



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT
OF COMMUNITY HEALTH

EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

JANUARY 2021

Mission

The mission of the Department of Community Health is to access to affordable, quality health care to Georgians through effective planning, purchasing and oversight.

We are dedicated to *A Healthy Georgia*.

Vision

DCH is committed to a lean and responsive state government that promotes the health and prosperity of its citizens through innovative and effective delivery of quality health care programs.

GOALS

State of Georgia's Key Goals for the Department of Community Health

- Healthy Georgia
- Responsible and Efficient Government, Fiscally Sound, Principled, Conservative

Department of Community Health's Key Goals

- Improve health status of Georgians by promoting healthy lifestyles, preventive care, disease management, disparity elimination and personal responsibility.
- Improve access to quality health care at an affordable price.

Core Organization Values

- Communications
- Customer Service
- Teamwork
- Accountability

Welcome!

We want to welcome you to the Georgia Department of Community Health!

We are pleased that you have joined us and wish you every success. We strive to provide an excellent opportunity for you to grow and develop in your career. We also want you to feel comfortable in your association with us and know that you are a valued member of our team.

There will be many things to learn in your new job with us. This handbook will help to explain the privileges you will enjoy as an employee and the duties and responsibilities that we all share. Please contact your supervisor, the Office of Human Resources (OHR), or any other member of management should you have questions or comments about any of this information.

We hope that you will find the Department of Community Health (DCH) an interesting and pleasant place to work, big enough to give you benefits that you might expect, yet still of a size that keeps you involved in the agency's successes on a personal level.

Welcoming new employees is always a pleasure. By joining the DCH team, we hope you will enjoy the sense of excitement that exists here. Our philosophy has always been to serve all of our constituents in an honest and prompt fashion, in the same way that we ourselves would like to be served. Everyone in our agency is dedicated to this principle.

By working together towards these objectives, we can develop the great potential we have both as individuals and as a team.

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Introductory Statement

An interesting and challenging experience awaits you as an employee of the Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH). State government has undergone substantial changes in recent years, and this handbook should answer many of your questions about state employment in general and about employment with DCH in particular. This handbook provides you with information about working conditions, employee benefits, and employee responsibilities. You are encouraged to read it thoroughly. If you have questions or need clarification about the information contained in this handbook, please contact OHR.

While no employee handbook can anticipate every circumstance or question about your employment, it is our hope that you will find this handbook to be a valuable reference tool during your employment with DCH and that you will refer to it often.

The information provided in this handbook is current as of the publication date; however, any subsequent changes in federal laws, state laws, applicable rules or departmental policies will take precedence. DCH has the right to change any information in this handbook at any time or for any reason without prior notice. While we make every effort to update this handbook in a timely manner, there may be a period of time during which the handbook does not reflect recent changes in policy or law. If ever a policy or law conflicts with this handbook, the most recent policy or law will control.

This handbook is not intended to be, nor should it be construed to be, a contract of employment.

Instead, the guidelines in this handbook provide a frame of reference from which deviations may be made as particular circumstances warrant. The handbook was developed by management and may be amended or cancelled at any time, at the agency's sole discretion.

If you need this handbook in an alternative format, please contact the OHR at (404)656-4374.

An Equal Opportunity Employer

DCH is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, disability, age, or religious or political opinions or affiliations, veteran status or genetic information. The Department adheres to the principles of equal opportunity in all aspects of employment, including selection, job assignment, compensation, discipline, termination, access to benefits, and training. Additionally, any form of harassment is prohibited by law, including sexual harassment, and is prohibited by DCH.

If you have questions or concerns about any type of discrimination in the workplace, please consult with your supervisor or the Director of Human Resources.

100 YOUR JOB

101 EMPLOYMENT STATUS

As a DCH employee, your status will be either "classified" or "unclassified."

Unclassified: Individuals hired into State government positions on or after July 1, 1996 serve in the unclassified service and are "employees at will." Employees at will, or unclassified employees, may be separated from employment at any time, without a reason, and have no appeal rights.

Classified: Individuals who were first hired into State government positions before July 1, 1996 and who have remained in classified positions without a break in service since that date are classified. Employees in the classified service may be able to appeal certain employment actions.

As positions in the Department become vacant, they are advertised and filled in the unclassified service. A classified employee who accepts employment in an unclassified position will become an employee in the unclassified service and will not be able to regain classified status later.

All non-temporary employees, regardless of whether they are classified or unclassified, are eligible for participation in employee benefit programs, including the Employees' Retirement System, the Flexible Benefits Program, the State Health Benefit Plan, etc., as long as they meet the eligibility requirements for those programs.

102 HOURS OF WORK

The official work hours of the DCH are from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except official state holidays. DCH recognizes alternative work schedules as viable work options that benefits the employer, the employee, and the community. Alternative work schedules may be utilized to enhance work unit effectiveness and productivity levels, while also addressing the quality of work/life issues faced by employees. The work hours of employees must be scheduled based on the needs of the organization. Managers may allow employees to work desired hours, provided that it is not detrimental to departmental operation or to the workload of other employees.

Divisions also may offer teleworking options, where an employee may work from home or from an alternate worksite on a scheduled or on an occasional basis. Please note, however, that these alternative working arrangements are subject to management discretion and may be discontinued at any time without prior notice to the employee.

Refer to the following policies for more information #310, *Hours of Work* and #313 *Alternate Work Schedules*.

Emergency Closings

At times, emergencies such as severe weather, fires, power failures, or floods can disrupt normal work at DCH facilities. In extreme cases, these emergencies may require some facilities to close. If this occurs outside of your usual working hours, designated local radio and/or television stations will be asked to broadcast the closing. *See policy #312 Inclement Weather.*

Emergencies can affect some areas while not affecting others. The Commissioner may excuse employees who are directly affected by the emergency for whatever time may be necessary if conditions warrant closing of an office or facility.

If you are absent from duty due to inclement weather or other emergencies but your office or facility is not closed, the Commissioner may permit any of the following options:

- Allow you to make up the time lost.
- Allow you to charge the absence to accrued compensatory time, personal leave, or annual leave.
- Place you on leave without pay if neither of the previous options is available.

Timekeeping

The Department is required to keep accurate records of the work time of employees, particularly those designated as “non-exempt” under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Employees who are not specifically exempt from the minimum wage and overtime provisions of the FLSA are considered to be *non-exempt*.

All employees are responsible for accurately recording their hours worked each day. Employees may be disciplined, up to and including dismissal, for altering, falsifying, tampering with time records, or recording another employee’s time. *See policy #320 Fair Labor Standards Act*

103 OVERTIME

Overtime compensation may take two forms: pay and compensatory time. In all cases, the Department will determine whether to grant compensatory time or paid overtime. Generally, the Department grants compensatory time rather than pay for overtime.

Under the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, employees are designated as either *non-exempt* or *exempt* from overtime compensation. *Non-exempt* employees receive overtime compensation at “time and a half” when more than 40 hours are worked in a workweek. *Exempt* employees may, at the agency’s discretion, receive straight time (hour for hour) or “State” compensatory time for hours worked over 40 in a workweek. Overtime is based on actual hours worked. Time off for holidays, sick leave, vacation leave, or any other leave of absence is not considered hours worked for overtime calculations. *See policy #320 Fair Labor Standards Act*

All overtime work for *non-exempt* employees must be authorized in advance by their supervisors. Working overtime without advance approval may result in disciplinary action.

104 PAYDAYS

DCH employees are paid twice each month, on the 15th and the last day of the month. If a payday falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or holiday, employees are generally paid on the preceding workday.

Direct deposit of employee pay is required for all new employees. Employees who elect to receive pay through direct deposit will not receive paper check stubs and will need to utilize the Employee Self Service feature described below. Written authorization is required to participate in direct deposit.

Employee Self Service

Employee paychecks and other important information are available online through a secure, individual logon known as "Employee Self Service." This feature allows employees access to view paycheck data (earnings, taxes, deductions and net pay), current direct deposit bank information, current deductions (benefits, credit union, parking, etc.), tax filing status, compensation history, leave balances, and personal information. In addition, employees may view and edit addresses, phone numbers, e-mail addresses and emergency contact information without having to complete and submit any forms to OHR.

Employee Self Service may be accessed by the following website: <http://team.georgia.gov>.

Prior to using Employee Self Service for the first time, you will need to register with Team Georgia. Your employee identification is automatically entered into the system once it is assigned to you, and it will be deleted from the system once you leave employment.

For questions or assistance regarding Employee Self Service, please contact OHR at (404) 656-4374.

Administrative Pay Corrections

DCH 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. If there is an error in the amount of your pay, you should promptly notify the payroll unit so that corrections can be made as quickly as possible.

Payroll Deductions

DCH is required to make certain deductions from every employee's pay. Among these are federal and state income taxes and retirement contributions. Social Security taxes are deducted up to a limit that is called the Social Security "wage base." DCH matches the amount of Social Security tax paid by each employee. There are also optional payroll deductions, including deductions for health insurance premiums, credit union accounts, charitable contributions, etc. for employees who are eligible to and choose to participate in these programs.

