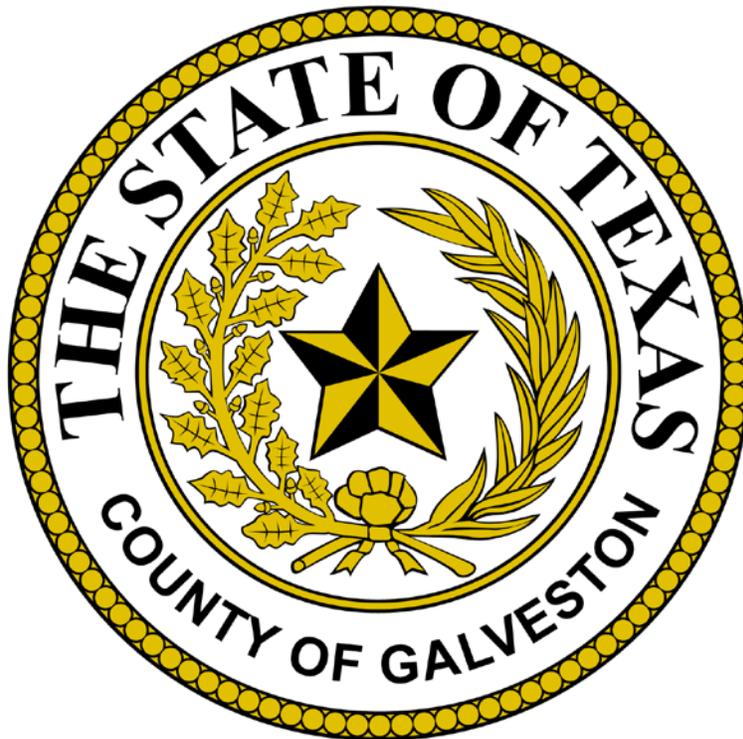


# Galveston County Employee Handbook



## Introduction

Welcome to Galveston County Government. We are excited to have you join our team! From Elected Officials to temporary employees, our job is to respectfully work together to serve our residents and neighbors, meet their needs, and earn their trust. Thank you for dedicating your time and effort in providing services to the wonderful citizens of Galveston County!

The citizens of Galveston County, as well as visitors and vacationers to our County, expect excellence and high quality services from government. As public servants, we have a duty to conduct ourselves with integrity and in a manner that is honorable and ethical. The expectation for each member of Galveston County's workforce is to serve with Honor, Dignity, and Integrity.

This handbook has been designed to introduce you to the County. It is a summary of the policies, rules, pay and benefits to which you are entitled, and the obligations you assume as an employee. It is our business to provide high quality, personalized government services to the citizens of Galveston County. As an employee, your talents, skills, and personal commitment are essential to our success. Your job contributes directly to the achievement of our goals and toward the success of Galveston County. Please read this handbook carefully and keep it handy for future reference. One of your first responsibilities is to be familiar with its contents. This handbook is only a summary of our policies; however, an individual department may have specific policies that apply only to their staff. Your supervisor will explain to you any specific departmental policies that apply to you and your job, as well as explain any questions concerning the policies or benefits outlined in this handbook

Human Resources Department

**Nothing in these policies constitutes a modification of the at-will nature of employment at Galveston County. Galveston County may discharge, or take any other adverse personnel action for any reason not prohibited by law at any time.**

**Galveston County reserves the right to make changes or exceptions to these policies at any time.**

**Human Resources Department Phone Number: 409-770-5418  
722 21<sup>st</sup> St. (Moody), 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Galveston, TX 77550**

**Galveston County Cares About You Hotline  
Harassment/Discrimination/ Workplace Complaints  
(409)-770-5500**

**ADA Coordinator- Kathy Branch (409) 770-5352**

## **Employment at Will**

**Under Texas law, employment at Galveston County is at-will. Employment at-will means that both employees and Galveston County have the right to terminate the employment relationship for any reason or no reason at any time.**

**This booklet is simply an explanation of County Policies relating to its employees.**

IT IS NOT TO BE CONSTRUED AS AN EXPRESS OR IMPLIED CONTRACT FOR YOUR EMPLOYMENT. NO EMPLOYEE RIGHTS ARE CREATED BY ITS ADOPTION.

AT ALL TIMES, INCLUDING AFTER SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THE INTRODUCTORY PERIOD, EMPLOYMENT WITH GALVESTON COUNTY IS CONSIDERED TO BE AT-WILL AND THE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP MAY BE TERMINATED AT ANY TIME FOR ANY LAWFUL REASON BY EITHER PARTY.

## **Changes In Policy**

Circumstances may arise in which Galveston County Commissioners Court determines that changes are required in the guidelines and procedures. For this reason, Galveston County reserves the right, at any time, to modify, rescind, or supplement any or all of the guidelines or procedures contained herein.

Since our County service needs constantly change, we expressly reserve the right to change any of our policies, including those covered here, at any time. We will notify you of these changes by posting them on the bulletin board or by other appropriate means. Changes will be effective on dates determined by Commissioners Court, and you may not rely on policies that have been suspended. No supervisor or manager has any authority to alter the foregoing.

If you are uncertain about any policy or procedure, please check with your supervisor or Human Resources. A complete Human Resources Policy Manual is available on-line and also through your department.

## **County Government Structure**

Commissioners Court consists of four County Commissioners and the County Judge. Commissioners Court is the administrative and policy-making body of the County. This structure is the same for every County in the State of Texas.

