access of material on the Internet which may be obscene, indecent, or of an inappropriate nature.

**Security and User Reporting duties:** Security in the System is a high priority and must be a priority for all users. Users are prohibited from sharing their log-in I.D.s or passwords with any other individual. Any attempt to log in as another user will result in consequences as set forth in these guidelines. A user who becomes aware of any security risk or misuse of the system must immediately notify the appropriate County administrator.

**Vandalism:** Vandalism or attempted vandalism to the System is prohibited and will result in consequences as set forth in above referring to disrupt or interfere with the System. of these Guidelines. Vandalism includes, but is not limited to, the downloading, uploading, or creating computer viruses.

**Consequences for Violations:** Any user of the System who engages in any of the prohibited acts listed above, shall be subject to discipline which may include:

- 1) discipline as provided in the County's policies;;
- 2) suspension or revocation of System privileges; and
- 3) referral to law enforcement authorities or other legal action in appropriate cases.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Our residents and other parties with whom we do business entrust the County with important information relating to them personally and/or their businesses. It is our policy that all information considered confidential will not be disclosed to external parties or to employees without a "need to know." If an employee questions whether certain information is considered confidential, he/she should first check with his/her Elected Official/Appointed Official.

This policy is intended to always alert employees to the need for discretion and is not intended to inhibit normal business communications.

All requests by the media for information shall be coordinated through Elected Officials/Appointed Officials. When the Elected Official/Appointed Official is not available, a designated employee may provide information to the media. If the department initiated the contact with the media (i.e. sent a news release), the contact person has approval to talk with the media regarding the specific topic of the release. The employee should request a copy of the release for proof reading prior to publication.



## **ELECTRONIC DEVICES CELL PHONES & SMARTPHONES**

This policy covers those aspects of an employee's work at the County regarding the use of cellular phones, Smartphones, or other handheld devices, whether County issued or personally owned, and the use of such electronic devices. Regardless of whether a cellular phone, or SMARTPHONES, is County or employee owned; such devices will be turned off, or set to vibrate/silent, during all meetings, conferences and other locations where incoming calls may disrupt workflow.

**Use County Owned Electronic Devices:** Some job classifications require immediate access to an employee. Under such circumstances, the County may issue a cell phone, or other device, to an employee for work-related communication. The primary use of such a device is for County related communication. All personal use of such devices is expected to be kept to a minimum. If the personal use of these devices causes disruption, or loss, in productivity, the employee may be subject to disciplinary action.

Employees in possession of County equipment, such as cell phones and other electronic devices, are expected to protect the equipment from loss, damage, or theft. Upon resignation or termination of employment, or at any time upon request of the County, the employee may be asked to produce the electronic device for return or inspection.

Only when there is a necessity to do so will the County consider replacing a County issued electronic device. Under no circumstances will the County replace business cell phones, or other electronic devices, to keep up with the changes in technology when there is not a need for such a replacement.

In the event an employee goes out on a leave under the Family Medical Leave Act or other leave described in this policy, the County reserves the right to deactivate or request for the device to be turned in for the duration of the employee's leave.

**Use of Employee-Owned Electronic Devices:** While at work, employees are expected to exercise the same discretion in using personal cellular phones and other electronic devices as is expected of them in using County owned devices. Excessive personal calls during the workday, regardless of the type of phone used, can interfere with employee productivity and be distracting to other workers. Employees are encouraged to make any other personal calls on non-work time where possible and to ensure that friends and family members are made aware of the County's policy. Management reserves the right to request that the employee provide detailed cellular phone bills regarding usage reports of calls made during working hours to determine if such usage was excessive.

Use of personal cellular phones for making/taking County calls is discouraged. Under certain circumstances, an employee may submit a request to have such calls reimbursed. The County will not be liable for loss, or damage, to personal cellular phones, or other personal electronic devices brought into the workplace.

**Safety and the Use of All Electronic Devices in the Workplace:** All employees are expected to follow applicable state and federal laws or regulations regarding the use of cellular phones and other electronic devices, always.

In compliance with state law regarding "hands-free" use of cell phones and electronic devices during the operation of any motorized vehicle, the County will issue employees hands-free equipment

with County issued cellular phones and Smartphones. However, employees always remain responsible for the continued safe operation of motor vehicles.

***EMPLOYEES WHO ARE CHARGED WITH TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS RESULTING FROM THE USE OF ANY CELLULAR PHONE OR ELECTRONIC DEVICE WHILE OPERATING A MOTOR DRIVEN VEHICLE WILL BE SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL LIABILITIES THAT RESULT FROM SUCH VIOLATIONS.***

## **EMPLOYEE CLASSIFICATION CATEGORIES**

All employees are classified as either nonexempt or exempt under state and federal wage and hour laws. An employee's classification may be changed only upon written notification by the County Board. The following is intended to help employees understand employment classifications and employees' employment status and benefit eligibility. These classifications do not guarantee employment for any specified period. The right to terminate the employment-at-will relationship at any time is retained by both the employee and Ford County.

- **Nonexempt employees:** are employees whose work is covered by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). They are NOT exempt from the law's requirements concerning minimum wage and overtime.
- **Exempt employees:** are generally Elected Officials/Dept. Heads or professional, administrative, or technical staff who ARE exempt from the minimum wage and overtime provisions of the FLSA. Exempt employees hold jobs that meet the standards and criteria established under the FLSA by the U.S. Department of Labor. Ford County has established the following categories for both nonexempt and exempt employees:
  - **Full Time:** Employees who are not in a temporary status and who are regularly scheduled to work the County's full-time schedule of at least 30 hours each week. Generally, these employees are eligible for the full benefits package, subject to the terms, conditions, and limitations of each benefits program. Irregular work schedules may be acceptable in appropriate situations.
  - **Part Time:** Employees who are not in a temporary status and who are regularly scheduled to work less than the full-time schedule of 30 or more hours per week or 1,000 hours per year based on hire date. While they do receive all legally mandated benefits (such as Social Security and worker's compensation insurance), they are ineligible for the County's other benefit programs.
  - **Introductory:** Employees who are serving a 180-day introductory period from the date of initial hire. Employees who satisfactorily complete the introductory period will be changed to the appropriate employment classification.
  - **Temporary:** employees are those who are hired as interim replacements, to temporarily supplement the work force or to assist in the completion of a specific project. Employment in this category is of a limited duration. Employment beyond any initially stated period does not in any way imply a change in employment status. Temporary employees retain that status unless and until notified of a change. While temporary employees receive all legally mandated benefits, (such as workers' compensation

insurance and Social Security), they are ineligible for any of the other County benefit programs.

- **Independent Contractors/Contractual Staff:** Individuals or companies contracted on a limited basis for a specific purpose and are paid at a predetermined rate for a specific project. Such individuals or companies are considered "self-employed" or independent contractors and are, therefore, not eligible for any fringe benefits or other indicia of employment available to employees of the County.
- **Volunteers:** Individuals who donate their time and talents in one or more services provided by the County and who are covered by County liability insurance. Volunteers shall preserve client confidentiality and shall observe the general rules of conduct applicable to regular employees.
- **Students and Interns:** Individuals who participate on a temporary basis in County activities and/or serve without compensation as a condition of fulfilling an academic requirement or training. The County will attempt to cooperate with college and high schools by allowing students to spend time in the County when it is convenient for the staff. The decision will be made by the Elected Official/Appointed Official. Students and interns shall preserve client confidentiality and shall observe the general rules of conduct applicable to other employees.

## **EMPLOYEE RELATIONS**

Ford County is in the business of providing services to the communities and individuals who reside within its borders. The success of Ford County is dependent upon the skill, dedication, and productivity of its employees, and as such, employees are expected to act consistent with the County's purpose. Employee performance and achievement are enhanced in an open and supportive work environment which is characterized by mutual trust and respect. Elected Officials and Appointed Officials are responsible for creating and maintaining a positive work environment in their operations by implementing the policies contained in the Ford County Employee Handbook.

The pace of change and the need for greater flexibility necessitate that we work within a climate of openness and participation. This is achieved by establishing open channels of communications, developing personal ownership of our objectives and performance measures, and consulting over the strategic planning and management of Ford County.

If employees have concerns about working conditions, compensation, or any other employment matter, they are to discuss these concerns openly and directly with their Elected Officials or Appointed Officials. They are responsible for responding to employee concerns. Resolution of employee problems and concerns at the earliest possible opportunity is recognized as a fundamental principle of sound employee relations.

## **EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION AND REFERENCE CHECKS**

As part of the hiring process, applicants will be required to complete an employment application. Resumes will not be accepted as employment applications.

Ford County relies upon the accuracy of information contained in the employment application

and other employment-related documents. Any misrepresentations, falsifications, or material omissions in any of this information or data may result in the exclusion of the individual from further consideration for employment or, if the person has been hired, termination of employment.

Skill tests, approved to the duties of position, may be administered by Elected Officials or Appointed Officials.

To ensure that individuals who join Ford County are well qualified and have a strong potential to be productive and successful, it is the policy of Ford County to check the employment references of all applicants. In addition, it is the policy of Ford County to verify the education background of all applicants.

## **ETHICAL CONDUCT / CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

In compliance with the Illinois State Officials and Employees Ethics Act, county employees (and certain relatives) are prohibited from soliciting or accepting any gift from any prohibited source, subject to certain exceptions. In addition, County employees are prohibited from:

- 1) performing prohibited political activities during compensated time;
- 2) using County property or resources in connection with any prohibited political activity; and/or
- 3) requiring any other employee to participate in any prohibited political activity as part of his/her duties, as a condition of employment, or during any compensated time off.

Employees have an obligation to conduct business within guidelines that prohibit actual or potential conflicts of interest. This policy establishes only the framework within which the County wishes the business to operate. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide general direction so that employees can seek further clarification on issues related to the subject of acceptable standards of operation. Employees should contact their Elected Official/Appointed Official for more information or questions about conflicts of interest.

Transactions with outside firms must be conducted within a framework established and controlled by the Elected Officials, Appointed Officials, and the County Board. Business dealings with outside firms should not result in unusual gains for those firms. Unusual gain refers to bribes, special fringe benefits, unusual price breaks, and other windfalls designed to ultimately benefit either the outside firm or a county employee.

An actual or potential conflict of interest occurs when an employee can influence a decision that may result in a personal gain for that employee or for a relative because of the County's business dealings. For the purposes of this policy, a relative is any person who is related by blood or marriage, or whose relationship with the employee is like that of persons who are related by blood or marriage.

No "presumption of guilt" is created by the mere existence of a relationship with outside firms. However, if employees have any influence on transactions involving purchases, contracts, or leases, it is imperative that they disclose to their Elected Official/Appointed Official as soon as possible the existence of any actual or potential conflict of interest in any situation that may give the appearance of a conflict of interest so that safeguards can be established to protect all parties.

Personal gain may result not only in cases where an employee or relative has a significant

ownership in a firm with which the County does business, but also when an employee or relative receives any bribe, substantial gift, or special consideration because of any transaction or business dealing involving the County. Failure to comply with the above could result in disciplinary action, including discharge.

## **INTRODUCTORY PERIOD**

The introductory period is intended to give new employees the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to achieve a satisfactory level of performance and to determine whether the new position meets their expectations. The Elected Official/Appointed Official uses this period to evaluate employee capabilities, work habits, and overall performance. Either the employee or the Elected Official/Appointed Official may end the at will employment relationship at any time during or after the introductory period, with or without cause or advance notice.

All new and re-hired employees work in an introductory status for the first 180 calendar days after their date of hire. Any significant absence that is approved by the Elected Official/Appointed Official will automatically extend the introductory period by the length of the absence. If the Elected Official/Appointed Official determines that the designated introductory period does not allow sufficient time to thoroughly evaluate the employee's performance, the introductory period may be extended for a specified period.

Upon satisfactory completion of the introductory period, employees enter the "regular" employment classification. The date the employee completes their introductory period must be noted in the employee's personnel file and payroll records.

During the introductory period, new employees are eligible for those benefits that are required by law, such as workers' compensation insurance and Social Security. After becoming regular employees, they may also be eligible for other County provided benefits. Employees should read the information for each specific benefit program for the details on eligibility requirements.

Employees who are promoted within a department or apply for and receive a job in another department of county government are subject to an introductory period, in that job. Benefits eligibility and employment status is not changed during this introductory period. If an employee fails in the promotion within the department during the introductory period, the employee may be allowed to return to his or her former job or a comparable job, for which the employee is qualified, depending on the availability.

## **JOB POSTING / INTERNAL TRANSFERS AND PROMOTIONS**

Ford County provides employees an opportunity to indicate their interest in open positions. Normally, notices of all job openings are posted, although the County reserves the right not to post a particular opening. Elected Officials/Appointed Officials shall post new or vacant positions in a central location at the appropriate work site and on the official bulletin board in the courthouse lobby. Job openings will be posted and normally remain open for three (3) working days, after which the Elected Official/Appointed Officials may fill the open position.

Each job posting notice will include the dates of the posting period, job title, department, location, grade level, salary range, job summary, essential duties, and qualifications (required skills

and abilities).

Employees who are on suspension or have a written warning on file for less than a year, are not eligible to apply for posted jobs. The County encourages employees to discuss their developmental and career plans with their supervisors before applying for posted positions.

Employees interested in applying for a posted position should contact the appropriate department and apply to the Elected Official/Appointed Official with the opening. After the three (3) working day posting period, the Elected Official/Appointed Official shall review all internal applications received and applications on file and will interview those candidates that possess the required skills and abilities for the job. If the Elected Official/Appointed Official determines that no internal candidate is satisfactory within the three (3) day posting period, the Elected Official/Appointed Official shall begin recruiting activities outside of the organization.