If you have questions concerning payroll deductions, your payroll unit can assist you.

105 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PROCESS

DCH's performance management process referred to as ePerformance, is a web-based process and is accessible via Employee Self-Service (ESS). Employees can access their performance documents utilizing ESS, and managers can utilize the Manager Self-Service (MSS) to access their employees' performance documents. The program is comprised of three phases: Objective/Goal Setting, Coaching and Development, and Performance Evaluation. The performance plan cycle begins with the new fiscal year, July 1st, and concludes on June 30th. New employees should anticipate scheduling a performance plan meeting with their managers within 45 days of employment.

The ePerformance management process is designed to evaluate all employees on five (5) statewide core competencies, as well as those goals and competencies specific to the position. In addition, managers and supervisors are evaluated on up to two (2) leadership competencies. The rating system consists of a five (5) point evaluation scale, which is used to determine eligibility for consideration of performance-based

increases. The amount of the performance-based increase, if any, will be determined by the Georgia Legislature and/or the State Personnel Board each year.

Review Process for Performance Plans and Evaluations

Your supervisor will discuss your performance evaluation with you, and you will be able to review it online and print a copy. You may attach written comments or rebuttal to the evaluation, regardless of the rating you receive.

A review process is available under the following circumstances:

1. **Performance Plans.** If you believe that a job responsibility or expectation is arbitrary, capricious, non-job related, or unrealistic, you may request a review by a designated official. Your request must be made in writing within five (5) workdays of receiving the plan.
2. **Performance Evaluations.** If you receive an **overall rating** of “*Unsuccessful Performer*” and you believe the rating to be arbitrary, capricious, or not reflective of overall performance, you may provide a written rebuttal and request a review by a designated agency official. Your request for review must be submitted OHR within five (5) workdays of receiving the performance evaluation. The reviewing official will not be your first or second-level supervisor. After reviewing the evaluation, your rebuttal, and any supporting documentation, the official will either uphold the rating or direct the supervisor to revise the evaluation. The reviewing official’s decision is final and cannot be appealed.

106 PERSONNEL FILES

Personnel files are maintained in OHR. These files include information such as your job application, resume, performance evaluations, salary increases, disciplinary actions and promotions.

Personnel files are the property of the DCH. Generally, only supervisors and management who have a legitimate reason to review information in a file are allowed to do so. However, because you are a public employee, some information in your personnel file may be accessed through a request under the Georgia Open Records Act [O.C.G.A. Sec. 50-18-70, *et seq.*] Other information, such as medical information, is considered confidential and is not open to the public. This information is maintained in separate confidential files.

Viewing Your Personnel File

Employees who wish to review their own files should contact OHR. With reasonable advance notice, employees may review their own personnel files in the presence of an individual assigned to maintain the files.

If you transfer to another state agency, your personnel file will transfer with you to your new agency's human resources office.

Personal Data Changes

Some changes in personal information may be made by you through Employee Self Service described earlier in this Handbook. However, changes due to major life events such as marriage, divorce, or the birth of a child, should be reported to OHR as soon as possible, but no later than thirty (30) days after the date of the event. Promptly reporting these changes will keep your personnel file current and will prevent delays in

processing important tax and benefit information. Be especially careful to report all changes in beneficiaries for retirement and insurance purposes.

Please remember that it is your responsibility to keep your insurance and retirement records up to date.

107 SEPARATION FROM EMPLOYMENT

Separation from employment can occur for many reasons. Following are some of the more common reasons under which an employee separates from employment:

- Retirement – The employee leaves DCH employment and begins to receive a monthly benefit from the Employees' Retirement System.
- Resignation – The employee voluntarily ends the employment relationship with DCH. Although advance notice is not required, it is customary and considered appropriate to provide at least two weeks written notice of resignation.
- Dismissal – The employee is separated from employment with DCH after a determination that it is in DCH's best interest that the employee be dismissed. Advance notice is generally not provided for unclassified employees. Classified employees are given a fifteen (15) calendar day notice period and an opportunity to appeal the action.
- Reduction in Force – The employee is separated from employment based on downsizing, budgetary constraints, reorganization, etc.

Upon separation from the Department, you will be paid for any accrued unused annual leave that you have, provided that you have returned all items belonging to the Department and do not have any outstanding travel or other money owed to DCH. Annual leave pay will ordinarily be calculated and paid to you within two (2) pay periods after your separation date.

Additionally, depending on the type of separation, you may be able to continue some or all of your employee benefits. Following your separation, you will receive written notification of your continuation options.

108 LICENSES, CERTIFICATES, REGISTRATION AND INSURANCE

All employees in positions that require a license, certificate or registration must maintain the appropriate valid documents. Failure to maintain such documents without justifiable cause may result in separation from employment.

Employees who must use their personal vehicles to perform assigned duties are also responsible for ensuring that their vehicles are properly insured against loss. Employees are prohibited from transporting customers, contractors, or other employees in uninsured personal vehicles while on duty.

109 ASSIGNMENT OF DUTIES

Management has the responsibility of accomplishing the mission of the Department. Based on the needs of the agency, management may assign, remove from, add to, or otherwise change the duties and responsibilities of employees; direct and control the work of employees; and may reassign employees from one duty station to another. Similarly, management has the authority to assign work hours and schedules to meet the needs of the Department.

200 EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

The State of Georgia provides a wide range of employee benefits to eligible employees, including health insurance, flexible benefits, and a generous retirement package. For detailed information about your options, please refer to the following:

State Health Benefit Plan	http://dch.georgia.gov
Flexible Benefit Plan	http://doas.ga.gov/statelocal/HRA/Benefits/pages/home.aspx
Employees' Retirement System and Peachstate Reserves	http://www.ers.ga.gov

You may also contact OHR if you have questions. Please note that your eligibility for participation in the employee benefit programs depends on the eligibility requirements established by the benefit plans.

Among the benefit options available to DCH employees are:

- Accidental Death and Dismemberment Insurance
- Alternate or Compressed Work Weeks
- Annual Leave (Vacation Benefits)
- 401(k) and 457 Deferred Compensation Plans
- Blood Donation Time
- College Savings Plan
- Court/Jury Leave
- Credit Union
- Critical Illness Insurance
- Dental Insurance
- Dependent Life Insurance
- Direct Deposit of Paychecks
- Disability Insurance (Short- and Long-Term)
- Employee Discounts
- Family and Medical Leave
- Flextime Scheduling
- Health Insurance
- Holidays
- Leave Donation Program
- Legal Insurance
- Life Insurance
- Long Term Care Insurance
- Medical/Disability Leave
- Military Leave
- Organ Donation Leave
- Parking (Pre-tax)
- Personal Leave
- Rapid Transit (Pre-tax)
- Retirement Pensions
- Sick Leave
- Special Injury Leave

- Spending Accounts (Dependent Care and Health Care)
- Spousal Life Insurance
- Training
- Van pool (Pre-tax)
- Vision Insurance
- Voting Time

Some benefit programs require contributions from employees, but many are fully paid.

201 FLEXIBLE BENEFITS PROGRAM

The State Flexible Benefits Program provides you with a variety of benefit options. Many can be purchased with pretax dollars that are deducted prior to determining your taxable pay, which may reduce your income taxes.

Once you are enrolled, you are given an opportunity to change coverage or change options during the open enrollment period which generally occurs in October or November of each year. Changes that are made during the annual open enrollment period are effective the following calendar year. Please note that regulations of the Internal Revenue Code prohibit making changes to your benefit options outside of the annual open enrollment period, except for specific qualifying events, such as marriage, divorce, birth of a child, loss of a dependent, etc.

Some flexible benefit options require medical underwriting before insurance is approved and coverage begins. If an option that you select requires medical underwriting, you must satisfy this requirement before your coverage will become effective.

202 HEALTH INSURANCE

Several health insurance options are offered to DCH employees through the State Health Benefit Plan. Your health insurance premiums are paid with pre-tax dollars. The Internal Revenue Code limits your ability to change benefit options or coverage to the annual open enrollment period, except for specific qualifying events.

Benefits Continuation (COBRA)

Employees are allowed to continue their health insurance coverage under the State's health plan in some cases when coverage would normally be lost. The Federal Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 (COBRA) may entitle you and your qualified dependents to a temporary extension of coverage for certain qualifying events. These events include your resignation, leave of absence without pay, or a reduction in your work hours. It can also become available to other members of your family upon certain qualifying events.

Under COBRA, the employee or dependent must pay the full cost of coverage at the State's group rate. An administration fee must also be paid. The State Health Benefit Plan provides you with written notice describing your rights under COBRA when your loss of eligibility is reported. The notice contains important information about your rights and obligations.

Contact your Payroll Office/Benefits or the State Health Benefit Plan for more detailed information.

203 LEAVE BENEFITS AND TIME OFF

Holidays

Georgia law provides for twelve (12) holidays per calendar year. The Governor declares the actual days on which holidays will be observed.