## **Ethical Principles**

THE ETHICAL EMPLOYEE SHOULD:

1. Promote decisions which only benefit the public interest;
2. Actively promote public confidence in County government;
3. Keep safe all assets, funds and other properties of the County;
4. Promptly administer the affairs of the County;

5. Conduct and perform their duties as an Employee diligently and promptly dispose of the business of the County;
6. Maintain a positive image to pass constant public scrutiny;
7. Evaluate all decisions so that the best service or product is obtained at minimal, cost-effective rates without sacrificing quality and fiscal responsibility;
8. Inject the prestige of the office or job into everyday dealings with the public Employees and associates;
9. Maintain a respectful attitude toward other Employees, other public officials, colleagues and associates;
10. Effectively and efficiently work with governmental agencies, political subdivisions and other organizations in order to further the interest on the County; and
11. Faithfully comply with all laws and regulations applicable to the County and impartially apply them to everyone.

#### **Misconduct Hotline**

Although the County believes that its Employees are honest and dedicated to public service, like all public and private entities, it may become the unwilling victim of an act of misconduct or dishonesty committed by either an Employee or by a third party with an employee's knowledge and/or assistance. Such activities will not be tolerated. To help deter their occurrence, it is necessary to develop internal controls to assist in the detection and prevention of such criminal activity.

**The hotline contacts to report Dishonesty, Misconduct or Criminal Activity are:  
(409) 770-5329 or [auditortiphotline@co.galveston.tx.us](mailto:auditortiphotline@co.galveston.tx.us). The hotline mailing address is:**

**County Auditor's Office  
Attn: Randall Rice  
PO Box 1418  
Galveston, Texas 77553**

### **Employment-At-Will and Introductory Period**

The information, guidelines and procedures discussed in this handbook are provided to assist you in your day-to-day work activities, but no statements in this handbook are intended or set forth as contractual commitments or obligations of Galveston County to any individual employee or group of employees or to establish an exception to the Employment-At-Will doctrine. Both the employee and the employer may terminate the employment relationship at any time, for any reason, with or without notice.

All new employees are hired on a six month introductory period during which performance is monitored closely. An employee may be terminated during his introductory period at any time for any reason or no reason with or without notice and is not entitled to appeal such termination.

### **Equal Employment Opportunity and Non-Discrimination and ADA Accommodations**

The County will not tolerate discrimination or harassment, and is committed to providing equal employment opportunity for all qualified applicants and current employees without regard to race, color, religion, ancestry or national origin, age, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, military/veterans status, gender identity or expression, genetic information, pregnancy or any other characteristic protected by law, except where permitted as a bona fide occupational qualification.

This policy applies to all terms and conditions of employment, including, but not limited to, application, testing, recruitment, hiring and placement, discipline, medical examinations, assignments, evaluations, benefits, promotion, transfer, compensation, leaves of absence, training, termination, layoff, reorganization of departments, and recall. In addition to these protected categories, Galveston County complies with the anti-discrimination statutes in each of the localities in which it operates. Galveston County recognizes its duty to comply with the American with Disabilities Act and when applicable, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Contact the Human Resources Department with questions regarding ADA accommodations or discrimination issues at (409) 770-5500.

### **Sexual and Other Harassment**

Galveston County is totally committed to providing a work environment free of harassment. If an employee feels that they have been harassed they must report the behavior immediately to their supervisor, or other manager if it is the supervisor, or Human Resources.

Harassment: Harassment consists of verbal or physical conduct that shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of; race, color religion, sex, disability, age, national origin, marital or military status, or any other characteristic protected by law. Harassing behavior has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment and interferes with an individual's work performance,

or otherwise adversely affects, an Individual's employment opportunities. Examples of harassment include, but are not limited to, spreading false rumors, threats, loitering, leaving frequent notes, numerous telephone calls, sabotage, vandalism, invasion of privacy, and hanging offensive pictures or posters.

Sexual Harassment: Sexual Harassment refers to behavior that is not welcome, is personally offensive, fails to respect the rights of others, and interferes with the employee's work performance. Examples of verbal harassment include sexual innuendoes, suggestive comments or degrading words used to describe

the individual, jokes of a sexual nature, sexual propositions and threats. Non-verbal examples include displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, graphic commentaries about an Individual's body, suggestive or insulting sounds, leering, whistling, or obscene gestures. Physical examples include unwanted physical contact. Employees who experience sexual or other types of harassment should make it known to the harasser that their actions are not welcomed. Any Employee who feels that they are a victim of discrimination, harassment or sexual harassment must immediately report the matter to the County's Human Resources Director. It is the County's policy to protect employees who in good faith report incidents involving possible violations or unethical behavior from retaliation. Staff members having knowledge of acts of retribution or retaliation in the work environment that are related to the reporting of a possible violation or unethical behavior should promptly report them, using the procedures described above.

### **Safe Workplace and Non-Violence Policy**

The County is committed to providing employees with a safe, non-violent work environment. Statements or behavior that can be considered threats to the safety of individuals in the workplace or persons with whom the County conducts business will not be tolerated. Every employee has a responsibility to report perceived or actual incidents of violence. Violence is defined as any direct physical or emotional assault. Emotional assault is defined as direct threat of harm or veiled threats of harm intended to intimidate another person. An employee may file a complaint with the Human Resources Director or their supervisor or Department Head.

### **Employee Classifications**

Exempt Employees - All employees holding positions that are exempted from coverage under the Fair Labor Standards Act and specifically from the overtime provision of that Act.