This procedure does not preclude the County from recruiting from the outside when and if it is determined such a procedure is necessary. Ford County offers the opportunity to be promoted or transferred, based on need and the employee's work-related performance, job-related qualifications, and County service.

For purposes of this policy and practice, a promotional opportunity is defined as a movement to a position in a higher classification. A lateral transfer is defined as a move from one position to another position which is not of a higher classification. Transfers may be initiated by the County to adjust to changes in workforce requirements, and other circumstances as determined by the County. Additionally, an employee may request a transfer to satisfy a personal preference. Such a transfer may also be suggested by the employee's supervisor when it is in the best interests of the County.

**Employee-Initiated Transfers and Promotions:** Employees may apply for posted internal positions (both lateral transfers and promotions) by applications through the job-posting program. Employees are eligible to pursue job opportunities for positions in which they are qualified. Employees are encouraged to contact their Elected Official/Appointed Official to discuss their qualifications and career interests prior to applying for an internal opening.

**County-Initiated Placements:** Placements may be initiated by the County to adjust to changes in workforce requirements, to accommodate an employee's disability or for other business reasons.

## **LAYOFF AND RECALL**

In some circumstances, it may become necessary to use a layoff procedure to adjust the work force. The term layoff is not used when employees are separated from the County because of failure to perform their duties satisfactorily. The County may lay off an employee due to shortage of funds to work, the abolition of the position, lack of work, or other material changes in the duties of the position, or for related reasons which are outside the employee's control, and which do not reflect discredit upon the service of the employee. The duties performed by any employee laid off may be reassigned to other employees already working. In identifying employees to be laid off, the County will consider various factors, which may include, but are not limited to, length of employment, work performance, and/or ability to satisfactorily perform job duties that are or may be assigned.

Qualified employees on layoff may be recalled at the discretion of the County. Recall of any

employees is contingent upon their ability to satisfactorily perform the work available. In addition, recall is contingent upon the satisfactory results of any required physical examination. Employees affected by a layoff are placed on a recall list for a maximum period of one calendar year. Employees not recalled within one year are removed from the list. If an employee is recalled after an absence of three months or more, the seniority or start date is adjusted to account for the time the employee was absent. If the employee is recalled within three months, the starting date is not adjusted.

Employees receiving a recall offer will be notified by registered mail, return receipt requested. Letters will be sent to the last known address on record in the employment files. Letters should be receipted by the employee or a member of the employee's immediate family. Such notification will require a reply by telephone or electronic communication within three (3) days of receipt. Failure to reply within the prescribed time will result in withdrawal of the recall offer.

Where the terms of a collective bargaining agreement conflict with this section, the terms of the collective bargaining agreement shall control (as to the relevant employees in the applicable collective bargaining unit).

## **MEDICAL EVALUATIONS**

To help ensure that new employees can perform their duties safely, pre-employment drug screenings are required and may be performed randomly or with reasonable suspicion thereafter.

After an offer has been made to a first-time applicant entering employment with the County, a drug screening will be performed at the County's expense by a health professional of the County's choice. The offer of employment and assignment to duty is contingent upon satisfactory results of the examination.

Because of the nature of some of the County's operations and processes, pre-employment medical examinations may be required to determine physical fitness to perform the essential functions of pre-designated positions, including but not limited to employees of the following departments: (i.e. building maintenance, animal control, emergency management and county highway).

After an offer has been made to an applicant entering a designated position, a medical examination will be performed by a health professional of the County's choice. Employment is contingent upon satisfactory completion of the exam. Such examinations will be scheduled at reasonable times and intervals and performed at the expense of Ford County.

Current employees may be required to take medical examinations to determine fitness for duty. Such examinations will be scheduled at reasonable times and intervals and performed at the expense of Ford County.

Information on an employee's medical condition or history will be kept separate from other employee information and maintained confidentially. Access to this information will be limited to those who have a legitimate need to know.

## **NEPOTISM, EMPLOYMENT OF RELATIVES AND PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS**

Ford County wants to ensure that County practices do not create situations such as conflict of interest or favoritism. This extends to practices that involve employee hiring, promotion and transfer.



Close relatives, partners, those in a dating relationship, members of the same household, or those whose relationship with the applicant/employee is like that of persons who are related by blood or marriage are not permitted to be in positions that have a reporting responsibility to each other. Close relatives are defined as a spouse, child, parent, sibling, grandparent, grandchild, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, someone that is considered or treated like a close relative or any such relative who is "step" or "in law".

If employees begin a dating relationship or become relatives, partners, or members of the same household and if one party is in a supervisory position, that person is required to inform the Elected Official/Appointed Official of the relationship.

Ford County reserves the right to apply this policy in the case of actual or potential problems because of the relationship between employees, even if there is no direct-reporting relationship or authority involved. This can include reassignment or, if necessary, termination of employment for one or both individuals involved.

## **OFFICE CLOSURE**

At times, emergencies such as severe weather, fires, power failures, earthquakes, or public health emergencies, may disrupt county operations. In extreme cases, these circumstances may require the closing of a work facility. If such an emergency occurs during non-working hours, local radio and/or television stations will be asked to broadcast notification of the closing. When operations are officially closed due to emergency conditions (per the Ford County Sheriff), the time off from scheduled work will be paid. Provisions of this section are applicable only to employees in the Courthouse, Public Health Department, Highway office personnel and Sheriff's office personnel. Provisions of this section are not applicable to the Highway Department and the Sheriff's Department or union personnel.

## **OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT**

Employees are permitted to engage in outside work or to hold other jobs, subject to certain restrictions as outlined below unless prohibited by Union contract.

Activities and conduct away from the job must not compete with, conflict with, or compromise the County interests or adversely affect job performance and the ability to fulfill all job responsibilities. Employees are prohibited from performing any services for residents and/or businesses on non-working time that are normally performed by Ford County. This prohibition also extends to the unauthorized use of any County tools or equipment and the unauthorized use or application of any confidential information. In addition, employees are not to solicit or conduct any outside business during paid working time. Employees are cautioned to carefully consider the demands that additional work activity will create before accepting outside employment. Outside employment will not be considered an excuse for/ poor job performance, absenteeism, tardiness, leaving early, refusal to travel or refusal to work overtime or different hours. If Ford County determines that an employee's outside work interferes with performance, the employee may be asked to terminate the outside employment.

Employees who have accepted outside employment may not use paid sick leave to work on the outside job. Fraudulent use of sick leave will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

## **PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS**

Elected Officials/Appointed Official and employees are strongly encouraged to discuss job performance and goals on an informal, day-to-day basis. Formal performance appraisals are conducted at the end of an employee's introductory period in any new position. This allows the Elected Official/Appointed Official and the employee to discuss the job responsibilities, standards, and performance requirements of the new position. Additional formal performance appraisals are conducted to provide both management and employees the opportunity to discuss job tasks, identify and correct weaknesses, encourage, and recognize strengths, and discuss positive, purposeful approaches for meeting goals.

Formal performance appraisals must be completed annually, on or near the employment date anniversary. These appraisals are to be placed in the employee personnel file, maintained by the Elected Official/Appointed Official.

## **PERFORMANCE STANDARDS**

To ensure orderly operations and provide the best possible work environment, the County expects employees to always adhere to disciplinary rules and proper personal standards of conduct. These rules and standards are necessary to protect the health and safety of all employees, to maintain uninterrupted operation, and to protect the County's property and goodwill.

It is not possible to list all forms of behavior that are considered unacceptable in the workplace. The following are examples of infractions of rules of conduct that may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment:

- Theft or inappropriate removal or possession of property. Falsification of timekeeping records.
- Misrepresentation or withholding information on the employment application or on any other records.
- Working under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
- Possession, distribution, sale, transfer, or use of alcohol or illegal drugs in the workplace, while on duty, or while operating employer owned vehicles or equipment.
- Fighting or threatening violence in the workplace.
- Boisterous or disruptive activity in the workplace.
- Negligence or improper conduct leading to damage of employer owned property.
- Insubordination or other disrespectful conduct.
- Violation of safety or health rules.
- Smoking in prohibited areas.
- Sexual or other unlawful or unwelcome harassment.

- Possession of dangerous or unauthorized materials, such as explosives or firearms, in the workplace.
- Excessive absenteeism or tardiness, or any absence without notice.
- Unauthorized absence from the work area during the workday.
- Unauthorized use of telephones, mail system, computers, or other employer owned equipment.
- Unauthorized disclosure of confidential information.
- Unauthorized purchases.
- Violation of personnel policies.
- Conviction of a felony.
- Sleeping or loafing on the job.
- Obstruction of the work of fellow employees.
- Unsatisfactory performance or conduct.
- Any work rule or regulation set by an individual Elected Official/Appointed Official.
- Use of Camera Cell Phones.
- Failure to maintain appropriate working relationships with others in the work environment.
- Gambling or soliciting on County property.

## **PERSONNEL DATA CHANGES**

It is the responsibility of each employee to promptly notify his or her Elected Official /Appointed Official of any changes in personnel data. Personal mailing addresses, telephone numbers, number and names of dependents, individuals to be contacted in the event of an emergency, educational accomplishments, and other such status reports should be accurate and current at all times.

## **PERSONAL SERVICES**

No employee may be required to perform personal services for any fellow employee, Supervisor, or Appointed/Elected Official. No employee may voluntarily perform such services during any compensated work hours, excluding holidays and/or vacation, or on county property. Personal services are defined as activity having value, or for which compensation is ordinarily paid between unrelated parties, other than as contained in an employee's job description or directly related to the operation of county business.

## **PERSONNEL FILES**

Employee files are maintained by the County and are considered confidential. Elected Officials/Dept. Heads may only have access to personnel file information on a need-to-know basis. Requests to review personnel files by current and former employees will be permitted in accordance with the Illinois Personnel Record Review Act. Representatives of government or law enforcement agencies, in the course of their duties, may be allowed access to file information.

The County will only respond to written reference inquiries. Responses to such inquiries will confirm only dates of employment, wage rates, and position(s) held. No employment data will be released without a written authorization and release signed by the individual who is the subject of the inquiry.

## **PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE**

Every employee has the duty and the responsibility to be aware of and abide by existing rules and policies. Employees also have the responsibility to perform his/her duties to the best of his/her ability and to the standards as set forth in his/her job description or as otherwise established.

Ford County supports the use of progressive discipline to address issues such as poor work performance or misconduct. Our progressive discipline policy is designed to provide a corrective action process to improve and prevent a recurrence of undesirable behavior and/or performance issues. Our progressive discipline policy has been designed consistent with our organizational values, HR best practices and employment laws.

Outlined below are the steps of our progressive discipline policy and procedure. Ford County reserves the right to combine or skip steps in this process depending on the facts of each situation and the nature of the offense. The level of disciplinary intervention may also vary. Some of the factors that will be considered are whether the offense is repeated despite coaching, counseling and/or training; the employee's work record; and the impact the conduct and performance issues have on our organization.

### **The following outlines Ford County's progressive discipline process:**

- Verbal warning: A supervisor verbally counsels an employee about an issue of concern, and a written record of the discussion is placed in the employee's file for future reference.
- Written warning: Written warnings are used for behavior or violations that a supervisor considers serious or in situations when a verbal warning has not helped change unacceptable behavior. Written warnings are placed in an employee's personnel file. Employees should recognize the grave nature of the written warning.
- Final Warning / Performance improvement plan: Whenever an employee has been involved in a disciplinary situation that has not been readily resolved or when he/she has demonstrated an inability to perform assigned work responsibilities efficiently, the employee may be given a final warning or placed on a performance improvement plan (PIP). PIP status will last for a predetermined amount of time not to exceed 90 days. Within this time period, the employee must demonstrate a willingness and ability to meet and maintain the conduct and/or work requirements as specified by the supervisor and the organization. At the end of the performance improvement period, the performance improvement plan may be closed or, if established goals are not met, dismissal may occur.
- Termination: When a situation is deemed to be extreme, previous warnings have not resulted in a change in unacceptable behavior performance, or performance does not

meet acceptable standards as determined by the County, an employee's employment may be involuntary terminated with the County.

Ford County reserves the right to determine the appropriate level of discipline for any inappropriate conduct, including oral and written warnings, suspension with or without pay, demotion and termination.

## **RECYCLING**

Ford County supports environmental awareness by encouraging recycling and waste management in its business practices and operating procedures. This support includes a commitment to the purchase, use, and disposal of products and materials in a manner that will best utilize natural resources and minimize any negative impact on the earth's environment.

Ford County encourages reducing and, when possible, eliminating the use of disposable products. Source reduction, decreases the consumption of valuable resources through such workplace practices as:

- Communication through computer networks with e-mail;
- Posting memos for all employees;
- Two-sided photocopying;
- Minimum packaging;
- Eliminating fax cover sheets;
- Reusing paper clips, folders, and binders;
- Reusing packaging material;
- Turning off lights when not in use.

Whenever possible, Elected Officials/Appointed Officials, and employees of the County are encouraged to purchase products for the workplace that contain recycled or easily recyclable materials. Buying recycled products supports recycling and increases the markets for recyclable materials. By recycling, the County is helping to solve trash disposal and control problems facing all of us in today environment.

## **REHIRE**

Former employees who left Ford County in good standing and were classified as eligible for rehire may be considered for reemployment. An application must be submitted, and the applicant must meet all minimum qualifications and requirements of the position, including any qualifying exam, when required.

Rehired employees begin benefits just as any other new employee. Previous tenure will not be considered in calculating longevity, leave accruals or any other benefits. Termination from employment due to a policy violation will be ineligible for rehire.