Holidays cannot be observed prior to the dates declared by the Governor. Two (2) of the observed holidays (*) that fall during the annual legislative session are observed later in the calendar year. Employees who leave State government after the actual dates of these holidays, but prior to the dates that they are observed, are not eligible to be paid for the holidays.

New Year's Day	January 1
State Holiday	January 19
M. L. King's Birthday	3rd Monday in January
Washington's Birthday	3rd Monday in February
State Holiday	April 26
National Memorial Day	Last Monday in May
Independence Day	July 4
Labor Day	1st Monday in September
Columbus Day	2nd Monday in October
Veteran's Day	November 11
Thanksgiving Day	4th Thursday in November
Christmas Day	December 25

Generally, to be eligible for the paid holiday, you must be in pay status for the full scheduled work shift on the scheduled work day either before or after the holiday. However, employees entering State service on the day following a holiday will not receive pay for that holiday. Being in pay status means that you are either working that day or on approved paid leave.

Employees required to work on a holiday will be issued a deferred holiday for eight (8) hours.

Annual Leave

Annual leave is available to provide opportunities for vacations or personal time away from the office. The following employees are eligible to earn and use annual leave:

- Regular full-time employees
- Regular part-time employees working 20 hours or more per week

Eligible employees begin earning leave after you have been in pay status for 40 hours in a semi-monthly pay period. Part-time employees earn leave prorated by the percentage of time worked. The amount of annual leave you receive each year increases with the length of your continuous employment as shown in the following schedule:

- For the first 5 years, employees receive 15 annual leave days each year, accrued semi-monthly at the rate of 5 hours per pay period.
- After 5 full years of service, employees receive 18 annual leave days each year, accrued semi-

monthly at the rate of 6 hours per pay period.

- After 10 full years of service, employees receive 21 annual leave days each year, accrued semi-monthly at the rate of 7 hours per pay period.

Employees may accumulate a maximum of 45 days (360 hours) of annual leave. Any hours earned above 360 are forfeited (see **Forfeited Leave** section). When you retire or leave State government employment, you will be paid for any unused annual leave up to the 360-hour maximum.

Annual leave may be taken with the approval of your supervisor. To take annual leave, employees should request advance approval as early as possible utilizing Workforce Timekeeper (WFTK). This allows your supervisor to coordinate your request with other absences and minimize disruption in the workplace. Your supervisor will take into account a number of factors, including business needs and staffing requirements.

Sick Leave

Sick leave is available to provide employees paid time off during times of illness, disability, or for routine medical or dental appointments. Sick leave is intended to be used for illness or injury and may not be used for any other type of absence. An employee may be required to report each day by telephone to the appropriate supervisor and to furnish evidence satisfactory to the supervisor for the use of accrued sick leave.

The following employees are eligible to earn and use sick leave:

- Regular full-time employee
- Regular part-time employees working 20 hours or more per week

You begin earning leave after you have been in pay status for 40 hours in a semi-monthly pay period. Part-time employees earn leave prorated by the percentage of time worked.

Sick leave accrues semi-monthly at the rate of 5 hours per pay period. The accrual rate never increases. When you leave State employment, you will not be paid for your sick leave balance. Because sick leave is meant to be income protection in case of long-term illness or disability, you can save up to 720 hours (90 days). Anything over 720 hours is forfeited (see **Forfeited Leave** section).

Sick leave may be used with approval of your supervisor for the following reasons:

- Personal illness or disability.
- Adoption of a child where your presence is required for health-related reasons.
- Absence needed because of exposure to contagious disease when exposure would endanger the health of others.
- Dental or medical care. Sick leave for dental or medical appointments will be limited to the time reasonably necessary to attend the appointment.
- Absence due to dental or medical care, illness, or accident in your immediate family that requires your presence.
- Death in your immediate family* which requires your presence. Sick leave for this purpose is limited to five work days or the equivalent.

*Immediate family means your spouse, grandparent, parent, parent-in-law, child, step-child, brother, or sister. It also includes anyone else who lives with you and is recognized by law as your dependent.

When the need for sick leave is foreseeable, such as with routine medical or dental appointments, you should request the time off as far in advance as possible utilizing the timekeeping system. Employees who are unable to report to work without prior approval must notify their supervisor prior to their scheduled starting time.

Forfeited Leave

You can save up to 45 days (360 hours) of annual leave and up to 90 days (720 hours) of sick leave. Any hours you earn over these amounts are forfeited. However, a record of your forfeited leave is maintained in Employee Self Service via TeamWorks.

What is the value of forfeited leave to you?

Restoration for extended illness. In the event you or a qualifying family member develops a long-term illness or disability, your forfeited leave may be restored to you on an as-needed basis, upon approval by the Department.

Retirement credit. For members of the Employees' Retirement System, forfeited leave can be credited toward retirement so that you can retire earlier. When you have at least 120 days (960 hours) of forfeited sick and annual leave combined with your sick leave balance, this provision would apply.

Personal Leave

Each year, between November 30th and December 31st, eligible employees have the opportunity to convert a portion of their sick leave to personal leave. If you have over 120 hours of sick leave, you can convert up to 24 hours in excess of 120 hours to personal leave. Once you convert the hours to personal leave, you cannot change your mind. Your personal leave then becomes available to use during the following calendar year. If you do not use it within that timeframe, you lose it.

Personal leave can ordinarily be used for any reason you choose. As with other types of leave, you must have approval to take personal leave. Your supervisor will make reasonable efforts to accommodate your request to use personal leave, and you should make your request for leave as far in advance as possible.

Family and Medical Leave

Federal law provides family and medical leave (FML) for eligible employees. Family and medical leave is job-protected leave from work for certain family and medical reasons. While on FML, eligible employees who have health insurance through the State Health Benefit Plan are entitled to maintain this health insurance coverage.

To be eligible for FML, you must have been employed with State government for at least twelve (12) months, and you must have been physically **at work** for at least 1,250 hours during the twelve (12) months immediately before the beginning of family and medical leave. Up to twelve (12) work weeks of family and medical leave is available based on a rolling year.

The Department requires employees to use any available accrued annual leave, personal leave, sick leave, or compensatory time prior to using unpaid leave during an FML absence. This means that you will receive your paid leave and the leave will also be considered protected leave and counted against your FML.

Depending on the circumstances, both male and female employees may be eligible for family and medical leave for the following qualifying reasons:

1. Pregnancy and birth of an employee's child;
2. Care of an employee's newborn child;
3. The placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care and to care for the child after placement;
4. Care of the employee's child, spouse or parent who has a serious health condition;
5. A serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform his or her essential job duties;

6. A qualifying exigency for families of members of the National Guard and Reserves when the covered military member is on covered active duty or called to covered active duty in support of a contingency operation; or
7. Care of spouse, son, daughter, parent or next-of-kin of a covered service member with a serious illness or injury incurred in line of duty on active duty.

Note: For circumstances 1-5 above the employee may use up to twelve (12) weeks of FMLA leave in a twelve (12) month period. For circumstances 6 and 7 above, the employee may use up to twenty-six (26) weeks in a single twelve (12) month period.

A serious health condition means an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves inpatient care in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical care facility, or continuing treatment by a health care provider.

Pregnancy-related absences from work (e.g., morning sickness, prenatal examinations, birth, etc.) are to be charged to available family and medical leave. Eligible employees may use remaining family and medical leave to care for the newborn child. Please note, however, that in cases of pregnancy and childbirth, sick leave may only be used for reasons that qualify for sick leave; in accordance with the Sick leave policy; and under most circumstances, sick leave is not appropriate for the entire period of leave. Of course, employees may use annual leave, personal leave, compensatory time, or request to be placed on leave without pay for the remainder of the twelve-week family and medical leave entitlement.

Eligible employees may use available family and medical leave to care for a child placed with them for adoption or foster care during the twelve-month period following the date of placement. Family and medical leave may be used prior to the actual date of placement if absence from work is needed for the placement to proceed.

Family and medical leave for a serious health condition is limited to the time determined to be medically necessary by the health care provider.

When the leave is foreseeable, such as with childbirth or elective surgery, employees must make requests for family and medical leave to their supervisors at least thirty (30) days in advance. If the leave is not foreseeable, employees should request family and medical leave as soon as possible.

Requests for leave for serious health conditions must include a health care provider's statement certifying the need for the leave and its beginning and expected ending dates. Family and medical leave will be approved only for the time that has been certified by the employee's health care provider as being medically necessary, up to a maximum of twelve (12) weeks per calendar year.

When employees return from leave (other than intermittent leave) for their own serious health condition, they must submit a medical certification that they are fit to resume work.

Employees who have fully complied with the terms of their family and medical leave approval notices are entitled to return to the same position or an equivalent position with equivalent pay, benefits and comparable working conditions at the expiration of the period of leave. However, employees do not retain this entitlement if, at the expiration of family and medical leave, they are unable to perform the essential functions of the position due to physical or mental conditions.