Non-Exempt - All employees holding positions that do not qualify for exemption from the overtime pay requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Full Time Employees- Non-exempt employees hired to fill an on-going position and scheduled to work 40 hours or more per week.

Part-Time Employees - Employees who are hired to work a regular schedule of no more than 19 hours per week, and are not benefit eligible.

Half-time, Benefits Eligible Employees - Employees who work a regular schedule of 20 hours a week or more, but less than 40.

On-Call/PRN Employees -An employee who works on an “as needed” basis with no guarantee of any hours or continued employment.

Temporary Employees - Employees who are hired for a work assignment of limited duration, Temporary employees are not guaranteed employment for the duration of their project or work assignment and are ineligible for company benefits other than those required by law.

### **Work Schedule**

The established usual payroll workweek will be a 40-hour week beginning on a Thursday and ending on a Wednesday, however the County operates 24 hours/ 7 days per week. Some positions work other days and hours and includes weekends as necessary. County buildings are open to the public from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM Monday through Friday. Lunch hours and breaks may not be taken at the beginning or end of the workday. Overtime must be pre-approved in advance by the Department Head. Vacation, sick, compensatory time or other time off taken during a week does not count as time worked for overtime calculations. A non-exempt employee required to work in excess of 40 hours per week, will be compensated at the rate of one and one half (1 ½) times the regular hourly rate or In some cases, the Employee may earn compensatory time at 1 ½ times.

### **Attendance**

Attendance is an essential function of every employee’s job. It is the employee’s responsibility to report regularly for work and be on time. Employees are required to notify their direct supervisor in advance of any day when they will be absent or late. Any employee who is absent for (2) two consecutive work shifts or the same number of isolated incidents without notifying their direct supervisor may be considered to have voluntarily resigned their employment. Extenuating circumstances will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

### **Job Posting**

Galveston County posts all open positions for 5 day and allows all current qualified employees an equal opportunity to apply for promotions or transfers within Galveston County when vacancies occur. All employees who are in good standing and meet the position qualifications are eligible to apply for posted positions. Elected and Appointed Officials may Opt-Out of posting their positions.

### **Employment of Relatives Nepotism**

Galveston County will ensure fair and equitable employment based on qualifications and merit. To reduce perceived or actual conflicts certain restrictions apply to the hiring of relatives except as prohibited by state and local laws. No official may appoint or vote for or confirm to any office, position, clerkship, employment or duty a relative within the second degree by affinity (marriage) or third degree by consanguinity (blood).

### **Employee Personal Relationships**

Galveston County realizes that personal relationships of a romantic nature may develop between coworkers and has established some guidelines for such relationships. Employees who are engaged in a personal relationship should refrain from personal conduct on company premises that create tension with coworkers or causes other employees to feel uncomfortable or offended. Romantic relationships between supervisors and subordinates are prohibited.

### **Identification Badges Required**

All Employees, with the exception of law enforcement personnel engaged in undercover activity, must, at all times while on duty, wear or have openly displayed, County issued identification badges issued by the Human Resources Department. Lost or stolen badges should be reported to Human Resources. Replacement badges may be obtained at the Human Resources Department. There is no charge for the first replacement. Subsequent replaces will cost \$6.00 each

### **Employee Records**

It is the policy of Galveston County to maintain accurate and complete employee files on all Employees. Employee files are the sole property of Galveston County. The Open Records Act may allow for the release of parts of the Employee file. Active employees will be permitted access to their employee files if requested in writing. Please complete the Open Records form and pay special attention to what you authorize to be released to the public.

### **Reference Requests and Employment Verifications**

All inquiries received by telephone or in writing regarding a present or past employee are to be referred to the Human Resources Department. Individual supervisors or managers are not to give out any employment reference or verification information. Human Resources will only provide reference requests and employment verifications with a signed Employee Release Form.

### **Payroll Periods**

Galveston County pays employees bi-weekly. The workweek begins on a Thursday and ends on a Wednesday.

### **Payroll Deductions**

Various payroll deductions are made each payday to comply with federal and state laws pertaining to taxes and insurance. Deductions may be made for the following:

Federal and income tax withholding; Medicare; Other items designated by the employee and employer; any other deductions required by applicable federal and state law. At the end of each calendar year,

employees will be supplied with their Wage and Tax Statement (W2) form. This statement summarizes income and deductions for the year.

### **Wage Increases**

The County reviews the compensation of all employees at least annually. The County will determine if wage increases are to be granted and the appropriate amount of increase. The following conditions, as well as others, will be considered in making a determination – market survey of existing wage ranges, budget, and Consumer Price Index. Measures will be determined and approved by Commissioners Court.

### **Non-Participation in Social Security, TCDRS**

The County **does not** participate in Social Security. Employees should be aware that because they are taking a non-Social Security covered position there may be possible reductions in their future Social Security benefits from the application of the Government Pension Offset Provision (GPO) and the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP). All Regular Employees with the exception of County Extension Office Agents and Temporary Employees, participate in The Texas County and District Retirement System. This benefit provides retirement and other benefits. Contributions are based on salary and are made both by the County and the Employee.