## RETURN OF COUNTY PROPERTY AND TERMINATION PROVISIONS

The separating employee must return all County property at the time of separation, including uniforms, cell phones, keys, PCs, and identification cards.

The separating employee shall contact the Elected Official/Appointed Official as soon as notice is given to schedule an exit interview. The interview will be on the employee's last day of work or another day, as mutually agreed on. Accrued vacation leave will be paid in the last paycheck.

Health insurance terminates the last day of the month of employment unless an employee requests immediate termination of benefits. Information for Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation (COBRA) continued health coverage will be provided. Employees will be required to pay their share of the dependent health and dental premiums through the end of the month.

## RIGHT TO MONITOR

All County-supplied technology and County-related work records belong to the County and not to the employee. Ford County routinely monitors use of County-supplied technology. Inappropriate or illegal use or communications may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

## SEPARATION OF EMPLOYMENT

Separation of employment within an organization can occur for several different reasons:

- **Resignation:** Although we hope your employment with us will be a mutually rewarding experience, we understand that varying circumstances cause employees to voluntarily resign employment. Resigning employees are encouraged to provide as much notice as possible, with a minimum of two weeks' notice required, preferably in writing, to facilitate a smooth transition out of the organization. Once an employee has submitted a notice to terminate their employment with the County, they are no longer eligible to use accrued but unused vacation, personal or sick time. The County reserves the right to provide an employee with two weeks' pay in lieu of notice in situations where job or business needs warrant such action. If an employee provides less notice than requested, the employer may deem the individual to be ineligible for rehire depending on the circumstances regarding the notice given.
- **Retirement:** Employees who wish to retire are required to notify their Elected Official/Appointed Official in writing at least one (1) month before the planned retirement date.
- **Job abandonment:** Employees who fail to report to work or contact their supervisor for three or more consecutive shifts shall be considered to have abandoned the job without notice, effective at the end of their normal shift. Employees who are separated due to job abandonment are ineligible for rehire.
- **Termination:** Employees of Ford County are employed on an at-will basis, and the County retains the right to terminate an employee at any time.

- Death: Separation will be effective as of the date of death. In the case of an employee death, all compensation due shall be paid to the estate of the employee.
- **Layoff:** involuntary employment termination initiated by the County for non disciplinary reasons. The County may lay off an employee due to shortage of funds to work, the abolition of the position, lack of work, or other material changes in the duties of the position, or for related reasons which are outside the employee's control, and which do not reflect discredit upon the service of the employee. The duties performed by any employee laid off may be reassigned to other employees already working. For benefit purposes, an employee's length of service will be reduced by the length of time the employee was laid off. Vacation time earned but not taken, as well as sick pay, will be paid according to current policy, to the laid off employee. An opportunity to continue coverage under Ford County's employee benefit plan will be given in accordance with COBRA for covered individuals. The "Layoff and Recall" policy in this manual contains more information.

Since employment with Ford County is based on mutual consent, both the employee and Ford County Elected Officials/Appointed Officials have the right to terminate employees at will at any time for any reason or no reason. Employee's benefits will be affected by employment termination. All accrued, vested benefits that are due and payable at termination will be paid, on the payday for that pay period. Some benefits may be continued at the employee's expense if the employee so chooses. The employee will be notified in writing of the benefits that will be paid and the benefits that may be continued, as well as the terms, conditions, and limitations of such continuance.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA—ACCEPTABLE USE**

Ford County encourages employees to share information with coworkers and with those outside the County for the purposes of gathering information, generating new ideas, and learning from the work of others. Social media provides inexpensive, informal, and timely ways to participate in an exchange of ideas and information. However, information posted on a website is available to the public, and therefore, Ford County has established the following guidelines for employee participation in social media.

**Note:** As used in this policy, "social media" refers to blogs, forums, and social networking sites, such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat, among others.

**Off-duty use of social media.** If employees publish content after-hours that involves work or subjects associated with Ford County, a disclaimer should be used, such as this: "The postings on this site are my own and may not represent Ford County positions, strategies or opinions." Employees must ensure that social media activity does not interfere with their work. In general, Ford County considers social media activities to be personal endeavors, and employees may use them to express their thoughts or promote their ideas. It is highly recommended that employees keep Ford County related social media accounts separate from personal accounts, if practical.

**On-duty use of social media.** Social media use shouldn't interfere with employee's responsibilities at Ford County. Ford County computer systems are to be used for business purposes only. When using the Ford County computer systems, use of social media for business purposes is



allowed (ex: Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and LinkedIn), but personal use of social media networks or personal blogging of online content is discouraged and could result in disciplinary action.

**Respect.** Demonstrate respect for the dignity of Ford County, its owners, its customers, its vendors, and its employees. A social media site is a public place, and employees should avoid inappropriate comments. For example, do not use ethnic slurs, personal insults, or obscenity, or use language that may be considered inflammatory. Even if a message is posted anonymously, it may be possible to trace it back to the sender.

**Post disclaimers.** If an employee identifies himself or herself as a Ford County employee or discusses matters related to Ford County on a social media site, the site must include a disclaimer on the front page stating that it does not express the views of Ford County and that the employee is expressing only his or her personal views. For example: “The views expressed on this website/Web log are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of my employer.” Place the disclaimer in a prominent position and repeat it for each posting expressing an opinion related to Ford County or Ford County’s business. Employees must keep in mind that if they post information on a social media site that is in violation of Ford County policy and/or federal, state, or local law, the disclaimer will not shield them from disciplinary action.

**Confidentiality.** Do not identify or reference Ford County customers or vendors without express permission. Employees may write about their jobs in general but may not disclose any confidential or proprietary information. For examples of confidential information, please refer to the confidentiality policy. When in doubt, ask before publishing.

**New ideas.** Please remember that new ideas related to work, or Ford County’s business belong to the County. Do not post them on a social media site without the County’s permission. Trademarks and copyrights. Do not use the County’s or others’ trademarks on a social media site or reproduce the County’s or others’ material without first obtaining permission.

**Legal.** Employees are expected to comply with all applicable laws, including, but not limited to, Federal Trade Commission (FTC) guidelines and copyright, trademark, and harassment laws.

**Discipline.** Violations of this policy may result in discipline up to and including immediate termination of employment.

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

## **SOLICITATIONS, DISTRIBUTIONS AND POSTING OF MATERIALS**

Ford County prohibits the solicitation, distribution and posting of materials on or at County property by any employee or non-employee, except as may be permitted by this policy. The sole exceptions to this policy are charitable and community activities supported by Ford County management and County-sponsored programs related to Ford County’s products and services.

**Provisions:**

- Nonemployees may not solicit employees or distribute literature of any kind on County premises at any time.
- Employees may only admit non-employees to work areas with management approval or as part of a County-sponsored program. These visits should not disrupt workflow. An employee must always account the nonemployee. Former employees are not permitted onto County property except for official County business.
- Employees may not solicit other employees during work times, except in connection with a County-approved or sponsored event.
- Employees may not distribute literature of any kind during work times or in any work area at any time, except in connection with a County-sponsored event
- The posting of materials or electronic announcements are permitted with approval from an Elected Official/Appointed Official.

Violations of this policy should be reported to your Elected Official/Appointed Official.

**USE OF COUNTY VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT**

When using County equipment and vehicles, employees are expected to exercise care, perform required maintenance, and follow all operating instructions, safety standards, and guidelines. Employees are expected to adhere to all applicable state and federal law when operating a vehicle or piece of equipment while in an employment capacity. Employees are also expected to obtain and to keep current the appropriate license(s) for the type of vehicle(s) operated. The Elected Official/Appointed Official will provide and document initial training prior to verifying the employee's qualifications and/or capabilities to operate equipment.

Employees are expected to notify their Elected Official/Appointed Official immediately if any equipment, machines, tools, or vehicles appear to be damaged, defective, or in need of repair. Prompt reporting of damages, defects, and the need for repairs could prevent deterioration of equipment and possible injury to employees or others. If employees have questions regarding their responsibility for maintenance and care of equipment or vehicles, they should contact their supervisor.

The improper, careless, negligent, destructive, unauthorized, or unsafe use or operation of equipment or vehicles, as well as excessive or avoidable traffic and parking violations, can result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

All county owned vehicles are to be operated by County employees only and are to be used to conduct County business only. No unauthorized persons may operate County owned vehicles. Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

All Ford County employees intending to operate County vehicles or use personal vehicles on County business must hold a valid driver's license. Employees intending to operate their personal vehicle(s) for County business must insure their personal vehicle. Each Elected Official/Appointed Official will keep a copy of current proof of automobile insurance for employees that use personal vehicle(s) for County business. Employees may be subjected to an audit of their driver's license record

by the Elected Official/Appointed Official. Failure to provide the above may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

### **VISITORS IN THE WORKPLACE**

To provide for the safety and security of employees and the properties of Ford County, only authorized visitors are allowed in the work areas. Restricting unauthorized visitors helps maintain safety standards, protects against theft, ensures security of equipment, protects confidential information, safeguards employee welfare, and avoids potential distractions and disturbances.

If an individual is observed on County's premise engaging in questionable behaviors, employees should immediately notify an Elected Official/Appointed Official or contact the Sheriff's office.

## **COMPENSATION**

### **ADMINISTRATION AND REVIEW OF SALARY AND WAGES**

The Ford County pay plan is intended to provide fair compensation for positions in the County within its affordability to do so. In establishing the pay plan, the County takes into consideration the general rates of pay for similar employment in private establishments and other public jurisdictions in the area as well as the financial condition of the County. From time to time, the County may make comparative studies of factors affecting the pay plan to determine whether its pay objectives are being met.

The pay plan primarily consists of a classification system and pay ranges. The classification system includes groupings of positions into grades, by title, which are approximately equal in complexity and responsibility, which have the same general qualifications, and which can be equitably compensated within the same range of pay. A minimum and maximum pay range is established for each classification. New employees or current employees entering a new classification are generally paid at the entrance rate for that position.

While the performance of each employee is under constant review, overall performance and pay level shall be appraised at least once during each 12-month period. Employees are generally advanced to the new pay rate within their classification on December 1st of each year, provided his or her performance level is at a satisfactory level. Pay rate advancements, as well as any exceptions, must be recommended by the appropriate Elected Official/Appointed Official and must be approved by the Ford County Personnel Committee and have appropriate funding within the Fiscal Budget. A new employee hired 90 days before any effective wage increases will not be eligible for that wage increase.

### **BUSINESS TRAVEL EXPENSES**

Employees will be reimbursed for reasonable business travel expenses incurred while on assignments away from the normal work location. All business travel must be approved in advance by the appropriate Elected Official/Appointed Official. The use of personal vehicles will be reimbursed at the rate set forth by County Board Resolution. Employees whose travel plans have been approved may be responsible for making their own travel arrangements.

The amounts approved for reimbursement of meals will be determined by County Board Resolution. All requests for payments must be accompanied with receipts and all payments for meals will be deducted from the appropriate line item of the approving department's budget. Employees are expected to limit expense to reasonable amounts. Expenses attributed to *NON-EMPLOYEES OR ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES WILL NOT BE REIMBURSED*.

Employees who are involved in an accident while traveling on business must promptly report the incident to the appropriate Elected Official/Appointed Official. Deductibles for collision insurance will be paid by the driver or owner of the private vehicle. Vehicles owned, leased, or rented by the County may not be used for personal use.

Employees must contact the appropriate Elected Official/Appointed Official for guidance and assistance on procedures related to travel arrangements, expense reports, reimbursement for specific expenses, or any other business travel issues.

Abuse of this business travel expenses policy, including falsifying expense reports to reflect costs not incurred by the employee, can be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

## **OVERTIME**

When operating requirements or other needs cannot be met during regular working hours, employees may be needed to work overtime. All overtime work must receive the Elected Official's /Appointed Official's written authorization normally in advance.

Overtime compensation is paid to all non-exempt employees in accordance with federal and state wage and hour restrictions. Overtime pay is based on actual hours worked. Time off on sick leave, vacation leave, or any leave of absence will not be considered hours worked for purposes of performing overtime calculations. This provision does not apply to Union employees.

Overtime shall be paid at a rate of time and one half for all hours worked outside of their normal work hours and/or workdays. . The work week begins on Sunday and ends on the following Saturday.

Where appropriate, all Elected Officials/Appointed Officials are encouraged to offer comp-time in lieu of overtime pay for hours worked more than 37.5 hours in a workweek. Compensatory time will be granted to Non-Exempt employees at the rate of 1.5 hours for each hour of overtime worked. Compensatory time may accumulate to a maximum of 40 hours, after which additional overtime worked will be paid. Upon termination of employment, an employee will be paid for accrued unused compensatory time.

Exempt Employees, Administrative, and executive employees who have duties and responsibilities which are primarily managerial, or employees for whom specialized training or certification is required, may be determined exempt from the overtime requirements by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). When exempt employees work more than forty hours per week, they are not eligible for overtime pay.

## **PAYMENT OF WAGES**

All employees are paid biweekly, on every other Friday. The County reserves the right to alter

pay date and schedule with one month's written notice to employees. Each paycheck will include earnings for all work performed through the end of the previous payroll period. Payroll will be direct deposited into an account directed by the employee. Employees will receive a copy of their earnings each pay period. No salary or wage advances will be made.

If a regularly scheduled payday falls on a recognized holiday, employees will receive pay on the last day of work before the regularly scheduled payday.

If an employee's marital status changes or the number of exemptions previously claimed increases or decreases, a new Form W-4 must be submitted to the County.

The law requires that the County make certain deductions from every employee's compensation. Among these are applicable federal, state, and local income taxes. The County also must deduct Social Security taxes on each employee's earnings up to a specified limit called the Social Security' wage base'.