When both spouses work for the State of Georgia, the two employees are limited to a combined total of twelve (12) weeks of family leave to cover the time off they need after the birth or placement of a child or to care for a seriously ill parent. However, each employee is eligible to take any unused portion of the twelve (12) weeks for his or her own serious health condition, the care of a seriously ill child or the care of the other spouse.

Military Leave

Military leave is a leave of absence from work while engaged in the performance of ordered military duty and while going to and returning from such duty. Military leave may also be used by members of the U.S. Armed Forces, any reserve force or reserve component of the U.S. Armed Forces or any force of the organized militia to attend service schools, for active duty, active duty for training, inactive duty training and examination purposes.

Employees serving in the military may be paid for up to one hundred forty-four (144) hours in a Federal fiscal year (October 1 through September 30). Employees ordered to active State service in the National Guard due to an emergency declared by the Governor may be paid for up to two hundred forty (240) hours in a Federal fiscal year. Any absences beyond these amounts will be without pay unless the employee requests to use accrued leave.

Ordinarily, advance notice of military service is required, unless military necessity prevents such notice, or it is otherwise impossible or unreasonable.

A military leave of absence is treated as continuous employment. Employees returning from military leave will be placed in the position, or a comparable one, that they would have attained had they remained continuously employed instead of serving in the military. However, in order to be eligible for reemployment at the end of a period of military leave, you must be sure and comply with all deadlines for submitting notices or for reporting for work.

For more information about military leave, please contact OHR or visit the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) web site at www.dol.gov/elaws/userra.htm for assistance understanding your rights and obligations regarding job entitlement, employer obligations and benefits under this act.

Court Leave

Employees are encouraged to fulfill their civic responsibilities by serving jury duty when required. If you are summoned to jury duty or subpoenaed as a witness, you may request court leave. You should provide a copy of the subpoena, summons, or other court orders as soon as possible so that your supervisor may make arrangements for the absence. Of course, you are expected to report for work whenever the court schedule permits. The time you are allowed as court leave includes the time actually required by the court and any additional time as reasonably needed to travel to and return from the court duty.

Important: Court leave does not apply if you are a principal party in the proceeding. It also does not apply if you have any other personal or family interest in the proceeding. You may, however, request to use other appropriate leave to cover such absences from work.

Voting Time

DCH encourages employees to fulfill their civic responsibilities by voting in elections. Generally, employees can find time to vote either before or after work. If you are not able to vote due to your work schedule, your supervisor may grant up to two (2) hours of paid time off to vote.

Employees should request time off from their supervisors as soon as possible before Election Day. Advance notice is required so that the time off can be scheduled at a time that is least disruptive to the work schedule.

Blood Donation Time

With supervisory approval, employees are allowed to take time from work to donate blood, platelets or granulocytes (white blood cells) through the apheresis process. Employees are also allowed time to recover

from the donation procedure. For blood donation, employees are allowed up to two (2) hours of leave per donation, up to four (4) times each calendar year. For the donation of blood platelets or granulocytes, employees are allowed up to four (4) hours per donation, up to (4) times each calendar year.

Leave for Donation of a Kidney or Other Organ

A leave of absence with pay of up to thirty (30) calendar days may be granted to employees who wish to donate an organ for transplantation. For purposes of this type of leave, the term “organ” means a human organ, including an eye that can be transferred from the body of one person to the body of another person. Leave for this purpose is not charged to your sick or annual leave balances.

Employees requesting leave to donate an organ must provide a statement from the doctor performing the transplant or from the hospital administrator. If the donation does not occur, regardless of the reason, this leave will not apply to the absence, and you must use accrued leave or be placed in authorized leave without pay status.

Leave for Donation of Bone Marrow

A leave of absence with pay of up to seven (7) calendar days may be granted to employees who wish to donate bone marrow for transplantation. Employees requesting leave to donate bone marrow for transplantation must provide a statement from the doctor performing the transplant or from the hospital administrator. If the donation does not occur, regardless of the reason, this leave will not apply to the absence, and you must use accrued leave or be placed in authorized leave without pay status.

Disaster Volunteer Leave

Qualified employees may be eligible for disaster volunteer leave with pay for up to fifteen (15) work days in a twelve (12) month period to participate in specialized disaster relief. Employees absent for this purpose will not be charged leave. In order to qualify for disaster volunteer leave: (1) you must be a certified disaster service volunteer of the American Red Cross; (2) there must be a disaster declared by the President of the United States or by a State governor in either Georgia or a neighboring state with a reciprocal agreement; and (3) the American Red Cross must request your services. Each request for disaster volunteer leave will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, and approval of such leave will be made at the discretion of DCH.

204 LEAVE DONATION PROGRAM

DCH provides a leave donation program to assist employees faced with a serious medical illness or injury to himself or herself or an immediate family member.

The Leave Donation Program allows employees who have exhausted all paid leave time a means of financial assistance through the contributions of leave accruals from fellow employees. Under the program, qualified employees are allowed to voluntarily transfer accrued leave to another qualified employee who has exhausted all other paid leave due to a serious health condition. The intent is to ensure that the employee continues to receive medical benefits during the catastrophic illness or injury period and to enable employees to continue receiving their regular salary. Leave donations may be used for the following reasons:

- Personal illness or disability of the employee; or
- Illness or disability of an employee’s spouse, child, parent, brother, sister, or anyone else living with the employee who is recognized by law as the employee’s dependent.

Donated leave cannot be used for work-related accidents or illnesses that are covered by Workers' Compensation benefits or for a disability that was incurred while committing a felony or assault. Further, because donated leave is credited to the recipient's sick leave balance, such leave can be used only for reasons that qualify for sick leave.

Eligibility

To be eligible to solicit donated leave, employees must meet the following criteria:

- Continuously employed for not less than twelve (12) months by DCH.
- Employed in a position entitled to earn leave for twelve (12) consecutive months.
- Have exhausted all leave balances, forfeited leave, and compensatory time.
- Have been on authorized leave without pay for eighty (80) consecutive hours.
- Have not been on an attendance or corrective action plan or undergoing disciplinary action for leave abuse or misuse in the previous twelve (12) months from the date of request.

To be eligible to donate leave, employees must meet the following criteria:

- Continuously employed for not less than twelve (12) months DCH.
- Employed in a position entitled to earn leave for twelve (12) consecutive months.
- If donating annual leave, the donor employee must be able to retain a minimum balance of sixty (60) hours after the donation.
- If donating sick leave, the donor employee must be able to retain a minimum balance of sixty (60) hours after the donation.

Employees should refer to policy #221 *Leave Donation* for additional information.

205 RETIREMENT

Retirement Benefits

Any employee hired on or after January 1, 2009 becomes a member of the State's newest retirement plan, the Georgia State Employees' Pension and Savings Plan (GSEPS). This plan combines a traditional pension plan with a 401(k) plan that includes an employer match. The 401(k) plan offers flexibility and "portability" while the pension plan rewards state career longevity.

GSEPS works as follows:

- The defined benefit plan provides a pension benefit formula of 1% X years of service X highest 24-months' average salary (30 years = approximately 29% of salary as a monthly benefit.) Vesting for the defined benefit plan is 10 years.
- The 401(k) plan provides employer matching up to 3% with member contributing 5%, utilizing the [Peach State Reserves 401\(k\) Plan](#).
 - Member contributes 1% of compensation and receives 1% salary match from DCH (100% match on the first 1% of compensation contributed)
 - For each additional percent contributed by member (up to 4%), DCH will match 50% of that amount (up to 2% of compensation)
 - The defined contribution employer contribution is subject to a 5-year vesting schedule, vesting 20% for each completed year of service in a GSEPS-eligible position.

Current employees who are ERS members as of December 31, 2008 may opt-in to GSEPS at any time on or after January 1, 2009.

Current employees who do not opt-in to GSEPS retain their membership in either the "old" plan or the "new" plan.

➤ "Old Plan" members are individuals who:

- Began employment with State government before July 1, 1982, or
- Became reemployed with State government after July 1, 1982 but had vested accounts before July 1, 1982.

➤ "New Plan" members are individuals who:

- Began employment with State government on or after July 1, 1982 but before January 1, 2009;
- Began State employment before July 1, 1982 but chose to transfer membership to the New Plan;
- Became reemployed with State government on or after July 1, 1982 or who later received a refund of contributions and interest; or
- Transferred accounts from ERS to TRS then back to ERS on or after July 1, 1982.

Both the "Old" and "New" plans are traditional defined benefit plans where an employee's retirement benefit is based on salary, years of service and a benefit formula factor.

In addition to participation in one of the retirement plans noted above, the State offers employees the option to enroll in the Peach State Reserves program, which is a plan offered by the State of Georgia to provide employees an opportunity to save for retirement while reducing their current taxable income and accumulating tax-deferred savings.

Under the Peach State Reserves, employees may choose to take advantage of a Section 401(k) Plan and a Section 457 Plan. With the exception of the GSEPS program described above, there is no employer match. Both the 401(k) plan and the 457 plan allow you to put aside a portion of your current salary before state and federal income taxes are deducted. This deferred salary is invested in one or more of several investment options - you choose the options for your investments - offered under the program. The deferred compensation and any investment earnings remain tax-deferred until actually distributed to you in the future, usually when you retire or leave State employment. Participation in this program allows you to build financial security, especially for retirement, beyond what your retirement or pension plan may offer.