### **Retirement and Vesting**

A Galveston County Employee who has 8 years of service is eligible for retirement under the following circumstances;

TCDRS retirement:

1. Vested and the age of 60;
  2. Service time and age =75
- or
3. Completed 30 years of service.

**Vesting for TCDRS is 8 years.**

### **Disability, Retirement, and Survivorship Benefits Program- Alternate Social Security Replacement Plan**

The County provides Regular Employees with a Disability, Retirement and Survivorship Benefits Program, commonly referred to as The Alternate Plan. This plan is the substitute plan for Social Security benefits and provides Life and Disability Insurance and a Deferred Compensation (or tax deferred) Retirement Plan. Contributions are based on salary and made both by the County and the Employee.

### **Separation from Employment**

Resignation– Any situation wherein an Employee voluntarily leaves employment. Resignation in

good standing requires a minimum two (2) week notice.

Job Abandonment- Leaving job without permission or notice is considered a voluntary resignation.

No Call, No Show for 2 or more consecutive shifts without permission or notification or Job Abandonment.

Dismissal for Job Abandonment, or No Call/No Show for 2 consecutive shifts - may be considered a voluntary termination.

Involuntary Separation - Dismissal or Discharge—Any involuntary separation from employment which does not fall within any other category.

### **Exit Interview**

Galveston County strives for outstanding job satisfaction. To assist us in becoming an employer of choice, exit interviews will be offered to all employees who separate their employment with the County. Please contact the Human Resources Department at 409-770-5418 for information on the online Exit Interview Survey. Human Resources will also meet in person to discuss the survey.

### **Reimbursements**

Employees shall be reimbursed for business expenses that are approved by the Department Head in accordance with Galveston County policy. It is the responsibility of the Employee to view and print off the policy in its entirety at the Galveston County Auditor's Office website at [www.galvestoncountytexas.gov](http://www.galvestoncountytexas.gov) and select Auditor's Office. All travel must include a properly approved travel request. Travel requests will include a brief justification for the trip and will identify the estimated cost for the trip. All travel requests must be approved in advance by a Department Head and must include an assertion that adequate travel funds are available.

### **Use of Personal Vehicles**

The use of personal vehicles for County business travel is acceptable whenever a County vehicle cannot effectively be utilized. The County does not insure private vehicles so the Employee should ascertain that their automobile insurance policy coverage provides adequate coverage. Damage to the vehicle, vehicle repairs, parking fines, towing charges and theft of property are the responsibility of the Employee, and not the County. The County will reimburse the Employee based upon beginning and ending odometer readings at the current IRS rate.

### **Group Insurance Benefits**

The County makes available a comprehensive and competitive offering of group insurance benefits including health, dental, vision, life insurance, short term and long term disability, cancer plans, and other products to eligible employees. Benefits become effective after two full pay periods of employment. Employees become active after two full pay periods.

Health Plan: Effective date is the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month following 30 days.

All newly enrolled employees will have until October 31 of the plan year in which their plan

becomes effective to have a Health Risk Assessment (HRA) performed through CareHere. If the HRA is not performed prior to October 31, the health plan premium will increase to the No-HRA rate at the start of the new plan year on January 1 of the following year. The CareHere Clinics are located at 826 Moody (21<sup>st</sup>) Galveston and 600 Gulf Freeway, Suite 100 Texas City. Schedule an appointment at 877-423-1330 or [www.carehere.com](http://www.carehere.com). The County also provides a health benefit plan for such Employees' dependents. Dependents are not required to participate in the annual HRA. Employees who desire health benefits for themselves or their dependents are responsible for paying a portion of the premium through the County's payroll deduction system. The amount for such coverage may change from time to time as determined necessary. Employees are also responsible for notifying the Human Resources Department when dependents are no longer eligible for coverage. Group health insurance programs may be continued on a temporary basis if an employee leaves the County under circumstances described by federal law (COBRA).

The existence of these employee benefits and plans, in and of themselves, does not signify that an employee will be employed for the time necessary to qualify for these benefits and plans.

The County also provides a variety of voluntary benefits where the employee pays the entire premium.

### **Employee Assistance Program**

Galveston County offers an employee assistance program (EAP) to all employees, including those who are Elected or Appointed as well as those employees who report to such and their dependents. The EAP provides confidential assistance to employees before their problems have harmful effects on work performance, family relationships, and general well being. The County recognizes that alcoholism or abuse; compassion fatigue, drug dependency, emotional illness, family problems, etc. can be highly complex conditions that can be successfully resolved. An employee's personal problems are a concern of the County when an employee requests assistance or when the problem affects job performance, attendance, interpersonal work relationships, or poses a safety risk to other employees.

**Types of Referral; Self-referral:** This takes place when the individual makes contact with the EAP on his/her own. **Informal referral:** This takes place when a supervisor, co-worker, family member, or community professional recommends or suggests that the individual utilize the EAP. **Mandatory referral:** This takes place when the performance of an employee has deteriorated and the individual is required to utilize the EAP or face further disciplinary measures.

Interface EAP currently provides EAP services for the County. To schedule an appointment or for assistance, call 800-324-4327 in English or 1-800-324-2490 in Spanish (Se Habla Espanol). [www.4eap.com](http://www.4eap.com)

### **Time Off - Holidays, Vacation, and Sick Leave**

The County provides eligible employees with vacation and sick leave under the following guidelines. All employees regularly scheduled to work at least 20 hours per week will be eligible to accrue vacation and sick leave beginning with the first pay period after employment; however, there is a six month waiting period to use any accrued leave.

**Holidays**

Unless required to work by their Department Head, Employees shall be allowed such holiday paid leave as is annually authorized by Commissioners Court, immediately upon hire. Half-Time Employees receive holiday paid leave if the holiday falls on a day they are scheduled to work. Employees on unpaid leave of absence are not permitted holiday paid leave. Employees absent without permission on the workday immediately before or after a holiday are not permitted holiday paid leave. Generally the County observes 11 Holidays.