All full-time employees hired for the County of Ford shall be signed up for the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF) or SLEP in the Sheriff's Department at the time of hire. Wages will be deducted on a pre-tax basis at the rate required by the specific fund and deposited into the employee's account.

The County offers programs and benefits beyond those required by law. Eligible employees may voluntarily authorize deductions from their paychecks to cover the costs of participation in these programs.

The County takes all reasonable steps to ensure that employees receive the correct amount of pay in each paycheck and that employees are paid promptly on the scheduled payday.

In the unlikely event that there is an error in the amount of pay, the employee should promptly bring the discrepancy to the attention of his or her supervisor and the County Clerk and Recorder so that corrections can be made as soon as possible.

If you have questions concerning why deductions were made from your paycheck or how they were calculated, your supervisor can assist in having your questions answered.

## **WORK HOURS AND TIMEKEEPING**

Except for the Ford County Highway Department, Clerk & Recorder's Office, Public Health Department and the Sheriff's Department, the normal working hours of all full-time employees of Ford County shall be 8:30 a.m. and continuing through 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, including an unpaid half hour meal period each day. Employees are granted two paid 15-minute breaks, (one in the morning and one in the afternoon.) The breaks are permitted with the provision that the offices be always staffed. Break time is not to be added to the lunch period or used for late morning arrival or early afternoon departure.

The work week begins on Sunday and ends on the following Saturday. Due to seasonal and job requirements, the hours of employment of the County Highway Department, Ford County Public Health Department and the Sheriff's Department shall be established and communicated by those Elected Officials/Appointed Officials.

Accurately recording time worked is the responsibility of every employee and his or her supervisor. Federal and state laws require the County to keep an accurate record of time worked to

calculate employee pay and benefits. Time worked at is all the time spent on the job performing assigned duties.

Non-exempt employees should accurately record the time they begin and end their work, as well as the beginning and ending time of each meal period. They should also record the beginning and ending time of any split shift or departure from work for personal reasons. (The prior provision is not applicable to the Public Health Department.) Non-exempt employees should report to work no more than 15 minutes prior to their scheduled starting time, nor stay more than 15 minutes after their scheduled stop time without prior authorization from their Elected Official/Appointed Official. Overtime work must always be approved before it is performed by the Elected Official/Appointed Official. If the employee's department has a time clock the employee must use it.

Each Elected Official/Appointed Official must maintain an accurate record of time worked by the employee more than the employee's regular workday. Altering, falsifying, tampering with time records, or recording time on another employee's time record may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

If corrections or modifications are made to the time record, both the employee and the supervisor must verify the accuracy of the changes by initialing the time record.

## **TIME OFF/LEAVES OF ABSENCE**

### **BEREAVEMENT LEAVE**

In the event of the death of an immediate family member, a full-time employee shall be permitted to be absent from his job for bereavement leave after their introductory period. The leave shall be up to three (3) paid days per occurrence and 2 maximum occurrences per year with the Elected Official's/Appointed Official's approval. If the employee desires to be absent for more than three (3) days, he/she may utilize previously earned, unused, vacation or personal time and receive compensation for each such additional day's absence at his normal rate of pay, provided that the Elected Official/Appointed Official approves such additional absence.

Definition of Immediate Family - A member of the immediate family shall be defined to be an employee's spouse, parent/stepparent/in-law, son/daughter in-law, grandchild, grandparent, sibling/step sibling/half-sibling, or legal guardian.

**Child/Spouse Bereavement Leave:** In the event of the death of a child (natural, adopted, foster, stepchild, a legal ward or the child of a person standing in loco parentis) or spouse, employees who have worked a minimum of 1250 hours for the County during the immediately preceding 12 months are entitled to a maximum of 2 weeks of unpaid bereavement time and up to 6 weeks of unpaid bereavement time in the event of the death of more than one child during a twelve-month period.

The time may be used to attend the funeral or alternative to a funeral, decide necessitated by the death, or to grieve the death of the child/spouse. The leave must be completed within 60 days after the date employee receives notice of the death of the child/spouse. Employees must give 48 hours of notice before the leave, unless it is not practicable, and may be requested to provide documentation

demonstrating the need for the leave.

Child/Spouse bereavement leave may not be taken in addition to unpaid leave permitted under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and may not exceed unpaid leave time allowed under that law.

## **DISABILITY LEAVE**

Disability is defined as a physical or mental condition that incapacitates an employee to a point that he/she is unable to perform their job requirements. Disability may be work or non-work related and must be certified by a licensed physician. It is the responsibility of the employee or his/her representative to contact the Elected Official/Appointed Official to keep him/her advised of the extent of the disability and contact the County Clerk's Office for a disability application as soon as it is anticipated that the employee may go on disability. Employees with a disability may qualify for IMRF or workman's compensation disability benefits; however, IMRF disability benefits are not paid for the first 30 days of disability. An employee may also be eligible for leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) policy if the employee meets certain eligibility requirements and the employee's disability qualifies as a serious health condition. In such cases, disability leave will run concurrently with FMLA leave and the terms of the FMLA policy will control to the extent such terms conflict with the provisions of this disability policy, until the employee's FMLA leave rights are exhausted.

- Employees requesting a disability leave must submit a request for leave in writing, stating the reason for the leave, at least thirty (30) days in advance as able to his or her supervisor. In emergencies, written notice must be provided as soon as possible under the circumstances. The employee must also submit certification from his or her physician stating the diagnosis and nature of the disability, why the disability will preclude the employee from working and the recommended course of treatment, and the estimated length of time that the employee will be out of work because of the disability. This medical certification generally must be provided at the time of the request of the leave, but no later than fifteen (15) days after the request for leave is made. The County reserves the right to require a second medical opinion by another physician at its designation.
- Employees must use all accrued sick days in conjunction with a disability leave. Employees may (but are not required to) use vacation and personal days during a disability leave to continue their salary, after sick days are exhausted. Sick leave and vacation and personal time will continue to be accrued only during the period when the employee is being paid by the County. Otherwise, sick leave and vacation time or personal days will not be accrued while the employee is on disability.
- Disability beyond 30 calendar days may be covered by the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF). The County Clerk and Recorder's Office will prepare the required forms to request IMRF disability coverage and forward them to the disabled employee. It is the employee's responsibility to sign the forms as required, provide the necessary physician's statement or other proof of disability, and return all forms to the County

Clerk and Recorder's Office for processing. The amount of IMRF disability benefits is 50% of the employee's average monthly earnings for the 12 calendar months prior to the date he or she is disabled.

- An employee will be returned to his or her former position if the employee returns from a sick/disability leave within 30 calendar days after the first day of absence, provided that the employee is able to perform the essential job functions of the position. Employees who are unable or unwilling to resume their duties on the same schedule to which they were assigned immediately prior to the period of disability within the thirty days are not guaranteed reemployment. For example, a full-time staff member is not guaranteed the right to demand rehire on a part-time basis.
- If the employee's leave continues beyond thirty (30) days, the County will attempt to return the employee to his or her former position or to a comparable position for which the employee is qualified if available when the employee returns from an approved leave. However, the County's need to fill a position may override its ability to hold a position open until an employee returns from his or her leave. The County, therefore, cannot assure that it will be able to return an employee to any position after an approved leave of more than thirty (30) days. If during the leave the employee's position has been filled or eliminated, or the duties and responsibilities have been significantly changed requiring new skills and abilities, the returning employee may be offered a position, if open, comparable to the position the employee held immediately prior to the leave. The County has the sole discretion to determine comparable jobs and the employee's qualifications for any such positions. If the employee's same or a comparable position for which the employee is qualified is not open at the end of the leave of absence, the employee will be automatically terminated from employment. Additionally, if an employee refuses to accept any position offered within one week after such offer, the employee will be terminated from employment, at which time the employee will be notified, as applicable, of any conversion rights and/or rights to group health plan coverage.
- Health Insurance will be paid by Ford County only while on paid absence, unless otherwise required by applicable law. Continued participation by the employee in the Group Life and Health Insurance program during unpaid disability leave will be at the employee's expense of paying the premium for continued coverage.
- During a disability leave, the County may require the employee to periodically report on his or her status and intent to return to work. The County may also periodically require certification of the employee's medical condition.
- Unused vacation, and personal time will be held pending the employee's return. In the event the employee does not return to work, unused benefits will be paid in accordance with the County's separation policy.
- In any event, if after six months of a disability leave the employee is unable or unwilling to perform the normal job functions of their position, the employee will be separated, and all unused benefits paid in accordance with routine separation policy.



- If the employee's disability continues beyond the original requested and approved leave time but the employee has not yet used the maximum six months allowed for a disability leave, the County may extend the disability leave for up to the maximum leave available upon written request for an extension and presentation of a statement from the employee's physician stating the reason why the employee cannot report back to work and the estimated additional time that will be required for the employee to recover from the disability.
- Failure to return from a disability leave upon the expiration of the approved leave period will be considered a voluntary resignation.
- When an employee returns from a disability leave, the employee must provide a statement of disability from his or her physician stating that the employee is medically fit to return to work and further stating any limitations that may be imposed by the physician on the employee's ability to work. The County, in its sole discretion, may require an employee to be examined by a physician designated by the County before the employee is permitted to return to work from a disability leave. The final decision on whether an employee is ready to return to work rests with the County.

## **FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT**

Ford County complies with the federal FMLA, which requires employers to grant unpaid leaves of absence to qualified workers for certain medical and family-related reasons. Upon hire, Ford County provides all new employees with notices required by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) on Employee Rights and Responsibilities Under the Family and Medical Act. The function of this policy is to provide employees with a general description of their FMLA rights. In the event of any conflict between this policy and the applicable law, employees will be afforded all rights required by law.

If you have any questions, concerns, or disputes with this policy, you must contact your Elected Official/Appointed Official in writing.

Please note there are many requirements, qualifications, and exceptions under these laws, and each employee's situation is different. Contact the Clerk & Recorder to discuss options for leave.

The FMLA requires private employers with 50 or more employees and all public agencies, including state, local, and federal employers, and local education agencies (schools) to provide eligible employees up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave in any 12-month period for certain family and medical reasons. The 12-month period is a rolling period measured backward from the date an employee uses any FMLA leave, except for leaves to care for a covered servicemember with a serious illness or injury. For those leaves, the leave entitlement is 26 weeks in a single 12-month period measured forward from the date an employee first takes that type of leave.

**Basic leave entitlement:** The FMLA requires covered employers to provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave to eligible employees for the following reasons:

- 1) for incapacity due to pregnancy, prenatal medical care, or childbirth;
- 2) to care for the employee's child after birth or placement for adoption or foster care;
- 3) to care for the employee's spouse, child, or parent who has a serious health condition; or
- 4) for a serious health condition that makes the employee unable to work.

**Military family leave entitlements:** Eligible employees with a spouse, child, or parent on active duty or called to active-duty status in the National Guard or Reserves in support of a contingency operation may use their 12-week leave entitlement to address certain qualifying exigencies. Qualifying exigencies may include addressing issues that arise from:

- 1) short notice of deployment (limited to up to 7 days of leave);
- 2) attending certain military events and related activity;
- 3) arranging childcare and school activities;
- 4) addressing certain financial and legal arrangements;
- 5) attending certain counseling sessions;
- 6) spending time with covered military family members on short-term temporary rest and recuperation leave (limited to up to 5 days of leave);
- 7) attending post deployment reintegration briefings;
- 8) arranging care for or providing care to a parent who is incapable of self-care; and
- 9) any additional activities agreed upon by the employer and employee that arise out of the military member's active duty or call to active duty.

The FMLA also includes a special leave entitlement that permits eligible employees to take up to 26 weeks of leave to care for a covered servicemember during a single 12-month period. A covered servicemember is a current member of the armed forces, including a member of the National Guard or reserves, who has a serious injury or illness incurred in the line of duty on active duty that may render the servicemember medically unfit to perform the duties of the servicemember's office, grade, rank, or rating and for which the servicemember is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy; is in outpatient status; or is on the temporary disability retired list.

**Benefits and protections during FMLA leave:** During FMLA leave, the company will maintain the employee's health coverage under any "group health plan" on the same terms as if the employee had continued to work. Upon return from FMLA leave, most employees will be restored to their original or equivalent positions with equivalent pay, benefits, and other employment terms. However, an employee on FMLA leave does not have any greater right to reinstatement or to other benefits and conditions of employment than if the employee had been continuously employed during the FMLA leave period.

Certain highly compensated key employees also may be denied reinstatement when necessary to prevent "substantial and grievous economic injury" to the company's operations. A "key" employee is an eligible salaried employee who is among the highest-paid 10 percent of the company's employees within 75 miles of the worksite. Employees will be notified of their status as key employees, when applicable, after they request FMLA leave.

Use of FMLA leave cannot result in the loss of any employment benefit that accrued before the start of an employee's leave.

**Employee eligibility:** The FMLA defines eligible employees as employees who:

- 1) have worked for the company for at least 12 months;
  - 2) have worked for the company for at least 1,250 hours in the previous 12 months;
- and

3) work at or report to a worksite that has 50 or more employees or is within 75 miles of company worksites that, taken together, have a total of 50 or more employees.

**Definition of “serious health condition:”** A serious health condition is an illness, an injury, an impairment, or a physical or mental condition that involves either an overnight stay in a medical care facility or continuing treatment by a healthcare provider for a condition that either prevents the employee from performing the functions of the employee’s job or prevents the qualified family member from participating in school, work, or other daily activities.