Because of the complexity of the various Retirement Plan provisions, the Peach State Reserves, as well as the benefits and eligibility requirements for both, you should contact the Employees' Retirement System of Georgia for specific information at:

Employees' Retirement System of Georgia
Two Northside 75, Suite 300
Atlanta, GA 30318
Phone: (404) 350-6300
Toll-free (outside Atlanta): 800-805-4609
<http://www.ers.ga.gov>

Additionally, the Employees' Retirement System of Georgia has prepared an *Explanation of Benefits Handbook*, which may be downloaded from this website. There are also links to other publications, forms and benefit calculators that you might find useful.

When you are ready to retire, you are encouraged to participate in one of the **Workshop for Retirement Application Processing (WRAP)** sessions offered by the Employees' Retirement System. These sessions provide valuable information about the retirement process. You are also encouraged to speak with an ERS representative well in advance of your retirement date so that you may fully understand all of the options available to you.

206 LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The key to our ability to provide the best service to our citizens is a motivated and well-trained workforce. Learning and development helps to align employee's goals and performance with the mission and vision of the agency. DCH encourages all employees to continuously develop their skills to bridge gaps and enhance their skills to reach their full potential in their current roles or for preparation for future opportunities.

To support succession planning within the Department, OHR offers leadership development programs for all employees at various levels within the agency. For more information about these programs or available learning opportunities, visit the DCH Academy website at <https://dchacademy.mksccloud.com>.

207 WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Workers' Compensation is an accident insurance program. It provides medical care, rehabilitation and income in place of lost wages when employees sustain job-related injuries or illnesses. It also provides payment to your dependents if you die from a job-related accident. Your workers' compensation coverage begins on the first day you start work.

Workers' Compensation is administered by the Department of Administrative Services' Risk Management Unit. Coverage includes all authorized hospital bills, medical bills, physical therapy, medical/vocational rehabilitation, and necessary travel expenses in accordance with the Workers' Compensation fee schedule.

If you are injured on the job, it is your responsibility to report the injury **immediately** to your supervisor. Any delay in reporting may jeopardize your Workers' Compensation benefits.

There is a seven (7) day waiting period for indemnity payments, therefore, benefits will actually begin during your second week of absence. If you are absent for twenty-one (21) days, or three (3) weeks, Workers' Compensation will pay for your first and third week of benefits at that time. If you use sick leave for your first week of absence, you will not be reimbursed for that period.

Rather than receive partial pay through the Workers' Compensation program, you may choose to have lost time covered by sick or annual leave instead. This option will provide coverage for your full salary while you are on leave. However, ***you must request such action in writing***. You cannot have your full salary covered by sick or annual leave while receiving Workers' Compensation benefits for lost time. You may choose only one option. Selecting full salary in lieu of Workers' Compensation benefits does not jeopardize medical or rehabilitation benefits provided under Workers' Compensation.

Return-To-Work Benefit Program

The State of Georgia has a Return-to-Work Program to assist injured employees' transition during the recovery period to their former jobs. It uses modified job assignments suited to the employee's medical condition, physical ability and work ability. Research has shown that when injured employees are active and productive, the recovery is a lot faster. So, the sooner an employee returns to work, the sooner he or she can return to full-time status.

Permanent Restrictions of Employees

Unfortunately, there may be times when an employee never fully recovers from an injury or illness. In those situations, the transitional team reviews the employee's essential job functions and compares them with the permanent restrictions documented by the doctor. In many cases, permanent restrictions will not affect an employee's ability to perform his or her job at full productivity capacity. However, if the restrictions affect the employee's essential job functions, attempts may be made to identify a reasonable accommodation for the employee.

208 EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Because problems of a personal nature, such as stress, depression, family problems or substance abuse, can have a negative effect on employees' work behavior or performance, the DCH has contracted with the Employee Assistance Program for the provision of confidential employee assistance and behavioral health services. As a DCH employee, you or any member of your household may contact the EAP provider at any time to schedule a confidential assessment by calling (833) 276-0988.

For more information concerning the Employee Assistance Program you may visit their website dedicated to DCH employees at www.EAPHELPlink.com.

300 EMPLOYEE CONDUCT

301 ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

To maintain a safe and productive work environment, DCH expects employees to be reliable and punctual in reporting for work. Absenteeism and tardiness place a burden on other employees and the agency.

Employees are expected to be on the job, on time, every day that they are scheduled to work. Wherever possible, employees should schedule all medical and personal appointments outside of work hours.

In the rare instances when you will be absent due to illness or emergency, you must notify your supervisor and keep your supervisor informed of when you likely will return to work. You are expected to call personally and talk directly with your supervisor prior to your scheduled starting time. Unless you are physically unable to make the telephone call yourself, you should not rely on friends, relatives, or coworkers to communicate your absence to your supervisor.

Calling in to report your absence or late arrival does not mean that your absence is approved. Your supervisor will consider your request for approval when you return to work.

Attendance and punctuality are considered in the evaluation of every employee's performance. Poor attendance and excessive tardiness are disruptive. Either may lead to disciplinary action, including dismissal.

302 CODE OF ETHICS

The successful reputation of DCH is built on the principles of fair dealing and ethical conduct of our employees. Our reputation for integrity and excellence requires that we observe the spirit and letter of all applicable laws and regulations, as well as maintain the highest standards of conduct and personal integrity.

The continued success of DCH depends on our customers' trust, and we are dedicated to preserving that trust. Employees owe a duty to the State of Georgia, its customers and citizens to act in a way that will merit the continued trust and confidence of the public.

The DCH expects its managers, supervisors, and employees to conduct business following the letter and spirit of all relevant laws and to refrain from any illegal, dishonest or unethical conduct.

In general, the use of good judgment, based on high ethical principles, will guide you. However, if you find it difficult to determine the proper course of action in a situation, discuss the matter with your immediate supervisor and, if necessary, with the Ethics Officer via email at Ethicshelpline@dch.ga.gov.

The State of Georgia adopted a code of ethics to guide public employees in their roles and responsibilities as State employees. The following is generally what is expected of you.

CODE OF ETHICS FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICE
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(O.C.G.A. Sec. 45-10-1)

Any person in government service should:

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

303 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The term "conflict of interest" refers to a situation in which an employee is in a position to influence a decision that may result in a personal gain or other benefit for that employee or for a relative as a result of the State business dealings.

Employees must conduct the State's business within guidelines that prohibit actual or potential conflicts of interest. You should not use privileged or confidential information for your own benefit or to provide friends, relatives, or acquaintances with any advantage. If you have direct and substantial outside interests that could be affected by State plans or activities and you are directly involved in such plans or activities, you should immediately inform your supervisor.

These are only guidelines that provide general direction about potential conflicts of interest. You should contact OHR for more information about acceptable standards of operation.

Political Activity

All government employees keep their basic constitutional rights such as voting. However, Federal and State laws somewhat limit our ability to participate in political activity. These laws are designed to preserve integrity within government. They protect us from undue political pressure, influence and coercion.

As a DCH employee and private citizen, you may:

- Register and vote in any election.
- Promote and encourage others to exercise their right to vote.
- Express a personal opinion privately and publicly on political candidates and issues, provided that any public expression does not conflict with any laws or policies.
- Display a political picture, badge, or button as long as such display is not under color of office or while you are on duty or on State property.
- Display a political bumper sticker on a privately owned vehicle **unless** the State is paying transportation mileage on that vehicle.
- Be elected or appointed to any office of a political party, political group, or political subdivision of the state, as long as the office is not full time, does not conflict with your official duties, and is not prohibited by law.
- Take part in the nonpartisan activities of a civic, community, social, professional, employee, or similar organization.
- Be a member of a political party or other political group and take part in its activities to the extent permitted by federal and state law or policy.
- Attend partisan and nonpartisan political meetings and rallies as a **spectator**.
- Sign a petition for specific legislative action or place a candidate's name on an election ballot.
- Be active in connection with constitutional amendments, referenda, municipal ordinances, or other questions or issues of a similar character.
- Serve as a nonpartisan paid worker at the polls.
- Participate fully in public affairs in a manner that does not compromise your efficiency or integrity as a State employee or the neutrality, efficiency or integrity of your agency.
- Write a personal letter to a DOAS per or other publication expressing a personal view on public issues.
- Contribute to a governmental program for financing federal, state or local elections as permitted by federal or state law.
- Manage or participate in your own campaign for any office permitted by law or policy as well as contribute to and accept contributions for that campaign.