**Vacation**

Employees are required to obtain prior approval from their Supervisor for any desired vacation leave. Employees must request prior approval to take vacation leave through the County's timekeeping system. Vacation leave requested for less than a fifteen (15) minute increments will not be approved. Introductory employees are awarded and may use ½ of their first years' entitlement at the end of their first six (6) months of employment. Thereafter, such Employees may take their vacation as it accrues. Introductory Employees who leave County employment prior to the completion of their first six months are not entitled to any vacation pay upon such separation. Other Full-Time Employees who have completed their Introductory Period shall accrue their vacation at the following rate:

Years	Annual Service Days	Annual Hours	Bi-Weekly Accrual Rate	Maximum Carry-Over
6 months	5	40		n/a
1 – 4	10	80	3.07	40
5 – 10	15	120	4.60	60
11	16	128	4.91	64
12	17	136	5.22	68
13	18	144	5.52	72
14	19	152	5.83	76
15	20	160	6.14	80
16	21	168	6.44	84
17	22	176	6.75	88
18	23	184	7.06	92
19	24	192	7.36	96
20+	25	200	7.67	100

Payout upon Separation from County: Employees hired prior to October 1, 2011, are paid accumulated

vacation leave up to the maximum permitted amount upon separation of employment from the County. For Employees hired on or after October 1, 2011, Employees are paid a maximum accumulated vacation leave up to 120 hours of accumulated leave upon separation from the County

### **Sick Leave**

Sick leave benefits are not an earned right. They are a privilege. Employees may not be given paid sick leave during the first six (6) months of their Introductory Period. Department Heads may require independent verification of illness as a prerequisite to payment of sick leave benefits. Department Heads may require an Employee to obtain and furnish a medical certificate from the Employee's physician or other Health Care Provider. The certificate must state that the Employee was treated for an illness or injury, the date of treatment, the date the condition began and the expected duration of the condition. Department Head may also request Human Resources to contact the Employee's physician or other Health Care Provider to verify the authenticity of the Employee's medical certificate. Misuse of the sick leave policy subjects an Employee to disciplinary action up to and including termination. A Department Head may authorize an Employee to use awarded sick leave to care for the employee or a member of the Employee's immediate family living in the household or in accordance with Family and Medical Leave Act who has an illness, injury or other temporary disability. Full-Time Employees are awarded sick leave based on years of service.

Service	Rate of Accumulation	Awarded Leave	
6 months	10	10 Days	80 Hours
1 year	5	15	120
2 years	5	20	160
3 years	5	25	200
4 years+	15 days/year up to max award of 720	40	320

Elected Officials, the County Auditor and the County Purchasing Agent are not awarded sick leave benefits. Half-Time Employees are awarded sick leave at one-half the rate of Full-Time Employees. Active Employees eligible for regular service retirement or disability retirement who were hired before October 1, 2011 and retire under that system of TCDRS or AUL are paid one-half awarded unused sick leave upon separation of employment from the County. Active Employees who were hired after October 1,

2011, who are eligible for regular service retirement or disability retirement and retire under that system of TCDRS or AUL are not paid for unused sick leave upon separation of employment from the County.

### **Sick Leave Pool**

The County has established a Sick Leave Pool Program for the benefit of Employees who Suffer a catastrophic injury or illness. Eligibility: All Full Time Employees, other than Elected or Appointed Officials with 12 or more months of continuous employment with the County and who have ten (10) or more days of vacation and/or sick leave (or five (5) or more days of vacation and/or sick leave if they are Half Time Employees), and have contributed a minimum of 3 sick days to the pool with the exception of a first year eligible employee, who must have contributed at least 1 day of sick leave to the pool. Eligible Employees desiring to contribute to the Sick Leave Pool must submit an application to Human Resources. Contact Human Resources to find out more information regarding the Sick Leave Pool. Every May and November, eligible Employees may transfer to the Sick Leave Pool not less than 1 day or more than 5 days of accrued sick leave earned by the Employee.

### **Bereavement Leave**

An employee may be granted up to three days off with pay in the event of a death in their immediate family. For the purpose of bereavement, immediate family is considered to be parent, grandparent, spouse, child, sibling or grandchild. Equal in-law and step relationships are included in immediate family.

### **Military Leave**

Galveston County will fully comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws pertaining to military service and reemployment rights, including but not limited to FMLA, and to the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA).

### **Nursing Mothers Paid Break**

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act amended the Fair Labor Standards Act to require reasonable breaks for nursing mothers to express breast milk during the first year following the birth of a child. The County will provide two – 15-30 minute paid breaks daily for nursing mothers. The nursing mother will be allowed whatever time is needed to express breast milk; however, if the break is longer than 15 – 30 minutes in duration, the break time will be unpaid time off.

### **Civic Duties and Responsibilities**

Employees are encouraged to participate in local civic organizations, local government, and any other activities, that help make the community a better place in which to live and work.

Employees are encouraged to vote. If the employee does not have sufficient time off during the polling hours, time will be arranged to allow the employee to vote. Employees must request this accommodation from their supervisor in advance of Election Day. All time off for voting will be unpaid.