Subject to certain conditions, the continuing treatment requirement may be met by a period of incapacity of more than three (3) consecutive calendar days combined with at least 2 visits to a healthcare provider or one (1) visit and a regimen of continuing treatment, incapacity due to pregnancy, or incapacity due to a chronic condition. Other conditions may meet the definition of “continuing treatment.”

**Use of leave:** An employee does not need to use this leave entitlement in one block. Leave can be taken intermittently or on a reduced work schedule when medically necessary. Employees must make reasonable efforts to schedule leave for planned medical treatment so as not to unduly disrupt the employer’s operations. Leave due to qualifying exigencies also may be taken on an intermittent or a reduced work schedule basis.

**Substitution of paid leave for unpaid leave:** Employees may choose or employers may require the use of accrued paid leave while taking FMLA leave. Accordingly, the company requires employees to use any accrued paid vacation, personal, and sick days during an unpaid FMLA leave taken because of the employees’ own serious health condition or the serious health condition of a family member or to care for a seriously ill or injured family member in the military. In addition, employees must use any accrued paid vacation or personal days (but not sick days) during FMLA leave taken to care for a newborn or newly placed child or for a qualifying exigency arising out of a family member’s active duty or call to active-duty status in support of a contingency operation. To use paid leave for FMLA leave, employees must comply with the company’s normal paid leave procedures found in its Vacation and Sick Leave policies.

**Employee responsibilities:** Employees must provide 30 days’ advance notice of the need to take FMLA leave when the need is foreseeable. When 30 days’ notice is not possible, employees must provide notice as soon as practicable and generally must comply with the company’s normal call-in procedures. The company may delay leave to employees who do not provide proper advance notice of the foreseeable need for leave, absent unusual circumstances preventing the notice. Employees must provide sufficient information for the company to determine if the leave may qualify for FMLA protection and the anticipated timing and duration of the leave. Sufficient information may include that the employee is unable to perform job functions, the family member is unable to perform daily activities, the need for hospitalization or continuing treatment by a healthcare provider, or circumstances supporting the need for military family leave. Employees also must inform the company if the requested leave is for a reason for which FMLA leave was previously taken or certified. Employees also are required to provide a certification and periodic recertification supporting the need for leave. The company also may require a second and, if necessary, a third opinion (at the company’s expense) and, when the leave is a result of the employee’s own serious health condition, a fitness-for-

duty report to return to work. The company also may delay or deny approval of leave for lack of proper medical certification.

**Company responsibilities:** The company will inform employees requesting leave whether they are eligible under the FMLA. If they are, the notice will specify any additional information required, as well as the employees' rights and responsibilities. If employees are not eligible, the company will provide a reason for the ineligibility.

The company will inform employees if leave will be designated as FMLA-protected and the amount of leave counted against the employees' FMLA leave entitlement. If the company determines that the leave is not FMLA-protected, the company will notify the employees.

**Other provisions:** Under an exception to the FLSA in the FMLA regulations, hourly amounts may be deducted for unpaid leave from the salary of executive, administrative, and professional employees; outside sales representatives; certain highly skilled computer professionals; and certain highly compensated employees who are exempt from the minimum wage and overtime requirements of the FLSA, without affecting the employees' exempt status. This special exception to the "salary basis" requirements for the FLSA's exemptions extends only to eligible employees' use of FMLA leave.

Employees may not perform work for self-employment or for any other employer during an approved leave of absence, except when the leave is for military or public service or when the company has approved the employment under its outside employment policy and the employees' reason for FMLA leave does not preclude the outside employment.

Unlawful acts by employers. The FMLA makes it unlawful for any employer:

- 1) to interfere with, restrain, or deny the exercise of any right provided under the FMLA or
- 2) to discharge or discriminate against any person for opposing any practice made unlawful by the FMLA or for involvement in any proceeding under or relating to the FMLA.

**Enforcement:** An employee may file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Labor or may bring a private lawsuit against an employer. The FMLA does not affect any federal or state law prohibiting discrimination or supersede any state or local law or collective bargaining agreement that provides greater family or medical leave rights.

## **HOLIDAYS**

Ford County will potentially grant holiday time off to all full-time employees set by resolution yearly by the County Board.

A recognized holiday that falls on a Saturday will be observed on the preceding Friday. A recognized holiday that falls on a Sunday will be observed on the following Monday. Any employee with unscheduled or unapproved time off the day before and/or after an observed holiday will not receive pay for that Holiday unless prohibited by Union contract.

Each year the County Board will set the holiday calendar. The County Board, when setting subsequent holiday calendar years for the Ford County employees, shall review the dates and days said holidays fall on, and shall confer with the County Officers before setting said holiday calendar.

The Highway Department will be allowed to work 3 normal weekday holidays, to be reviewed annually, and to replace them with 3 extra personal leave days such that, total holidays plus personal leave be equal for all full-time employees.

If a recognized holiday falls during an eligible employee's paid absence (such as vacation or sick leave), holiday pay will be provided instead of the paid time off benefit that would otherwise have applied.

Holiday pay is time and one-half and will be calculated based on the employee's straight time pay rate (as of the date of the holiday) times the number of hours the employee worked on that day. To qualify for holiday pay, all employees shall work their last regularly scheduled workday before the holiday and their first regularly scheduled workday after the holiday. Paid time off for holidays will not be counted as hours worked for the purposes of determining overtime. When a set holiday falls on a normal work week workday, the employee shall receive holiday pay providing any additional requirements are met. When a set holiday falls on a day that is not part of an employee's normal work week workday, the employee shall not receive Holiday pay.

An employee in a non-exempt position working on one of the above enumerated holidays may, at the option of the Elected Official/Appointed Official, be given an equivalent time off or time and one half pay for the number of hours worked.

An employee in an exempt position who is required to work on a day designated as a holiday shall be entitled to exchange time for hours worked.

## **JURY DUTY**

Serving on a jury or serving as a witness when called is a civic duty, and as such is recognized and supported by Ford County.

An employee who receives a summons or subpoena from a civil authority and serves during work hours will be paid the difference between the earnings from the court system and his or her current base rate of pay. To receive full pay, an employee must submit evidence to the supervisor indicating the amount of pay received from the court system. Only full time and part time employees are eligible to receive paid jury and witness duty leave. Temporary employees are not eligible for paid jury and witness duty leave.

If an employee is asked to appear in court as a witness at the request of a party other than the County, the employee is free to use vacation leave. If the subpoena is County related, the employee will receive paid time off for the entire period of witness duty. In the event the employee is engaged in litigation against the County, other County employees and/or County Elected officials, the employee will not be paid in any manner for their absence to appear as a witness and/or litigant. However, if an employee is witness for the County in a litigation matter, the employee will receive their regular hourly rate of pay for the time scheduled away from their assignment by their Elected Official/Appointed Official.

The County will continue to provide health insurance benefits for the full term of the absence if the employee has coverage. Vacation, leave, and holiday benefits, will also continue to accrue during the leave.

## **LACTATION/BREASTFEEDING**

For up to one year after a child's birth, any employee who is breastfeeding her child will be provided reasonable break times as needed to express breast milk for her baby. The County will designate a room for this purpose upon request.

## **MILITARY LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Ford County is committed to protecting the job rights of employees absent on military leave. In accordance with federal and state law, it is the County's policy that no employee or prospective employee will be subjected to any form of discrimination based on that person's membership in or obligation to perform service for any of the Uniformed Services of the United States. Specifically, no person will be denied employment, reemployment, promotion, or other benefit of employment based on such membership. Furthermore, no person will be subjected to retaliation or adverse employment action because such person has exercised his or her rights under applicable law or County policy. If any employee believes that he or she has been subjected to discrimination in violation of County policy, the employee should immediately contact your Elected Official/Appointed Official.

Employees taking part in a variety of military duties are eligible for benefits under this policy. Such military duties include leaves of absence taken by members of the uniformed services, including Reservists and National Guard members, for training, periods of active military service and funeral honors duty, as well as time spent being examined to determine fitness to perform such service. Subject to certain exceptions under the applicable laws, these benefits are generally limited to five years of leave of absence.

Employees requesting leave for military duty should contact their Elected Official/Appointed Official to request leave as soon as they are aware of the need for leave.

## **PERSONAL TIME**

Personal time provides an all-purpose time off policy for eligible employees to conduct personal business. Full time employees are eligible, after thirty days of employment, to take personal time which equals one (1) paid working day per year. Personal days must be used by the end of the fiscal year and cannot be accumulated from year to year.

A personal day can be used in minimum increments of ½ day. To schedule a planned personal day, employees should request advance approval from their Elected Official/Appointed Official. When employees have an unexpected need to be absent from work, they should notify their Elected Official/Appointed Official before the scheduled start of their workday, if possible. The Elected Official/Appointed Official, based on business need and staffing requirements, will review requests for personal days.

Personal days are paid at the employee's base rate of pay at the time of absence, not including any overtime or special forms of compensation such as bonuses or shift differentials.

## **PREGNANCY RIGHTS AND ACCOMMODATIONS**

Pursuant to the Illinois Human Rights Act, the County provides reasonable accommodations, to

the extent required by law, for conditions related to pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions. Employees requesting a leave or reasonable accommodation should promptly notify their Elected Official/Appointed Official.

**Use of accrued paid leave:** The County requires employees to use accrued paid sick leave, concurrently with some or all the leave taken under this policy. Additionally, employees must comply with the County's normal procedures for the applicable leave policy (e.g., call-in procedures, advance notice).

**Maintenance of health benefits:** If employees and their families participate in the County's group health plan, the County will maintain coverage during leave under this policy on the same terms as if employees had continued to work. If applicable, employees must decide to pay their shares of health plan premiums while on leave. In some instances, the County may recover premiums it paid to maintain health coverage or other benefits for employees and their families. Use of leave under this policy will not result in the loss of any employment benefit that accrued prior to the start of leave under this policy. Employees should consult the applicable plan document for information regarding eligibility, coverage, and benefits.

**Procedures:** When seeking leave or a reasonable accommodation under this policy, an employee must provide their Elected Official/Appointed Official with the following:

- As soon as practicable and if possible, prior to commencing leave, a statement from his or her health care provider supporting the request for leave or reasonable accommodation. The statement should confirm that the requested leave or reasonable accommodation is based on a pregnancy-related disability, and if the statement is provided in support of a leave request, the statement should include an anticipated start and end date. An employee must also supply periodic reports as deemed appropriate during the leave regarding the employee's status and intent to return to work.
- Upon return from leave, medical certification of fitness for duty before returning to work. The County will require this certification to address whether employees can perform the essential functions of their positions.

Failure to comply with the foregoing requirements may result in delay or denial of leave, or disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

**Employer responsibilities:** To the extent required by law, the County will inform employees whether they are eligible for leave under this policy. As detailed in the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) Policy, the County will also inform employees if leave will be designated as FMLA-protected and, to the extent possible, note the amount of leave counted against employees' leave entitlements. If employees are not eligible for FMLA leave, the County will provide a reason for the ineligibility.

**Job restoration:** Upon returning from leave, employees will typically be restored to their original positions or to equivalent positions with equivalent pay, benefits, and other employment terms and conditions.

**Failure to return after leave:** If an employee fails to return to work as scheduled after leave under this policy, or if an employee exceeds the leave entitlement, the employee will be subject to the County's other applicable leave of absence, accommodation, and attendance policies. This may result in termination if the employee has no other County-provided leave available to him or her that applies to

the continued absence. Likewise, if leave under this policy ran concurrently with FMLA leave, following the conclusion of the FMLA leave, the County's obligation to maintain the employee's group health plan benefits ends (subject to any applicable COBRA rights).

## **SCHOOL VISITATION RIGHTS**

The School Visitation Rights Act of 1993 provides employed parents and guardians (who are otherwise unable to meet with educators because of work conflicts) the right to eight (8) hours of unpaid time off during the school year to attend necessary education or behavioral conferences at their children's schools. The County will provide employees their rights under this act as follows:

- This act applies solely to public and private employers with fifty (50) or more individuals in Illinois.
- The employee must have been employed at least six (6) months and have been employed at least half time.
- The employee can be granted up to eight (8) hours during any school year; no more than four (4) hours may be taken at any one day.
- This time can only be taken if the employee has exhausted all earned leave time, except PTO leave or disability leave.
- The employee must provide the employer with a written request for leave at least 7 days in advance. In an emergency, 24 hours' notice is required.
- The leave permitted under this Act will not be paid time.
- The school administrator shall provide the employees with documentation of the school visitation.
- The State Superintendent of Education and the Director of IDOL must develop the form.

The following link takes you to the visitation form. <http://www.illinois.gov/idol/Laws-Rules/FLS/Documents/FLSSVA01.PDF>

## **SICK LEAVE**

Ford County provides paid sick leave benefits to all eligible employees for periods of temporary absence due to non occupational illness, injury, or disability. In addition, sick leave can be used in the event of illness, injury or medical appointment for a child, spouse, sibling, parent, mother-in-law, father-in-law, grandchild, grandparent, or stepparent.

Full time employees are eligible to use accrued sick leave after 90 days of employment. Eligible employees will accrue sick leave benefits of 12 days per year (credited pro-rata on a bi-weekly basis) beginning on the date of employment.

Paid sick leave can be used in minimum increments of one hour. Employees who are unable to report to work due to illness or injury should notify their direct supervisor at least one hour before they are to report to work. The direct supervisor must also be contacted on each additional day of absence. Failure to notify the direct supervisor, except under extenuating circumstances, shall be cause for disciplinary action.