As a DCH employee, you **cannot**:

- Be a candidate for nomination, election or appointment to any:
 - Full-time elective public office of a political subdivision of Georgia or another state;
 - Full-time elective office of a political party or political organization;
 - Elective state office of Georgia or any other state; or
 - Elective civil office of the federal government.
- Direct, manage, control or participate in a political campaign except as permitted by law or policy.
- Serve as a watcher, challenger or similar partisan worker at the polls.
- Use any coercive political pressure to get you or another person an appointment, promotion, pay increase or any other employment advantage in the DCH or state government.
- Use any official authority to affect the political action of another person or to affect an election for public office, political party office, or an office of a political organization.
- Directly or indirectly tell any employee of DCH or another state agency to give money or anything else of value to anyone for political purposes.

- Participate in any form of political activity while on duty or under color of office.
- Engage in any political activity in violation of federal or state law.
- Endorse candidates other than yourself or oppose candidates other than your opponents in elections for public office or a political party.
- Address a convention, caucus, rally, or similar gathering in support of candidates other than yourself or in opposition to candidates other than your opponents for public office or a political party.
- Circulate a recall petition.
- Transport any political campaign materials, solicit votes, or transport anyone who is soliciting votes while traveling in a vehicle for which the State is paying mileage.

The Federal Hatch Act

The Federal Hatch Act applies to DCH employees whose positions are financed in whole or in part by the Federal government. If you are covered by this Act, you cannot:

- Use your authority to interfere with or affect the result of an election or nomination for office.
- Coerce (either directly or indirectly), attempt to coerce, command or advise a State employee or local official to pay, lend or contribute anything of value to a political party, committee, organization, agency, or person for political purposes.
- Be a candidate for elective public office in a partisan election (which may include some part-time offices of local subdivisions of the state).

Because applicable laws and policies may differ from agency to agency, please discuss your specific situation with your supervisor or OHR.

Outside Employment

As a DCH employee, you are expected to devote your entire work hours to your job and to the business of the DCH. You may, however, engage in outside employment, as long as it does not interfere with your duties at DCH. Prior to engaging in outside employment, you should complete the Secondary Employment Acknowledgement form and submit to your supervisor. Once approved, the form will be placed in your personnel file. Secondary employment that constitutes a conflict of interest is prohibited.

Please refer to policy #411 *Secondary Employment* for more information.

304 COMPLAINT RESOLUTION

DCH is committed to providing the best possible working conditions for our employees. We encourage open and frank discussions of any problem, complaint, suggestion, or question. If you have a concern about your working conditions or employment, you should first seek resolution through open and honest communications with supervisors or other employees involved in the issues. If these attempts are not successful, however, most conflicts or disputes can be addressed through an informal process called mediation. A complete description of the mediation process is available in OHR.

Not every problem can be resolved to everyone's total satisfaction, but only through understanding and discussion of mutual problems can employees and management develop confidence in each other. This confidence is important in maintaining an efficient and harmonious work environment.

If you believe a condition of employment or a management decision affecting you is unjust or inequitable, you should contact OHR for assistance or you may view the complaint resolution procedures directly under policy #433 *Employee Complaint Resolution*.

305 DISCIPLINE

Employees are expected to devote work time to work, meet all work standards, and conduct themselves appropriately. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

The major purpose of any disciplinary action is to correct the problem, prevent recurrence, and prepare the employee for satisfactory service in the future. However, there are some behavior problems or performance issues that are serious enough to justify dismissal without going through a progressive disciplinary process; therefore when deemed necessary by management a progressive discipline process will not be followed.

Appeals

Classified employees may appeal the following disciplinary actions to the State Personnel Board, which has delegated the appeal process to the Office of State Administrative Hearings:

- suspensions without pay
- demotions
- dismissals

Once the Office of State Administrative Hearings receives a classified employee's letter of appeal, an evidentiary hearing will be scheduled, and both parties (the employee and the Department) will have the opportunity to present witnesses and evidence to an administrative law judge.

Other actions that may be appealed by classified employees can be found in the Rules of the State Personnel Board at the following web site www.DOAS.ga.gov/. The appeal process for these types of actions is generally based on written evidence, and evidentiary hearings are usually not scheduled.

Unclassified employees, because they are employed "at will," have no appeal rights for disciplinary or adverse actions, including dismissal.

306 PERSONAL APPEARANCE

Appropriate dress, grooming, and personal cleanliness contribute to the morale of all employees and affect the business image that DCH presents to customers and visitors. Because of the many different types of jobs within DCH, it is not possible to establish an agency-wide dress code. However, during business hours, employees are expected to present a clean and neat appearance at all times and to dress according to the requirements of their positions. Employees who appear for work inappropriately dressed or who display poor or offensive hygiene may be sent home by supervisors/managers and directed to return to work in proper attire or properly groomed. Consult your supervisor if you have questions about appropriate dress or appearance.

Casual Days

We are always searching for new ways to make the DCH a better place to work. One way to improve our work environment is to offer our employees the opportunity to dress in casual business wear. Casual dress is a welcome alternative to the formality of typical business clothes. Our goal is to have employees project a professional image while wearing casual and relaxed clothing. Therefore, Fridays are usually designated as casual day. Other days, such as holidays or days before a holiday, may be designated as casual days with prior notice from your supervisor.

Casual business wear encompasses many looks, but it really means casual clothing that is appropriate for an office environment. It is clothing that allows you to feel comfortable at work, yet always looks clean, neat and professional. However, not all casual clothes are appropriate for work. For example, you should not wear stained, wrinkled, frayed, or revealing clothing to work. If you are considering wearing something that you are not sure is acceptable, choose something else, consult with your supervisor or refer to policy #410 *Standards of Conduct* for more information.

307 NO SMOKING

In keeping with DCH's intent to provide a safe and healthful work environment, smoking is prohibited in State-operated buildings. This applies to all forms of tobacco, cigarettes, pipes, smokeless and electronic products and to all employees, customers, and visitors.

Additionally, there will be no smoking permitted in DCH owned vehicles (cars, trucks, carry-alls, etc.) at any time.

308 IDENTIFICATION BADGES

DCH requires employees to wear identification badges issued by the Department while at work or performing on-site work on behalf of DCH. Employees should generally not wear these badges while away from the work place or during off-duty hours.

309 STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

DCH employees live in somewhat of a "glass house." We have an obligation not only to the Department, but also to Georgia taxpayers. While it is virtually impossible to set specific guidelines for every aspect of your job, you must be constantly mindful of your conduct and adhere to the highest moral and ethical standards in performing your duties and in your professional relationships.

Ordinarily, the DCH would not be concerned with your time after work. However, off-duty conduct may become a legitimate concern when it affects agency operations or reflects unfavorably on the agency.

As State employees, we must be especially careful to avoid such things as using our positions for personal gain, giving unjustified preferences, losing sight of the need for efficient and impartial decisions in methods of operations, or doing anything that could result in questioning the integrity of State government or the Department.

The following list is intended to give examples of expected performance and/or behavior while on duty or at work. This list does not include all expectations.

- Maintain a professional and business-like relationship with co-workers and supervisors.
- Behave in a courteous and professional manner in the presence of customers, the general public and other employees.
- Use appropriate telephone courtesy.
- Seek, accept and accurately complete assignments within deadlines.
- Report to work on time.
- Use appropriate reporting procedures for tardiness and/or absence and requesting leave.
- Use work time effectively.
- Observe policies on health, safety and security.
- Report to work free of alcohol and illegal drugs.
- Cooperate and provide assistance with any type of investigation conducted by or at the direction of management (including cooperation in interviews, producing requested documents and polygraph examinations).
- Comply with instructions from all supervisors and managers, including but not limited to job directives, coaching and meeting requests.

The following examples of inappropriate activities **are prohibited** while on duty or at work. This list does

not include all prohibitions.

- Negligence or inefficiency in the performance of your assigned duties or job responsibilities, including unacceptable job performance.
- Insubordination, including refusing or intentional failure to follow directions of your supervisor, or other designated member of management.
- Violations or disregard of any policy, procedure, or federal, state, or local laws affecting the agency or your employment.
- Misconduct or behavior which may have a negative effect on the agency's reputation and/or community standing.
- Abusing, misusing, or stealing State property or other employees' property or equipment.
- Using or selling alcohol or illegal drugs or reporting for work under the influence of such substances or when such substances may impair your ability to work safely or effectively.
- Conduct or behavior offensive to other employees or clients/customers.
- Excessive absenteeism or tardiness, including failure to report for and remain at work without justifiable cause.
- Failure to notify your supervisor of an intended absence as required by policy.
- Leaving your workstation without authorization.
- Being on call for other employment.
- Tape recording conversations at work, unless specifically approved by management.
- Conduct or behavior that could endanger yourself or your fellow employees.
- Fighting, horseplay, disorderly or disruptive behavior.
- Falsifying documents, such as employment applications, time sheets, reports, etc.
- Threatening, profane or abusive language or written material.
- Acts or threatened acts of violence.
- Argumentative behavior while on duty or while acting under color of office.
- Disclosing confidential information without authorization.
- Illegal or unprofessional behavior, such as sexual-related conversations, inappropriate touching, racial or ethnic jokes and slurs, or other verbal or physical conduct of an offensive nature.
- Gambling, lending, borrowing or soliciting money or donations of any kind.
- Carrying weapons of any kind (knives, firearms, explosives, etc.) while on State property, unless specifically permitted by law or policy.