### **Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)**

Galveston County complies with The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Eligible employees include those who have completed at least 12 months of service and have worked at least 1,250 hours in the 12 months preceding the leave. In addition, an employee must work at a location where at least fifty employees are employed within 75 miles of that worksite. If eligibility is met, an employee is entitled to take up to 12 weeks of approved FMLA in a 12-month rolling period.

Eligible employees may take leave for 1. A serious health condition. 2. To care for an immediate family member (spouse, child- living in the same residence or if you have care taking responsibility, or parent ) with a serious health condition. 3. The birth of a newborn child; or placement with the employee of a child for adoption or foster care; providing that the leave concludes within 12 months of the birth or placement of the child. 4. An employee who is the spouse, son, daughter, parent, or nearest blood relative of a covered service member who is recovering from a serious illness or injury sustained in the line of duty, on active duty, and is actively receiving medical treatment, is entitled to up to 26 weeks of leave in a single 12 month period to care for the service member. 5. A qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that the employee's spouse, son, daughter, or parent has been notified of an impending call or order to federal active duty in the Reserve or National Guard.

Requests for FMLA - Whenever the necessity for leave is foreseeable, the employee must provide the company with 30 days notice or as much notice as is practicable. Appropriate certification forms must be completed and certifications must be received within 15 days after the leave is requested, unless it is not practicable to do so. Failure to provide timely or sufficient notice may result in the delay or denial of family and medical leave, and may disqualify the employee for job protection and continuation of benefits under the provisions of the FMLA. It is the employee's responsibility to report periodically to their supervisor regarding their status and intent to return to work during their leave.

Pay During Leave - An employee who is taking FMLA leave must use all paid vacation, sick leave and compensatory time prior to being eligible for unpaid leave. Once all paid leave is exhausted the remaining time during the leave will be unpaid. FMLA will run concurrent with any paid leave time.

Benefit Continuation – Vacation and sick leave will continue to accrue during any paid portion of leave. Group health coverage will be continued during the approved leave. While the employee is on paid leave, the County will continue to deduct the premium contribution from the employee's paycheck. The County requires reimbursement of premium amounts paid on behalf of the employee for group health plan coverage if the employee does not return to work following the leave.

Return from Leave - An employee who takes leave under this policy may be asked to provide a fitness for duty (FFD) clearance from the health care provider. An employee returning from leave within the approved

12 weeks will be restored to the same or an equivalent position. An employee is entitled to reinstatement only if continued employment would have occurred had the leave not been taken. Thus, due to a reduction in force or restructuring or other reason, the employee would not be eligible for restoration at the time job restoration is sought. If the employee does not return to work following the conclusion of the leave, the employee will be considered to have voluntarily resigned.

### **Dress and Personal Appearance**

County employees are expected to maintain an appropriate appearance that is professional, neat and clean, as determined by the requirements of the work area. Dress and appearance should not be offensive to the public or other employees. Employees will be expected to exercise good judgment in choosing appropriate apparel. Employees who have questions regarding the appropriate work attire for their work area should contact their direct supervisor. Employees should refrain from wearing strong colognes or perfumes or from smelling of smoke. These scents may be offensive to our co-workers and the public which may exacerbate any illness they may have. Body modification that may be offensive to the public including excessive visible body piercing and tattoos may have to be covered. Please contact your supervisor or Department Head with any questions or concerns.

### **Cellular Phone Use**

Use of cellular phones during work hours is regulated to protect workplace privacy and work productivity. Cellular telephones must be turned to vibrate mode upon entering any work area. The use of personal cellular telephones in work areas is prohibited for personal phone calls. Personal calls are limited to break times. Personal cell phones must not be on desk area or interfere with work, except where authorized by supervisor.

### **Cameras and other Recording Devices**

The County prohibits the use of cameras, tape recorders, or other recording devices on company property without permission and business necessity. This includes cell phones with photographic capabilities. The purpose is to protect the privacy of all employees and to ensure the security of confidential County information. The recording of conversations, meetings, or other interactions, without business necessity and approval violates the spirit of trust in the workplace. Making such a recording without the knowledge of those recorded may subject an employee to disciplinary action up to immediate discharge.

### **Social Networking**

The County recognizes that employees may use social networking websites or similar media including, but not limited to, blogs (hereinafter referred to as "personal websites") during non-working hours. The use of the County internet to access personal websites is prohibited, unless approved by a supervisor. Employees who use personal websites are expected to refrain from presenting themselves as representatives of the County or from portraying the County in a negative manner. Employees are expected to show a duty of

loyalty and respect to the County and co-workers. Employees are not permitted to use personal cell phones or any other email enabled phone to connect to the County email system, unless specifically requested in writing, and approved by the County CIO, County Judge or Commissioners. Employees are expected to respect the privacy of employees and refrain from posting photos, opinions, or other information, which may portray other employees, the County or others in business relationships with the County in a negative manner. The publication of confidential information is strictly prohibited.

### **Theft, Misuse, or Destruction of Property**

The County will not tolerate theft, destruction, or inappropriate use of any County asset, property, and services, and/or destruction of another employee's personal property.

### **Return of Company Property**

All employees are expected to take proper care of any County provided equipment, computer, files, or other property. Any such property must be returned in good repair. Loss or damage to equipment will require the employee to reimburse the County for the cost of repair or replacement. An employee who leaves the County, either voluntarily or involuntarily, is expected to return any County property in his/her possession immediately or within 24 hours. Failure to return company property may result in a deduction from the final check or legal action against the employee.