For absences greater than three (3) consecutive calendar days, employees are required to



provide a physician's statement to their supervisor verifying the absence and the employee's inability to perform the duties of the position during the absence. For absences greater than five (5) consecutive calendar days, employees are required to provide a physician's statement to their supervisor verifying the absence and the employee's inability to perform the duties of the position during the absence, plus a statement that the employee safely return to work and listing restrictions or accommodations, if any. A physician's verification is not required for absences of three (3) days or less, except in cases where there is a pattern of suspected abuse or repeated illness.

Any employee who submits a falsified absence report and/or physician's statement will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

An employee "abuses" sick leave when the employee uses or attempts to use sick leave for reasons that do not qualify for sick leave (as identified above). An employee who is determined to have abused sick leave will not be paid for the inappropriate sick leave. "Abuse" of sick leave shall subject the employee to disciplinary action.

Sick leave benefits will be calculated based on the employee's base pay rate at the time of absence and will not include any special forms of compensation, such as bonuses or shift differentials.

Accumulated unused paid sick leave is an earned benefit granted during employment. Upon an employee's resignation or retirement, but not if the employee is discharged for cause, accumulated unused paid sick leave shall be paid as part of their final compensation. Sick leave may be paid upon resignation or retirement at the rate of \$25 per day or a prorated share thereof only if the employee is employed by the County more than one year. An employee retiring or resigning has the option to use up to 240 accumulated days for pension enhancement with IMRF (Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund) or SLEP or has the option to be paid up to a maximum of 100 sick days. Employees should refer to IMRF guidelines to determine if the pension enhancement option is appropriate.

Employees shall be notified in writing of leave balances, including vacation, sick leave, personal time, comp time, etc. on each paystub.

An employee may voluntarily donate sick leave to another employee who has exhausted his accumulated sick leave, so long as such donation does not extend the employee's leave time beyond the approved leave period. If an employee voluntarily requests that the County transfer a portion of that employee's accrued sick time to another employee, the County will facilitate that transfer. Such a request must be submitted in writing to the Clerk and Recorder's Office for processing. The name of the donor can be kept anonymous. An employee seeking to donate sick leave will be required to retain enough sick time to equate to one month of scheduled work time off, hours and number of days will vary based on full-time status. Donated time is not otherwise limited in the amount of sick time the employee can donate. An employee can only receive donations of sick time from employees once they have otherwise exhausted all accrued time off.

## **TELECOMMUNICATING POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

**Objective:** Telecommuting allows employees to work at home, on the road or in a satellite location for all or part of their workweek. Ford County considers telecommuting to be a viable, flexible work option when both the employee and the job are suited to such an arrangement. Telecommuting may be appropriate for some employees and jobs but not for others. Telecommuting is not an

entitlement, it is not a County-wide benefit, and it in no way changes the terms and conditions of employment with Ford County. The County Board requests that all employees be present to work in their offices during Courthouse hours (except for Sheriff's Dept. employees, some Highway employees and during paid time off.)

**Procedures:** Telecommuting can be informal, such as working from home for a short-term project or on the road during business travel, or a formal, set schedule of working away from the office as described below. Either an employee or a supervisor can suggest telecommuting as a possible work arrangement.

Any telecommuting arrangement made will be on a trial basis for the first three months and may be discontinued at will and at any time at the request of either the telecommuter or the organization. Every effort will be made to provide 30 days' notice of such change to accommodate commuting, childcare and other issues that may arise from the termination of a telecommuting arrangement. There may be instances, however, when no notice is possible.

**Eligibility:** Individuals requesting formal telecommuting arrangements must be employed with Ford County for a minimum of 12 months of continuous, regular employment and must have a satisfactory performance record. Exceptions may be made at the discretion of the employee's supervisor on a case-by-case basis.

Before entering into any telecommuting agreement, the employee and manager, with the assistance of the human resource department, will evaluate the suitability of such an arrangement, reviewing the following areas:

- Employee suitability. The employee and manager will assess the needs and work habits of the employee, compared to traits customarily recognized as appropriate for successful telecommuters.
- Job responsibilities. The employee and manager will discuss the job responsibilities and determine if the job is appropriate for a telecommuting arrangement.
- Equipment needs, workspace design considerations and scheduling issues. The employee and manager will review the physical workspace needs and the appropriate location for the telework.
- Tax and other legal implications. The employee must determine any tax or legal implications under IRS, state, and local government laws, and/or restrictions of working out of a home-based office. Responsibility for fulfilling all obligations in this area rests solely with the employee.

If the employee and manager agree, and the Clerk and Recorder's Office concurs, a draft telecommuting agreement will be prepared and signed by all parties, and a three-month trial period will commence.

Evaluation of telecommuter performance during the trial period will include regular interaction by phone and e-mail between the employee and the manager to discuss work progress and problems. At the end of the trial period, the employee and manager will each complete an evaluation of the arrangement and make recommendations for continuance or modifications. Evaluation of telecommuter performance beyond the trial period will be consistent with that received by employees working at the office in both content and frequency but will focus on work output and completion of

objectives rather than on time-based performance.

An appropriate level of communication between the telecommuter and supervisor will be agreed to as part of the discussion process and will be more formal during the trial period. After conclusion of the trial period, the manager and telecommuter will communicate at a level consistent with employees working at the office or in a manner and frequency that is appropriate for the job and the individuals involved.

**Equipment:** On a case-by-case basis, Ford County will determine, with information supplied by the employee and the supervisor, the appropriate equipment needs (including hardware, software, modems, phone and data lines and other office equipment) for each telecommuting arrangement. The human resource and information system departments will serve as resources in this matter. Equipment supplied by the organization will be maintained by the organization. Equipment supplied by the employee, if deemed appropriate by the organization, will be maintained by the employee. Ford County accepts no responsibility for damage or repairs to employee-owned equipment. Ford County reserves the right to make determinations as to appropriate equipment, subject to change at any time. Equipment supplied by the organization is to be used for business purposes only. The telecommuter must sign an inventory of all Ford County property received and agree to take appropriate action to protect the items from damage or theft. Upon termination of employment, all County property will be returned to the County, unless other arrangements have been made.

Ford County will supply the employee with appropriate office supplies (pens, paper, etc.) as deemed necessary. Ford County will also reimburse the employee for business-related expenses, such as phone calls and shipping costs, that are reasonably incurred in carrying out the employee's job.

The employee will establish an appropriate work environment within his or her home for work purposes. Ford County will not be responsible for costs associated with the setup of the employee's home office, such as remodeling, furniture, or lighting, nor for repairs or modifications to the home office space.

**Security:** Consistent with the organization's expectations of information security for employees working at the office, telecommuting employees will be expected to ensure the protection of proprietary County and customer information accessible from their home office. Steps include the use of locked file cabinets and desks, regular password maintenance, and any other measures appropriate for the job and the environment.

**Safety:** Employees are expected to maintain their home workspace in a safe manner, free from safety hazards. Ford County will provide each telecommuter with a safety checklist that must be completed at least twice per year. Injuries sustained by the employee in a home office location and in conjunction with his or her regular work duties are normally covered by the County's workers' compensation policy. Telecommuting employees are responsible for notifying the employer of such injuries as soon as practicable. The employee is liable for any injuries sustained by visitors to his or her home worksite.

Telecommuting is not designed to be a replacement for appropriate childcare. Although an individual employee's schedule may be modified to accommodate childcare needs, the focus of the arrangement must remain on job performance and meeting business demands. Prospective telecommuters are encouraged to discuss expectations of telecommuting with family members prior to

entering a trial period.

**Time Worked:** Telecommuting employees who are not exempt from the overtime requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act will be required to accurately record all hours worked using Ford County's time-keeping system. Hours worked more than those scheduled per day and per workweek require the advance approval of the telecommuter's supervisor. Failure to comply with this requirement may result in the immediate termination of the telecommuting agreement.

**Ad Hoc Arrangements:** Temporary telecommuting arrangements may be approved for circumstances such as inclement weather, special projects, or business travel. These arrangements are approved on an as-needed basis only, with no expectation of ongoing continuance.

Other informal, short-term arrangements may be made for employees on family or medical leave to the extent practical for the employee and the organization and with the consent of the employee's health care provider, if appropriate.

All informal telecommuting arrangements are made on a case-by-case basis, focusing first on the business needs of the organization.

## **UNPAID LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

An Unpaid Leave of Absence is intended to provide Ford County with a means to allow employees to be reinstated with past seniority if they need to suspend active employment status. Unpaid leaves are granted to employees in good standing at the discretion of the appropriate Elected Official/Appointed Official.

An employee requesting an unpaid leave must be a full time employee with at least 90 days of service. An employee requesting an unpaid leave must provide a written request (to the appropriate Elected Official/Appointed Official) which relates the anticipated term of the leave and its purpose. The Elected Official/Appointed Official will recommend its acceptance or denial based on operational needs. Unpaid leaves are without pay with a minimum duration of one month, a maximum duration of six months. At the end of an unpaid leave of absence, at the request of an employee who is unable to return to work, the Elected Official/Appointed Official will review the situation to determine whether additional leave should be granted.

During the leave of absence, employees can continue to receive group benefits provided such continuances are acceptable under the terms of the adopted programs (employees must pay full premium costs for employees and dependents in advance). Employees will not earn sick leave or vacation credit while on an unpaid leave and no pay will be given for holidays occurring during this period. Time spent on an approved unpaid leave shall not be credited toward seniority or vacation benefits.

An employee returning from an unpaid leave is requested to provide the supervisor with at least two weeks' advance notice of the date the employee intends to return to work. The employee may be reinstated to his or her former position, if it exists, or, if not, to another vacant position in the same class. Reinstatement from an unpaid leave is not guaranteed.

## **VACATION**

The Ford County vacation policy is intended to provide eligible employees with opportunities

for rest, relaxation, and personal pursuits. Employees earn vacation time according to their length of service on their anniversary date as shown below:

<u>YEARS OF SERVICE</u>	<u>VACATION TIME EARNED</u>
From eligibility thru 5 years	10 days
From eligibility 6 through 10 years	15 days
From eligibility over 11 years	20 days

The length of eligible service is calculated based on a "benefit year". This is the 12-month period that begins when the employee starts to earn vacation time. Vacation shall be earned during the work year and granted to employees once a year on the anniversary date of their employment. An employee's benefit year may be extended for any significant leave of absence except a military leave of absence (military leave has no effect on the vacation calculation). Earned vacation time is available for use in the year following its accrual.

Paid vacation time can be used in minimum increments of one hour. To use vacation benefits, employees must request advance approval from their Elected Official/Appointed Official. Vacation requests are reviewed based on business needs and staffing requirements.

Vacation time off is paid at the employee's base pay rate at the time of vacation. It does not include overtime or any special forms of compensation such as incentives, bonuses, or shift differentials. Employees may accumulate a maximum of 20 days of vacation time. Once the maximum accrual is reached, all further accruals will cease. Vacation time accruals will recommence after the employee has taken vacation time and their accrued hours have dropped below the maximum.

Vacation time is granted in addition to any recognized holidays which may fall during the employee's vacation. When an employee's service with the County is terminated, he or she will receive compensation for any unused, accumulated vacation leave up to a maximum of 20 days. The payment of accrued vacation leave will be based on time that has been earned through the last day of work and applicable to the base pay rate of the individual on that day with Elected Official/Appointed Official written authorization.

### **VICTIMS ECONOMIC AND SAFETY ACT (VESSA)**

In accordance with the Illinois Victims Economic Security and Safety Act (VESSA), leave shall be granted to an employee who is a victim of domestic (sometimes referred to as "intimate partner violence") or sexual violence or who has a family or household member (defined as any person related by blood, or by present or prior marriage, and any other person who shares a relationship through a son or daughter) who is a victim. Up to twelve (12) weeks of unpaid leave per year (52 consecutive weeks) may be taken. For purposes of this policy, the initial one-year period will commence on the first day that VESSA is taken. VESSA does not create a right for the employee to take a leave that exceeds the leave time allowed under, or in addition to, the leave time permitted by the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). For employees on VESSA leave who are also eligible for FMLA leave, VESSA leave time is not in addition to the 12-week FMLA entitlement when the reason for VESSA leave also qualifies under FMLA but depletes the 12-week FMLA entitlement when used.

An employee, who may have exhausted all available leave under FMLA for a purpose other than that which is available under VESSA, remains eligible for leave under VESSA. Employees taking leave under VESSA may “voluntarily” use accumulated, unused leave days, first. However, the employer cannot require that these unused personal leave days be used. When an employee is taking a VESSA leave of absence concurrently with FMLA, they will be required to use accumulated, unused leave days (PTO) as outlined in FMLA policy.

While on a VESSA qualifying leave, employees will retain health insurance benefits at the same level as if continuously employed. Upon return to employment following a VESSA leave, the employee is entitled to be returned to his or her same or equivalent position. Contact your Elected Official/Appointed Official for additional information.

## **VOTING LEAVE**

**Voting Time:** The County encourages employees to fulfill their civic responsibilities by participating in elections. Generally, employees can find time to vote either before or after their regular work schedule. All employees who are scheduled to work on election day are encouraged to vote absentee. If the polls are not open at least two hours before or after the employee is scheduled to work, the County will grant up to two hours off to vote.

Employees are required to request time off to vote from their supervisor at least two working days prior to the Election Day. Advance notice is required so that the necessary time off can be scheduled at the beginning or end of the work shift, whichever provides the least disruption to the normal work schedule.

Employees must submit a voter's receipt to their Elected Official/Appointed Official on the first working day following the election to qualify for paid time off.

**Election Leave:** Employees who are chosen to serve as election officials at polling sites will be permitted to take required time off to serve in this capacity. It is incumbent on employees who are chosen to act as election officials to notify their manager a minimum of seven days in advance of their need for time off to accommodate the necessary rescheduling of work periods. Time engaged as an election official should be reported and coded appropriately on timekeeping records.