Because it is impossible to provide a comprehensive list of prohibited activities, if you are unsure about a particular situation that is not listed here, obtain clarification from your supervisor or contact OHR. Employees who engage in any of the listed prohibited activities or otherwise engage in misconduct are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

310 TRAVEL

DCH will reimburse employees for reasonable business travel expenses when conducting business away from the normal work location. All business travel must be approved in advance by the immediate supervisor.

When approved, the costs of transportation, meals, lodging, and other business-related expenses will be reimbursed according to travel regulations set by the Office of Planning and Budget and the State Accounting Office. Employees are expected to limit expenses to reasonable amounts.

Employees should discuss with their supervisors the appropriate guidelines for travel arrangements, travel advances, expense reports, reimbursement for specific expenses, or any other business travel issues. Travel advances are limited to employees whose current annual salary is \$50,000 or less.

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

311 USE OF DCH PROPERTY

Offices, desks, files, vehicles, etc. are provided for the use of employees during their employment but remain the sole property of DCH. Use all DCH property carefully and properly. This includes DCH vehicles, telephones, mobile devices, voice mail, fax machines, copiers, computers, supplies, and so forth. Employees are expected to return all DCH property when requested to do so. The DCH may take all action deemed appropriate to recover or protect its property.

Employees are responsible for all DCH property, materials, or written information issued to them or in their possession or control. Using DCH property or funds for personal gain is prohibited and may result in disciplinary action or dismissal.

Computers, Internet, and E-mail

Computers, computer files, the e-mail system, and software made available to employees are intended for business use only. Most employees have access to the Internet and are expected to use it for DCH business in accordance with departmental policy.

All computer data, including the Internet and e-mail that is composed, transmitted, or received using DCH resources is considered part of the DCH's official records. Employees should ensure that the business information obtained through this equipment and media is accurate, appropriate, ethical, and lawful.

Data that is composed, transmitted, accessed, or received via the Internet must not contain content that could be considered discriminatory, offensive, obscene, threatening, harassing, intimidating, or disruptive to any employee or other person. For example, the display or transmission of sexually explicit images, messages, and cartoons is prohibited. Other misuse includes, but is not limited to, ethnic slurs, racial comments, off-color jokes, or anything that may be construed as harassment or as showing disrespect for others.

E-mail may not be used to continue chain letters, to solicit for commercial ventures, religious or political causes, outside organizations, or for any other inappropriate activity.

The equipment, services, and technology provided to access the Internet remain at all times the property of the DCH. As such, we reserve the right to monitor Internet traffic. We also reserve the right to retrieve and read any data composed, sent, or received through our online connections and stored in our computer systems. To ensure compliance, computer and e-mail usage may be monitored.

Equipment and Vehicles

Equipment and vehicles essential in accomplishing job duties are expensive and may be difficult to replace. When using DCH property, employees are expected to exercise care, perform required maintenance, and follow all operating instructions, safety standards, and guidelines.

Please notify your supervisor if 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. Your supervisor can answer any questions about your responsibility for maintenance and care of equipment or vehicles used on the job.

Telephones and Mail

Telephones are to be used for official DCH business. Personal calls should be reserved for breaks and meal periods. Under no circumstances should you make or charge a long distance call to the DCH unless it is work related and approved by your supervisor. Under no circumstance should you accept a collect call. Employees will be required to reimburse the DCH for any charges resulting from their personal use of the telephone and may also be subjected to disciplinary action.

The mail system is reserved for business purposes only. Employees should refrain from sending or receiving personal mail at the workplace.

Workplace Monitoring

Workplace monitoring may be conducted to ensure quality control, employee safety, security, and customer satisfaction. Employees, particularly those who communicate with customers, may have their telephone conversations monitored or recorded. Telephone monitoring is used to identify and correct performance. Improved job performance enhances our image as well as customer satisfaction with our service.

Computers and software furnished to employees are the property of DCH. As such, computer usage and files may be monitored or accessed.

We are sensitive to the legitimate privacy rights of employees and will make every effort to guarantee that workplace monitoring is done in an ethical and respectful manner.

312 SOCIAL MEDIA

DCH's I.T. and Communications offices have established social media sites that are used to represent the agency. These approved sites are:

- Facebook:
- Twitter:
- YouTube:

Only the Office of Communications has permission to create social media sites, publish content and respond to comments on social media sites on behalf of DCH. Employees should only access these networks within DCH's IT infrastructure when performing official agency business. All social media use on behalf of the Department shall comply with applicable DCH and the State of Georgia policies and federal law.

313 USE OF PRIVILEGED OR CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Many employees are exposed to privileged or confidential information, which may be of significant interest to the public. Privileged or confidential information must not be used by employees to gain advantage for themselves, relatives, friends or acquaintances. Improper disclosure of privileged or confidential information may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from employment.

Use of computers or other agency resources to obtain confidential information concerning customers, contractors, other employees or other individuals for non-work-related reasons is also prohibited.

400 EMPLOYEE PROGRAMS

401 CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS PROGRAM

The State Charitable Contributions Program (SCCP) provides employees an opportunity to support eligible charitable organizations using payroll deduction. The SCCP raises millions of dollars that help provide health, welfare, educational and environmental programs and services to the citizens of Georgia.

Charitable organizations are selected for inclusion in the program by the Policy and Education Program Advisory Committees. Only those charitable organizations that meet the requirements established by law [O.C.G.A. 45-20-50] and the State Personnel Board Rules are eligible to receive contributions.

For more information on the annual Charitable Contributions Program please contact OHR.

402 FAITHFUL SERVICE AWARDS PROGRAM

The most valuable asset of any organization is its employees. The Faithful Service Awards Program, which is administered by the Department of Administrative Services, was created by law to recognize the contributions of State government career employees. Employees who reach five years of service are presented a Faithful Service Award. Every five years thereafter, employees receive another Faithful Service Award.

403 RECYCLING

DCH encourages 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 use natural resources and minimize any negative impact on the environment.

The simple act of placing a piece of paper, can, or bottle in a recycling container is the first step in reducing demand on the earth's limited resources. Employees are encouraged to make a commitment to recycle. By recycling, we are helping to solve trash disposal and control problems facing all of us today.

If you have any questions or new ideas and suggestions for the recycling program, contact OHR.

404 GEORGIA COMMUTESMART

The Georgia CommuteSmart initiative encourages expanded use of commute options and flexible work scheduling for eligible state employees. As a voluntary ozone reduction effort, employees are encouraged to reduce single occupancy vehicle trips, especially during the ozone season, by engaging in clean commute alternatives. Clean commutes include: carpooling, vanpooling, biking, walking, or riding public transportation.

The Georgia CommuteSmart (www.gacommuteoptions.com), a Georgia nonprofit organization committed to improving air quality and reducing traffic congestion, provides several helpful suggestions for identifying clean commute alternatives. Through this website, you may be able to find a carpool partner or locate a vanpool that fits your work schedule. You may also find money-saving ideas and commuter rewards for participating in certain programs.

500 DCH EMPLOYMENT

501 APPLICATIONS AND INFORMATION DISCLOSURE

DCH relies upon the accuracy of information in job applications, as well as the accuracy of other data presented throughout the hiring process and later. All applicants and employees must provide factually accurate information on every Application for Employment, State Security Questionnaire/Loyalty Oath form and on all other work-related documents. If you misrepresent, falsify, or omit information, you may be dismissed from employment or removed from consideration for employment.

Any employee who fails to sign or refuses to sign a State Security Questionnaire/Loyalty Oath form is prohibited by law from receiving a paycheck.

502 CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS

DCH is committed to providing a safe environment for all individuals and the safeguarding of state property. All reasonable efforts will be made to provide a safe and secure environment for employees, clients, and customers and any other work-related contacts. Accordingly, in conjunction with the hiring process, the Department will conduct criminal history record investigations and employment background checks to ensure all applicants (new hires) who are selected for specific positions are suitable for employment with the Department.

No criminal history record check may be conducted unless the applicant has provided a completed authorization to release background information form.

The existence of a conviction does not automatically disqualify an individual from employment with DCH. Relevant considerations may include, but are not limited to, the nature and number of the convictions, their dates, and the relationship that a conviction has to the duties and responsibilities of the position. Further, any employee or applicant whose criminal history record information shows a significant arrest or a pattern of recent arrests may be disqualified from employment until such time as the charge(s) is resolved. Any decision to accept or reject an individual with a criminal conviction rests solely at the discretion of the Department.

503 DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION

DCH will comply fully with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and its amendments. We are committed to ensuring equal employment opportunities for qualified persons with disabilities and will not discriminate in our employment practices. Hiring procedures will provide persons with disabilities an equal chance at employment or advancement.

Upon request, job applications are available in alternative, accessible formats. Applicants may also receive assistance in completing the application process.