### **Employee Counseling**

Galveston County will provide for its employees a fair and equitable system related to employee coaching and counseling. It is the Employee's responsibility to meet satisfactory job expectations that include behaving in a professional manner, performing the job description's essential functions and responsibilities; adhering to County policies and procedures. It is the policy of the County to try to resolve employee issues before they escalate. Processes for employee counseling may include verbal feedback, written coaching and counseling, written performance plans, written warnings, suspension, and employment separation, based on the specific circumstances. The County may use the employee counseling process in any order necessary to address the employee's performance issues and to protect the County's interests. All employees are employed "at will" and, as such, are free to separate their employment at any time without reason and the company retains the same rights. The Employee may appeal an adverse employment decision through the Human Resources Department. Please contact the Human Resources Department for the policy regarding filing an appeal.

### **Work Rules**

The County strives to provide for its Employees a fair and equitable system related to employee Coaching and counseling and progressive discipline. It is the Employee's responsibility to meet satisfactory job expectations that include behaving in a professional manner, performing the job description's essential functions and responsibilities; adhering to the County policies and procedures, and

abiding by the County Ethics policy. It is the County's intent to ensure Employees are afforded due process in the counseling and discipline process.

Employees are advised that the following may be cause for discipline, up to and including, involuntary separation from County employment. This includes any willful or deliberate violations of County rules to such a degree that continued employment of the individual may not be desirable and may necessitate the discharge of the employee. This list is intended to provide examples and is not all inclusive.

1. Willfully falsifying application for employment.
2. Negligence of essential functions or work duties or continued poor performance.
3. Falsification or tampering with County records;
4. Falsification of Employee's own or other Employee's time records or medical history
5. Dishonesty or breach of trust.
6. Failure to wear or openly display County badge.
7. Permitting another person to substitute or falsely use a County badge or departmental identification card.
8. Misconduct or behavior that is disruptive to the workplace.
9. Willful damage to or unauthorized misuse or removal of property owned, rented, leased or used by the County.
10. Spreading false rumors or filing false accusations.
11. Disclosure of confidential information of County clients or employees to an unauthorized person;
12. Theft or misuse of County Purchasing Card.
13. Rude behavior or unprofessional attitude, Bullying, Harassment or Discrimination of fellow employees or members of the public.
14. Abuse or misuse of County property including internet and email, property of other employees, or property of taxpayers.
15. Saying, writing or communicating in any form or method any negative or sexually explicit or derogatory or racial or ethnic comment.
16. Furnishing information such as confidential Employee, inmate, court or other records to an unauthorized person.
17. Acts of Discrimination.
18. Insubordination, refusal or deliberate failure to carry out instructions given by supervisor,
19. Flagrant disrespect for fellow employees or Officials or Directors
20. Misuse of telephone, e-mail, cell phone, computers and other means of County supplied communications in violation of departmental regulations
21. Harassment of any kind, including sexual harassment of co-workers.
22. Creating a hostile work environment in violation of Title 7 of the Civil Rights Act.
23. Engaging in acts of violence, fighting or threats of violence towards any employee, members of their families, or any other person associated with the County.
24. Misconduct, such as fighting, committing a violent act, or use of profane, abusive or insubordinate language toward supervisors, Department Heads, fellow Employees, or others.
25. Abandonment of job/position; Walking off job without proper approval or notice.
26. Excessive un-excused absences and/or tardiness.
27. No call/no show for two consecutive shifts, or three isolated instances,
28. Diversions of equipment for personal use or sale;
29. Bringing liquor, narcotics, drugs or any other controlled substances onto County premises except as approved by the appropriate member of senior management; and/or inebriation, intoxication or drug use while at work or performing your job.
30. Consuming liquor or using narcotics or drugs, or any controlled substances, on County premises, or while on duty, or entering the premises of the County under the influence thereof;
31. Illegal possession or sale of alcohol or drugs

32. Reporting for work or engaging in County business if mobility or judgment is impaired due to the influence of alcohol or other intoxicants or drugs
33. Possession or Carrying firearms or other dangerous weapons on County premises unless carrier is a Texas peace officer, of a firearm on or in County property without proper credentials and/or authority to carry firearms.
34. Engaging in any activity that conflicts with or gives the appearance of conflicting with the interests of the County, without first having obtained the written consent of the appropriate member of senior management;
35. Unprofessional conduct or conduct which violates the technical or ethical standards of a profession;
36. Disregard for the safety of other employees including horseplay or practical jokes;
37. Disregard of personal appearance, dress or personal hygiene.
38. Unauthorized use of public funds
39. Misrepresentation to the County of one's credentials and ability to perform certain duties.
40. Any intentional act considered fraud and abuse or unethical.
41. Repeated minor violations or nonconformance of safety rules or procedures.
42. Failure to abide by established safety rules or practice of the County.
43. Single serious violations of a safety rule or procedure that could have potentially resulted in injury to an Employee or another Employee or could have caused property damage.
44. Engaging in other business or employment during county work hours.
45. Failure of any Employee to obtain or to maintain any required training, continuing education or other requirement imposed upon them by law or their Supervisor or Department Head in order to maintain their employment with the County in their current position.
46. Failure to maintain qualifications necessary to perform the job.
47. Fraud or misrepresentation of information concerning a workers' compensation claim.
48. Refusal to submit to drug testing after probable cause has been established.
49. Conviction of a felony while employed by the County.
50. Unauthorized possession of either County property or the property of another Employee without their permission.
51. Failure to satisfactorily complete the 6 month introductory period.
52. Engaging in any conduct prohibited by this Policy Manual.