## **BENEFITS**

### **CONTINUATION OF BENEFITS (COBRA)**

The Federal Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) gives employees and their qualified beneficiaries the opportunity to continue health insurance coverage under the County's Health plan when a 'qualifying event' would normally result in the loss of eligibility. Some common "qualifying events" are as follows:

- Death of the employee;
- Termination of the employee's employment for any reason other than gross misconduct;
- Reduction in the employee's hours of work below the minimum required for eligibility under the plan;
- Divorce or legal separation;

- Employee becoming entitled to Medicare; or
- Dependent child ceasing to be a "dependent child" under the terms of the County's health care plan.

Under COBRA, the employee or beneficiary pays the full premium at applicable rates as determined by the plan actuary, plus a service fee. The County provides each eligible employee with a written notice describing rights granted under COBRA when the employee becomes eligible for coverage under the County's Health Insurance plan. The notice contains important information about the employee's rights and obligations.

## **RETIREMENT, INSURANCE AND OTHER BENEFITS**

The County provides retirement, group health insurance, life insurance, disability insurance and other benefits for eligible employees. These various benefits are described below. Additional information, including summary plan descriptions ("SPDs") which explain coverage of our benefits in greater detail are available from the County Clerk' Office. Please note, however, that the actual plan documents are the final authority in all matters relative to the benefits described in this handbook or the SPDs, and will govern in the event of any conflict, including any oral representations or statements concerning such benefits. Ford County also reserves the right to change or eliminate benefits at any time at its discretion in accordance with applicable law.

**Retirement Plan:** The County of Ford shall on behalf of all full-time and part-time employees who work a minimum of 1000 hours per year contribute to a personal retirement account known as Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF). The County's contribution shall be in accordance with the rules promulgated by the IMRF program and actions taken by the Ford County Board. The Ford County Clerk's Officer shall make a payroll deduction for the employees' proportionate share to his or her IMRF account.

**Group Health Insurance:** The County of Ford shall provide group health insurance benefits to eligible full-time employees. The covered employee has the option to add their spouse and children for inclusion in the insurance plan, provided the appropriate deductions will be taken from the employee's salary. Those Ford County employees off work because of non-work-related illness or accidents, who have used up all sick leave and vacation time personal days shall pay the premium for coverage under the said policy.

After the designated waiting period, the full-time employee becomes eligible for group health insurance on the first day of the third full month of employment. Health Insurance deductions will start the second full month of waiting period.

**Life Insurance:** The County of Ford shall provide, on behalf of full-time employees, a life insurance policy.

**Disability Insurance:** An employee who has twelve (12) consecutive months of service and cannot perform the duties of his or her position because of illness or injury that lasts more than thirty (30) days may be entitled to disability benefits, equivalent to 50% of average monthly earnings in accordance with IMRF regulations. For more details regarding such benefits, please contact the Clerk & Recorder's Office.

## WORKPLACE SAFETY

### DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE

Ford County has a longstanding commitment to provide a safe and productive work environment. Alcohol and drug abuse pose a threat to the health and safety of employees and to the security of our equipment and facilities. For these reasons, Ford County is committed to the elimination of drug and/or alcohol use and abuse in the workplace through the adoption of a zero-tolerance drug and alcohol policy. This policy outlines the practice and procedure designed to correct instances of identified alcohol and/or drug use in the workplace. This policy applies to all employees and all applicants for employment of Ford County.

**Employee Assistance and Drug-Free Awareness:** Illegal drug use and alcohol misuse have several adverse health and safety consequences. Information about those consequences and sources of help for drug/alcohol problems is available from an Elected Official/Appointed Official.

Ford County will assist and support employees who voluntarily seek help for such problems before becoming subject to discipline and/or termination under this or other policies. Such employees may be allowed to use accrued paid time off, placed on leaves of absence, referred to treatment providers and otherwise accommodated as required by law. Such employees may be required to document that they are successfully following prescribed treatment and to take and pass follow-up tests if they hold jobs that are safety sensitive or that require driving or if they have violated this policy previously.

Employees should report to work fit for duty and free of any adverse effects of illegal drugs or alcohol. This policy does not prohibit employees from the lawful use and possession of prescribed medications. Employees must, however, consult with their doctors about the medications' effect on their fitness for duty and ability to work safely and promptly disclose any work restrictions to their supervisor. Employees should not, however, disclose underlying medical conditions unless directed to do so.

**Work Rules:** The following work rules apply to all employees. Whenever employees are working, are operating any County vehicle, are present on County premises, or are conducting related work off-site, they are prohibited from:

- Using, possessing, buying, selling, manufacturing, or dispensing an illegal drug (to include possession of drug paraphernalia).
- Being under the influence of alcohol or an illegal drug as defined in this policy.
- Smoke, consume, store, or otherwise use cannabis in the workplace.
- Being under the influence of prescribed medications that adversely affect the employee's ability to perform their job duties safely and effectively.

The presence of any detectable amount of any illegal drug or illegal controlled substance in an employee's body while performing County business or while in a county facility is prohibited.

Ford County will not allow any employee to perform their duties while taking prescribed drugs that are adversely affecting the employee's ability to perform their job duties safely and effectively. Employees taking a prescribed medication must carry it in the container labeled by a licensed



pharmacist or be prepared to produce it if asked. The County and employee must adhere to all provisions of the Compassionate Use of Medical Cannabis Program Act (410 ILCS 130).

Any illegal drugs or drug paraphernalia will be turned over to an appropriate law enforcement agency and may result in criminal prosecution.

**Required Testing:** The County retains the right to require the following tests:

- **Pre-employment:** Applicants must pass a drug test upon acceptance of an offer of employment and before beginning work. Positions governed by the Department of Transportation and other federally regulated (49 CFR 40.151(e)), safety-sensitive positions will require applicants to test negative for illegal substances as well as cannabis. A positive test for cannabis that would result in the County losing a federal or state contract will result in disqualification of further employment consideration. Refusal to submit to testing will result in disqualification of further employment consideration.
- **Reasonable suspicion:** Employees are subject to drug/alcohol testing based on observations by a supervisor of apparent workplace use, possession, or impairment. Management must use the Reasonable Suspicion Observation Checklist to document specific observations and behaviors that create a reasonable suspicion that an employee is under the influence of illegal drugs, alcohol or legal substances that are adversely affecting the employee's ability to perform their job duties safely and effectively.

**Examples include:**

- Odors (smell of alcohol, body odor or urine).
- Movements (unsteady, fidgety, dizzy).
- Eyes (dilated, constricted or watery eyes, or involuntary eye movements).
- Face (flushed, sweating, confused or blank look).
- Speech (slurred, slow, distracted mid-thought, inability to verbalize thoughts).
- Emotions (argumentative, agitated, irritable, drowsy).
- Actions (yawning, twitching).
- Inactions (sleeping, unconscious, no reaction to questions).
- Negligence or carelessness in operating equipment or machinery
- Disregard for the safety of the employee or others
- Involved in any accident that results in serious damage to equipment or property
- Disruption of a production or manufacturing process
- Carelessness that results in any injury to the employee or others

When reasonable suspicion testing is warranted, the Department Head/Elected Official and another Elected Official will meet with the employee to explain the observations and the requirement to undergo a drug and/or alcohol test within two hours. Refusal by an employee will be treated as a positive drug test result and will result in immediate termination of employment.

If discipline results due to the suspicion that the employee is under the influence or impaired by cannabis, the County will afford the employee a reasonable opportunity to contest the basis of the determination.

Under no circumstances will the employee be allowed to drive himself or herself to the testing facility. A member of management must transport the employee or arrange for a cab and arrange for the employee to be transported home.

- **Post-accident/Injury:** Employees are subject to testing when they cause or contribute to accidents that seriously damage a county vehicle, machinery, equipment, or property or that result in an injury to themselves or another employee requiring offsite medical attention. A circumstance that constitutes probable belief will be presumed to arise in any instance involving a work-related accident or injury in which an employee who was operating a motorized vehicle (including a county forklift, pickup truck, overhead crane, or aerial/man-lift) is found to be responsible for causing the accident. In any of these instances, the investigation and subsequent testing must take place within two hours following the accident, if not sooner. Refusal by an employee will be treated as a positive drug test result and will result in immediate termination of employment.

Under no circumstances will the employee be allowed to drive himself or herself to the testing facility. A member of management must transport the employee or arrange for a cab and arrange for the employee to be transported home.

**Collection and Testing Procedures:** Employees subject to alcohol testing will be transported to a Ford County designated facility and directed to provide breath specimens. Breath specimens will be tested by trained technicians using federally approved breath alcohol testing devices capable of producing printed results that identify the employee. If an employee's breath alcohol concentration is .04 or more, a second breath specimen will be tested approximately 20 minutes later. The results of the second test will be determinative. Alcohol tests may, however, be a breath, blood, or saliva test, at the County's discretion. For purposes of this policy, test results generated by law enforcement or medical providers may be considered by the County as work rule violations.

Applicants and employees subject to drug testing will be transported to a Ford County designated testing facility and directed to provide urine specimens. Applicants and employees may provide specimens in private unless they appear to be submitting altered, adulterated or substitute specimens. Collected specimens will be sent to a federally certified laboratory and tested for evidence of cannabis, cocaine, opiates, amphetamines, PCP, benzodiazepines, methadone, methaqualone, and propoxyphene use. (Where indicated, specimens may be tested for other illegal drugs.) The laboratory will screen all specimens and confirm all positive screens. There must be a chain of custody from the time specimens are collected through testing and storage.

The laboratory will transmit all positive drug test results to a medical review officer (MRO) retained by Ford County, who will offer individuals with positive results a reasonable opportunity to rebut or explain the results. Individuals with positive test results may also ask the MRO to have their split specimen sent to another federally certified laboratory to be tested at the applicant's or employee's own expense. Such requests must be made within 72 hours of notice of test results. If the second facility fails to find any evidence of drug use in the split specimen, the employee or applicant will be treated as passing the test. In no event should a positive test result be communicated to the County until such time that the MRO has confirmed the test to be positive.

**Consequences:** Applicants who refuse to cooperate in a drug test or who test positive will not be hired and will not be allowed to reapply/retest in the future. Employees who refuse to cooperate in required tests or who use, possess, buy, sell, manufacture, or dispense an illegal drug in violation of this policy will be terminated. Employees who test positive, or otherwise violate this policy, may be terminated. Employees will be paid for time spent in alcohol or drug testing and then suspended pending the results of the drug or alcohol test. After the results of the test are received, a date and time will be scheduled to discuss the results of the test; this meeting will include two members of management and a union representative (if requested). Should the results prove to be negative, the employee will receive back pay for the times/days of suspension.

**Confidentiality:** Information and records relating to positive test results, drug and alcohol dependencies and legitimate medical explanations provided to the medical review officer (MRO) shall be kept confidential to the extent required by law and maintained in secure files separate from normal personnel files.

**Inspections:** Ford County reserves the right to inspect all portions of its premises for drugs, alcohol, or other contraband. All employees, contract employees and visitors may be asked to cooperate in inspections of their persons, work areas and property that might conceal a drug, alcohol, or other contraband. Employees who possess such contraband or refuse to cooperate in such inspections are subject to appropriate discipline up to and including discharge.

**Crimes Involving Drugs:** Ford County prohibits all employees from manufacturing, distributing, dispensing, possessing, or using an illegal drug in or on County premises or while conducting County business. Employees are also prohibited from misusing legally prescribed or over the counter (OTC) drugs. Law enforcement personnel shall be notified, as appropriate, when criminal activity is suspected.

As a condition of employment, each employee shall agree to notify his/her supervisor of his/her conviction of any criminal drug statute for a violation occurring on the department premises or while performing work for the department, no later than five (5) days after a conviction.

Employees shall be informed of dangers of drug and alcohol abuse in the workplace and about the Ford County policy of maintaining a drug and alcohol-free workplace.

**“County premises”:** includes all buildings, offices, facilities, grounds, parking lots, lockers, places, and vehicles owned, leased, or managed by Ford County or any site on which the County is conducting business.

**“Controlled Substance”:** is a substance which is defined as a controlled substance in the Illinois Controlled Substance Act (720 ILCS 570/1 et seq).

**“Refuse to cooperate”:** means to obstruct the collection or testing process; to submit an altered, adulterated or substitute sample; to fail to show up for a scheduled test; to refuse to complete the requested drug testing forms; or to fail to promptly provide specimen(s) for testing when directed to do so, without a valid medical basis for the failure. Employees who leave the scene of an accident without justifiable explanation prior to submission to drug and alcohol testing will also be considered to have refused to cooperate and will automatically be subject to discharge.

**“Under the influence of alcohol”:** means an alcohol concentration equal to or greater than .04,

or actions, appearance, speech, or bodily odors that reasonably cause a supervisor to conclude that an employee is impaired because of alcohol use.

**“Under the influence of drugs”**: means a confirmed positive test result for illegal drug use per this policy. In addition, it means the misuse of legal drugs (prescription and possibly OTC) when there is not a valid prescription from a physician for the lawful use of a drug during medical treatment (containers must include the patient’s name, the name of the substance, quantity/amount to be taken and the period of authorization).

**Enforcement**: County Officials are responsible for policy interpretation, administration, and enforcement.

## **SAFETY AND HEALTH**

To assist in providing a safe work environment for employees, customers and visitors, Ford County has established a workplace safety program. This program is a top priority for the County. The Sheriff’s Committee has responsibility for implementing, administering, monitoring, and evaluating the safety program. Its success depends on the alertness and personal commitment of all. The County provides information to employees about workplace safety and health issues through regular internal communication channels such as internal meetings of each department, bulletin board postings, memos, or other written communications. The Sheriff’s Committee assists in these activities and facilitates effective communications between employees and management about workplace safety and health issues.