During the hiring process, inquiries are made only to see whether an applicant is able to perform the job. However, post-offer physical examinations are required for those positions that have a bona fide job-related physical requirement. Such exams are given to everyone entering the position and only after a conditional job offer is made. Medical records will be kept separate and treated confidentially.

504 DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE

Georgia's Drug-Free Workplace Act (DFWA) promotes a drug-free workplace in all offices and work sites of State government. While on State premises or conducting State business off State premises, no employee may use, possess, distribute, sell or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.

Under the Drug-Free Workplace Act, an employee who performs work under a government contract or grant must notify his or her supervisor of a criminal conviction for drug-related activity. The report must be made within five (5) days of the conviction.

A drug-free awareness program is available that explains resources available and consequences for violations of the DFWA. Employees are encouraged to discuss these matters with their supervisor or OHR.

Drug Testing

Some positions, such as post certified positions and others previously identified by DCH, require pre-employment and random drug testing as specified by law. Employees in these positions must submit to this testing as a condition of their employment.

Additionally, any employee may be required to submit to testing for the presence of illegal drugs or alcohol if a reasonable suspicion exists that the employee has used illegal drugs or is under the influence of illegal drugs, alcohol or other substances while on duty.

Applicants and employees who refuse to take a drug or alcohol test, or who fail a drug or alcohol test are subject to immediate dismissal from employment and may be disqualified from employment for two years.

505 EMPLOYMENT OF RELATIVES

Personal relationships may create an actual or potential conflict of interest, cause disruption or create a negative or unprofessional work environment. Therefore, relatives of employees will not be eligible for employment when potential problems of supervision, security or morale exist.

The term “relatives” includes but is not limited to parents, brothers, sisters, children, spouses, legal wards, and guardians. Relatives may not be employed or placed in positions or situations where a superior-subordinate will exist between the relatives.

In instances where management suspects that a conflict may arise as a result of the hiring, promotion, or transfer process, such placement should be approved by the Human Resources Director or the Commissioner.

506 IMMIGRATION LAW COMPLIANCE

DCH does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of citizenship or national origin. In compliance with the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, each new employee, as a condition of employment, must complete the Employment Eligibility Verification I-9 Form. New employees must present satisfactory documents establishing identity and employment eligibility. Former employees who are rehired must also complete the form if:

- They have not completed an I-9 with the DCH within the past three years, or
- If their previous I-9 is no longer retained or valid.

If you have questions or would like more information on immigration law, please contact OHR. Employees may raise concerns about immigration law compliance without fear of reprisal.

507 MEDICAL AND PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS

All applicants are required to be certified for medical and physical fitness for their positions. Applicants in some job categories will be required to obtain a medical and physical examination after they receive a job offer. This ensures that employees meet the medical and physical requirements of the job. The offer of employment is contingent upon satisfactory completion of the certification.

An employee’s medical information will be kept separate from other employee information and will be treated confidentially. Access to this information will be limited to those who have a legitimate need to know.

508 SELECTIVE SERVICE COMPLIANCE

The Military Selective Service Act requires male applicants between the ages of 18 and 26 to present proof of having registered with the Selective Service System or to present proof of being exempt from registration. If an applicant or employee fails to provide proof of registration or exemption within specified deadlines, the offer of employment will be withdrawn from the applicant or the employee will be separated from employment.

509 SEXUAL AND OTHER UNLAWFUL HARASSMENT

DCH is committed to providing a workplace that is free from all forms of unlawful discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment. The Department will take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace and, if such harassment occurs, to investigate complaints and take prompt remedial action. These provisions apply to all employees of the Department, including full-time and part-time employees.

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination that violates [Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#). Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitutes as sexual harassment when this conduct explicitly or implicitly affects an individual's employment, unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

Sexual harassment can take many forms, including physical conduct, verbal abuse, etc. It can involve males harassing females or other males, and females harassing males or other females. It can also involve unlawful conduct by non-employees in the workplace. (Sexual harassment does not apply to consensual relationships between employees.)

Offensive conduct that does not meet the legal definition of sexual harassment may nonetheless constitute misconduct and, therefore, subjects an employee to disciplinary action under the Department's *Standards of Conduct* policies.

Employees who experience or witness sexual or other unlawful harassment in the workplace have several avenues for reporting their concerns. The employee may contact OHR for immediate assistance.

Any supervisor who receives a complaint of sexual harassment, whether oral or written, or who becomes aware of a complaint of sexual harassment **must** report the complaint to OHR or the Office of Inspector General for further guidance. Failure to report the complaint may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from employment.

All allegations of sexual harassment will be promptly investigated. A finding that sexual harassment or other misconduct has occurred will result in appropriate action being taken, up to and including dismissal from employment.

When the investigation is completed, the employee who made the initial report will be informed of the outcome of the investigation.

Employees may express concerns regarding sexual harassment and cooperate in internal investigations of sexual harassment without fear of retaliation or reprisal.

Please refer to policies #413 *Unlawful Discrimination and Harassment* and #437 *Sexual Harassment* for additional information.

510 SECURITY

DCH is committed to providing a safe working environment for all of its employees. Therefore, all employees are requested to do everything reasonable and necessary to keep the DCH a safe place to work. Safeguarding personal property, such as cash, handbags, or briefcases, is the responsibility of each employee. Before leaving the workplace in the evening, employees should lock all files and cabinets and clear all confidential work materials from desk surfaces.

All firearms or weapons of any type, concealed or unconcealed, are prohibited on State premises, including State vehicles, unless specifically permitted by law or policy.

Access to Premises

To provide for the safety and security of employees and facilities, only authorized visitors are allowed in the workplace. 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 unauthorized individual is observed on the premises, you should immediately notify your supervisor. If necessary, direct the individual to OHR or notify security.

511 SOLICITATION

To avoid work disruptions and possible discord between employees, DCH prohibits employees from soliciting other employees or distributing literature in connection with causes that are not directly related to work or that are related to commercial pursuits, groups or interests. Additionally, persons not employed by DCH may not solicit or distribute literature in the workplace without authorization.

Employees may, of course, use their meal and break periods for personal purposes, but must not engage in solicitation, literature distribution or other activities that disrupt or interfere with ongoing DCH operations or other employees' work time or enjoyment of their break or meal periods.

Bulletin Boards

To maintain an effective avenue for communicating with our employees, DCH maintains bulletin boards. Bulletin boards are located in areas that employees frequently visit in order to ensure that employees have constant access to important information.

DCH's bulletin boards are used to communicate information such as equal employment opportunity, wage and hour laws, family and medical leave, health and safety, and other issues. They are also used to communicate information regarding DCH's policies and business announcements, including for example, job postings, safety rules, health items, benefit programs, and notices of special events, etc.

Standard Communication Delivery

To communicate information quickly and efficiently to all DCH employees, email will be the standard communication delivery method used by the Department. Announcements will also be posted to the Department's home page on the Intranet. Employees are encouraged to check the home page frequently to stay informed of important information.

TERMS and CONDITIONS of EMPLOYMENT

Every employee is responsible for adhering to the following terms as a condition of employment. Failure to adhere to any of these terms could result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Works When Scheduled

You are expected to begin and work when scheduled and to call in according to your established office policy when arriving late for work or when absent. You are also expected to observe the provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act, policies on lunch and break periods and use work time appropriately.

Requests and Uses Leave Appropriately

You are expected to submit leave requests on a timely basis. Your usage of leave should comply with the established leave policies and procedures. You must also provide supporting documentation for leave usage upon request from your supervisor.

Dresses Appropriately

You are expected to dress appropriately and present a neat and clean appearance for your job. You are expected to practice personal hygiene and wear clothing that is suitable for your assigned job.

Observes Health, Safety and Sanitation Policies

You are expected to observe all established policies on health, safety, security and sanitation. You are expected to notify proper authorities of any circumstance or situation that may provide a potential health hazard.

Follow All Other Rules and Policies

You are expected to perform your job responsibilities according to DCH's established rules, regulations, policies, and guidelines. You are expected not to report to work under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. If you are required to possess a license and/or certification, you are expected to keep your license and certification current. You are expected not to engage in prohibited political activity or activities other than official business during working.

If you have any questions regarding your terms and conditions of employment, please contact OHR.

EMPLOYEE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I, _____, hereby acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Georgia Department of Community Health's Employee Handbook and Terms and Conditions of Employment, which provides important information about my employment with the DCH. I understand that the DCH, at its sole discretion, may modify, eliminate, revise or deviate from the guidelines and information in this handbook as circumstances or situations warrant.

I also understand that any changes made by the DCH with respect to its policies, procedures or programs can supersede, modify or eliminate any of the information outlined in this handbook. I accept responsibility for familiarizing myself with the information in this handbook and will seek verification or clarification of its terms or guidance where necessary.

Furthermore, I acknowledge that this handbook is neither a contract of employment nor a legal document and nothing in the handbook creates an express or implied contract of employment. I understand that I should consult my supervisor or the Human Resources Office if I have any questions that are not answered in this handbook.

Employee Signature

Employee Name (printed)

Employee Identification Number

Date