### **Disciplinary Process**

The County may use the Employee counseling process in any order necessary to address the employee's performance issues and to protect the County's interests. All Employees are "At-Will", and as such, are free to separate their employment at any time without reason and the County retains the same rights.

Verbal Feedback , Coaching and Counseling

Written Coaching and Counseling Notification or Written Warning

Administrative Leave (with pay)

Administrative Leave (without pay)

Suspension (without pay)

Demotion

Involuntary Separation or Dismissal

Dismissal for Job Abandonment, or No Call/No Show for 2 consecutive shifts – may be considered avoluntary termination

The employee may appeal any adverse action in writing to the Human Resources Director, using the Appeal form within 72 hours if the employee disagrees with the findings. The Human Resources Director

or designee will then review the investigation, and make a recommendation to the Department Head. The Human Resources Director or designee will communicate the findings within 5 business days to the Employee. The Department Head has the final decision.

### **Solicitation and Distribution of Non County Literature**

It is the responsibility of the County to maintain an atmosphere consistent with respect for the citizens of Galveston County. In addition, in order to protect employees from undue interference in the course of performing their work, the following guidelines governing solicitation and distribution of non-Galveston County literature has been established. Persons who are not employed by the County are not permitted to distribute material or to solicit employees or anyone at premises operated by the County in work areas. Persons may be allowed on the County premises if they are conducting official business with the County or they may be invited to provide presentations of products, equipment or services directly related to County business and as part of in-service training for employees. Employees may not solicit for any purpose during scheduled work time, which includes both the work time of the employee doing the soliciting and the work time of the employee to whom the solicitation is directed. Employees may not distribute non work related literature for any purpose during scheduled work time or in work areas. Work time does not include scheduled off-duty periods such as meal times or breaks, time before and after a shift, and any other period of time when employees are not expected to be performing their work tasks. The placement of "flyers" and/or printed matter on automobiles parked in our parking lots or host facility parking lots is strictly prohibited. Bulletin Boards and E-Mail are to be used strictly for purposes related to Galveston County business. Use of either for solicitation of any non-County purpose is strictly prohibited.

### **Safety & Health Policies**

All employees are required to follow all government safety laws, as well as all Galveston County safety policies and procedures. Employees who work in safety sensitive positions have additional policies to abide by. Please refer to the Galveston County Safety Manual for specific policies and procedures.

### **Alcohol and Drug Free Workplace**

Galveston County, in accordance with the Drug Free Workplace Act of 1988, explicitly prohibits the following list below of activities and items while on duty on company premises, including on-call: the use, possession, solicitation for or sale of narcotics or other illegal drugs, alcohol, prescription medication without a prescription, or unlawful manufacturing or distribution of alcohol and/or illegal drugs. Being impaired under the influence of legal or illegal drugs or alcohol adversely affects the employee's work performance, safety of the employee and others, and the employer's reputation and public confidence in the County.

### **Accidents and Injuries**

All accidents wherein an employee is injured should be reported immediately to the Employee's Supervisor. The Supervisor will notify the Employee's Department Head. The Department Head will notify the Human Resources Department for Workers' Compensation purposes. The Department Head should also notify the Facilities Department. The Department Head should also complete and forward an Accident Report/Investigation Form to Human Resources and Facilities as soon as is expeditiously feasible. Drug and/or alcohol analysis as detailed in the County's Drug and Alcohol Policy will be required for employees whose duties require their holding a Commercial Driver's License or who work in safety sensitive areas. The Human Resources Department will authorize the visit to the Occupational Health Clinic.

### **Galveston County Cares About You Hotline**

Employees who want to report a concern or harassment/discrimination or workplace complaint now have the opportunity to contact the Galveston County Cares About You Hotline at 409-770-5500, This phone is a confidential line that is answered by the Human Resources Director or designee. Please leave your name, phone number and brief message. Calls are returned within 24 hours or sooner on weekdays.

### **Galveston County Policies Available to All Employees**

These benefits, and Federal protections are available to all Galveston County employees regardless of whether the Elected Official signed off of the HR policy manual. Galveston County policies are available on-line under the Human Resources and webpage, or by contacting the Human Resources Department at 409-770-5418 or [HumanResources@co.galveston.tx.us](mailto:HumanResources@co.galveston.tx.us) .

## HANDBOOK RECEIPT & ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I have received a copy of the Galveston County Employee Handbook. I have read the handbook, understand it, and agree to follow it during my employment with the County.

I acknowledge that the County reserves the right to change, revise, or delete the plans, policies, benefits, and procedures described in this handbook at any time the County determines such a change is necessary or desirable.

I acknowledge that this handbook is not a contract of employment. Nothing contained in this handbook or in any other statement of company policy, including statements made in the course of employment, will be taken as constituting an express or implied promise of continued employment.

I understand and agree that my employment can be terminated at will, so that both the County and I remain free to choose to end our work relationship at any time for any reason.

I understand that this handbook is the property of Galveston County and must be returned to the County upon termination of employment.

Employee Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Employee Name (Printed) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Human Resources/ Witness Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Employee Copy**

**HANDBOOK RECEIPT & ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I have received a copy of the Galveston County Employee Handbook. I have read the handbook, understand it, and agree to follow it during my employment with the County.

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I understand that this handbook is the property of Galveston County and must be returned to the County upon termination of employment.

Employee Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Employee Name (Printed) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Human Resources/ Witness Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**County Copy for Human Resources Employee File**