Elected Officials/Appointed Officials and employees receive periodic workplace safety training. The training covers potential safety and health hazards and safe work practices and procedures to eliminate or minimize hazards.

Some of the best safety improvement ideas come from employees. Those with ideas, concerns, or suggestions for improved safety in the workplace are encouraged to raise them with the Elected Official/Appointed Official of their department.

Each employee is expected to obey safety rules and to exercise caution in all work activities. Employees must immediately report any unsafe conditions to the appropriate Elected Official/Appointed Official. When it is of eminent danger, and it is impractical to report it to your Elected Official/Appointed Official report it to the nearest Elected Official/Appointed Official and then report it to your supervisor. Employees who violate safety standards, who cause hazardous or dangerous situations and/or who fail to report it, or where appropriate, remedy such situations, maybe subject to disciplinary actions, up to and including termination of employment.

In the case of accidents that result in injury, regardless of how insignificant the injury may appear, employees should immediately notify the appropriate Elected Official/Appointed Official. Such reports are necessary to comply with laws and initiate insurance and workers’ compensation benefits procedures. Reports necessary to complete are available in the Clerk and Recorder’s Office or Sheriff’s Office (for Sheriff’s department). All reports must be completed and returned to the Clerk and Recorder’s Office within one business day. Since OSHA laws and regulation change frequently all the rules set forth above must be closely adhered to.

## INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL POLICY

Ford County will take proactive steps to protect the workplace in the event of an infectious disease outbreak. It is the goal of Ford County during any such time to strive to operate effectively and ensure that all essential services are continuously provided and that employees are safe within the workplace.

Ford County is committed to providing authoritative information about the nature and spread of infectious diseases, including symptoms and signs to watch for, as well as required steps to be taken in the event of an illness or outbreak.

**Preventing the Spread of Infection in the Workplace:** Ford County will ensure a clean workplace, including the regular cleaning of objects and areas that are frequently used, such as bathrooms, breakrooms, conference rooms, door handles and railings. A committee will be designated to monitor and coordinate events around an infectious disease outbreak, as well as to create work rules that could be implemented to promote safety through infection control.

We ask all employees to cooperate in taking steps to reduce the transmission of infectious disease in the workplace. The best strategy remains the most obvious—frequent hand washing with warm, soapy water; covering your mouth whenever you sneeze or cough; and discarding used tissues in wastebaskets. We will also install alcohol-based hand sanitizers throughout the workplace and in common areas.

Unless otherwise notified, our normal attendance and leave policies will remain in place. Individuals who believe they may face challenges reporting to work during an infectious disease outbreak should take steps to develop any necessary contingency plans. For example, employees might want to arrange for alternative sources of childcare should schools close and/or speak with supervisors about the potential to work from home temporarily or on an alternative work schedule.

**Limiting Travel:** All nonessential travel should be avoided until further notice. Employees who travel as an essential part of their job should consult with management on appropriate actions. Business-related travel outside the United States will not be authorized until further notice.

Employees should avoid crowded public transportation when possible. Alternative scheduling options, ride-share resources and/or parking assistance will be provided on a case-by-case basis. Contact the Clerk & Recorder for more information.

**Telecommuting:** Telework requests will be handled on a case-by-case basis. While not all positions will be eligible, all requests for temporary telecommuting should be submitted to your manager for consideration.

**Staying Home When Ill:** Many times, with the best of intentions, employees report to work even though they feel ill. We provide paid sick time and other benefits to compensate employees who are unable to work due to illness. During an infectious disease outbreak, it is critical that employees do not report to work while they are ill and/or experiencing the following symptoms: fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, and fatigue. Currently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that people with an infectious illness such as the flu remain at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100 degrees F or 37.8 degrees C) or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications. Employees who report to work ill will

be sent home in accordance with these health guidelines.

**Requests for Medical Information and/or Documentation:** If you are out sick or show symptoms of being ill, it may become necessary to request information from you and/or your health care provider. In general, we would request medical information to confirm your need to be absent, to show whether and how an absence relates to the infection, and to know that it is appropriate for you to return to work. As always, we expect and appreciate your cooperation when medical information is sought.

**Confidentiality of Medical Information:** Our policy is to treat any medical information as a confidential medical record. In furtherance of this policy, any disclosure of medical information is in limited circumstances with Elected Officials/Dept. Heads first aid and safety personnel, and government officials as required by law.

**Social Distancing Guidelines for Workplace Infectious Disease Outbreaks:** In the event of an infectious disease outbreak, the County may implement social distancing guidelines to minimize the spread of the disease among the staff.

## **SMOKE AND VAPE FREE WORKPLACE**

**Policy:** It is the policy of Ford County to prohibit smoking and vaping on all company premises to provide a safe and healthy work environment for all employees. Smoking is defined as the "act of lighting, smoking or carrying a lighted or smoldering cigar, cigarette or pipe of any kind." Vaping refers to the use of electronic nicotine delivery systems or electronic smoking devices such as e-cigarettes, e-pipes, e-hookahs, and e-cigars.

**Scope:** This policy applies to:

- All areas of buildings occupied by company employees.
- All company-sponsored offsite conferences and meetings.
- All vehicles owned or leased by the company.
- All company employees.
- All visitors (customers and vendors) to company premises.
- All contractors and consultants and/or their employees working on company premises.
- All temporary employees.
- All student interns.

**Procedures:** Employees who violate this policy will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including immediate discharge. A process is in place for resolving complaints about the smoke- and vape-free policy:

- Complaints about the application of this policy should be brought to the attention of the Clerk & Recorder for resolution.
- The complaint should be submitted in writing and should identify specific objections.
- Ford County will investigate the complaint and resolve it in accordance with the policy.

No employee shall suffer any form of retaliation for raising a complaint or asking a question about this policy. This policy is intended to comply with the requirements of Illinois Smoke Free Illinois Act.

## **VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE**

All employees, customers, vendors, and business employees must be always treated with courtesy and respect. Employees are expected to refrain from conduct that may be dangerous to others.

Conduct that threatens, intimidates, coerces, or creates a hostile work environment towards another employee, customer, vendor, or business employee will not be tolerated. Ford County resources may not be used to threaten, stalk, or harass anyone at the workplace or outside the workplace. Ford County treats threats coming from an abusive personal relationship as it does other forms of violence.

Indirect or direct threats of violence, incidents of actual violence and suspicious individuals or activities should be reported as soon as possible to Elected Official/Appointed Official or security personnel, or a member of Ford County's Board. When reporting a threat or incident of violence, the employee should be as specific and detailed as possible. Employees should not place themselves in peril, nor should they attempt to intercede during an incident.

Employees should promptly inform their Elected Official/Appointed Official of any protective or restraining order that they have obtained that lists the workplace as a protected area. Ford County will not retaliate against employees making good-faith reports. Ford County is committed to supporting victims of intimate partner violence by providing referrals to and community resources.

Ford County will promptly and thoroughly investigate all reports of threats of violence or incidents of actual violence and of suspicious individuals or activities. The identity of the individual making a report will be protected as much as possible. Ford County will not retaliate against employees making good-faith reports of violence, threats or suspicious individuals or activities. To maintain workplace safety and the integrity of its investigation, Ford County may suspend employees suspected of workplace violence or threats of violence, either with or without pay, pending investigation.

Anyone found to be responsible for threats of or actual violence or other conduct that is in violation of these guidelines will be subject to prompt disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

Ford County encourages employees to bring their disputes to the attention of their Elected Official/Appointed Official before the situation escalates. Ford County will not discipline employees for raising such concerns.

## **WEAPONS**

Ford County always prohibits the possession of weapons on its property, including our parking lots or County owned vehicles. Additionally, while on duty, employees may not carry a weapon of any type unless it is a requirement of their job. Weapons include, but are not limited to, handguns, rifles, automatic weapons, knives that can be used as weapons (excluding pocketknives, utility knives, and other instruments that are used to open packages or cut string and for other miscellaneous tasks),

martial arts paraphernalia, stun guns, and tear gas. Any employee violating this policy is subject to discipline up to and including dismissal for the first offense.

## **WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATIONS / LIGHT DUTY**

In general, Ford County's light duty position classification is reserved for employees in the worker's compensation program and otherwise-qualified disabled employees subject to temporary work restrictions. Each request by an employee for a deviation from the duties and requirements of his/her position will be treated on an individual basis in conformance with applicable State and Federal Laws. The employee must submit requests for work restrictions, in writing, to their Elected Official/Appointed Official, (with a copy to the Clerk and Recorder's Office), on form (GC104) provided by the County. The form must be accompanied by a completed Work Capacities Form (GC104A) signed by their physician. Generally, any accommodation or modification of an employee's job duties will be permitted on a temporary basis and will be reviewed by the County at periodic intervals.

## **WORKPLACE BULLYING**

Ford County defines bullying as "repeated inappropriate behavior, either direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, at the place of work and/or in the course of employment." Such behavior violates the Performance Standards, which clearly state that all employees will be treated with dignity and respect. The purpose of this policy is to communicate to all employees, including Elected Officials/Dept. Heads and executives, that the County will not tolerate bullying behavior. Employees found in violation of this policy will be disciplined up to and including termination.

Bullying may be intentional or unintentional. However, it must be noted that where an allegation of bullying is made, the intention of the alleged bully is irrelevant and will not be given consideration when meting out discipline. As in sexual harassment, it is the effect of the behavior upon the individual that is important. Ford County considers the following types of behavior examples of bullying:

- Verbal bullying: Slandering, ridiculing, or maligning a person or his/her family; persistent name calling that is hurtful, insulting or humiliating; using a person as the butt of jokes; abusive and offensive remarks.
- Physical bullying: Pushing, shoving, kicking, poking, tripping, assault, or threat of physical assault; damage to a person's work area or property.
- Gesture bullying: Nonverbal threatening gestures or glances that convey threatening messages.
- Exclusion: Socially or physically excluding or disregarding a person in work-related activities.

## **WORKPLACE CONTRABAND AND SECURITY INSPECTIONS**

Ford County wishes to maintain a work environment that is free of illegal drugs, alcohol, firearms, explosives, or other improper materials. To this end, the County prohibits the possession, transfer, sale or use of such materials on its premises. This shall not include law enforcement officers



who are specifically authorized by law to carry a firearm, or any other employee specifically authorized by law to carry a firearm in the course and scope of his/her employment with the County. The County requires the cooperation of all employees in administering this policy.

Desks, lockers, and other storage devices may be provided for the convenience of employees but remain the sole property of the County. Accordingly, they, as well as any articles found within them, can be inspected by any agent or representative of the County at any time, either with or without prior notice.

The County likewise wishes to discourage theft or unauthorized possession of the property of employees, the County, visitors, and customers. To facilitate enforcement of this policy, the County or its representative may inspect not only desks and lockers, but also persons entering and/or leaving the premises and any packages or other belongings.

### **WORK-RELATED ACCIDENT, INJURY OR ILLNESS**

In accordance with applicable state law, employees will be paid benefits (lost salary and medical expenses) if disabled as result of a work-related accident or illness. The amount and duration of these benefits are specified by law based upon the nature and circumstances of the illness or injury.

Employees must immediately report to their Appointed Official/Elected Official all injuries, illnesses, or accidents that occur while working - no matter how minor. This ensures that the County can assist the employee in obtaining any necessary medical treatment and determine if the employee is eligible for worker's compensation benefits. Failure to promptly report any illness, injury, or accident or to otherwise cooperate with the County's investigation and documentation of the incident may affect eligibility for worker's compensation benefits and will result in disciplinary action up to and including immediate discharge. (See also Worker's Compensation Insurance section under Benefits).

PAGE LEFT BLANK  
INTENTIONALLY

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND RECEIPT**

I have received my copy of the Ford County, IL. Employee Handbook. The employee handbook describes important information about Ford County, and I understand that I should consult my Elected Official/Appointed Official regarding any questions not answered in the handbook. I have entered my employment relationship with Ford County voluntarily and acknowledge that there is no specified length of employment. **Accordingly, either I or Ford County can terminate the relationship at will, with or without cause, at any time, so long as there is not violation of applicable federal or state law.**

I understand and agree that no manager, supervisor or representative of Ford County has any authority to enter into any agreement for employment other than at will.

This handbook and the policies and procedures contained herein supersede any and all prior practices, oral or written representations, or statements regarding the terms and conditions of my employment with Ford County. By distributing this handbook, the County expressly revokes any and all previous policies and procedures that are inconsistent with those contained herein.

I understand that, except for employment-at-will status, any and all policies and practices may be changed at any time by Ford County, and the County reserves the right to change my hours, wages and working conditions at any time. All such changes will be communicated through official notices, and I understand that revised information may supersede, modify or eliminate existing policies.

I understand and agree that nothing in the Employee Handbook creates, or is intended to create, a promise or representation of continued employment and that employment at Ford County is employment at will, which may be terminated at the will of either Ford County or myself. Furthermore, I acknowledge that this handbook is neither a contract of employment nor a legal document. I understand and agree that employment and compensation may be terminated with or without cause and with or without notice at any time by Ford County or myself.

I have received the handbook, and I understand that it is my responsibility to read and comply with the policies contained in this handbook and any revisions made to it.

---

Employee's Signature

---

Date

---

Employee Name (Print)

---

Name of Office

---

Elected Official/Dept. Head Signature

***TO BE PLACED IN EMPLOYEE'S PERSONNEL FILE***