

Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations September 2024

- Resolution #2018-003 Sick and Safe Leave
- Resolution #2018-007 Temporary Assignment and Appointments
- Resolution#2018-022 Hardship Leave Bank
- Resolution #2019-001 Recruitment
- Resolution #2019-003 Employee Grievance Panel
- Resolution # 2019-012 Americans with Disability Act Analysis
- Resolution # 2019-13 Position Vacancy Announcement
- Resolution # 2020-004 Early Return to Work Program
- Resolution # 2020-006 Continuity of Operations
- Resolution # 2020-022 Continuity of Operations Update Inclement Weather
- Resolution #2022-014 Employee Grievance Procedures
- Resolution #2023-002 Employee Advisory Board
- Resolution #2023-009 Leave Chapter
- Resolution #2023-010 Retiree Health and Other Benefits
- Resolution #2024-026 Tuition Assistance Programs
- Resolution #2024-027 Harassment Policy



Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

CHAPTER 3                    RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

SECTION

3-101	Vacancies .....	16
3-102	Position Vacancy Announcements .....	16
3-103	Employment Applications .....	17
3-104	Preliminary Rejection of Applicants .....	17
3-105	Review of Applicants for At-Will Service .....	18
3-106	Review of Applicants for Classified Service .....	19
3-107	Criminal Background Investigation of Applicants .....	20
3-108	Notification to Applicants .....	20
3-109	Selection of Alternative Applicants .....	21
3-110	Creation of Personnel File .....	21
3-111	County Assistance to State Agencies, Units of State Government and State Employees .....	21

CHAPTER 4                    WORK RULES

SECTION

4-101	Respectful, Professional and Non-Discriminatory Workplace .....	23
4-102	Harassment Policy .....	23
4-103	Substance Abuse .....	31
4-104	General Policies Governing Employee Conduct .....	34
4-105	Technology, Cellular Phone, E-Mail, Internet, and Telephone Policy .....	37
4-106	Employee Use of Social Networking Software & Systems .....	40
4-107	Confidentiality .....	42
4-108	Code of Ethics.....	42
4-109	Smoking on County Property.....	42
4-110	Criminal Background Investigation of Employees.....	43
4-111	Relatives Policy .....	44
4-112	Pregnancy Policy .....	44
4-113	Whistleblower Policy.....	46

CHAPTER 5                    DISCIPLINE OF EMPLOYEES

SECTION

5-101	Policy .....	48
5-102	Causes for Disciplinary Action .....	48
5-103	Types of Disciplinary Measures .....	49
5-104	Who May Discipline Employees .....	52
5-105	Suspension, In-grade Reduction, Demotion and Dismissal Procedures .....	53

Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

5-106 Discipline Records .....55

CHAPTER 6                    EMPLOYEE GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

SECTION

6-101 Introduction .....57  
6-102 Employees Covered .....57  
6-103 Reasons for Filing a Grievance .....57  
6-104 Matters That May Not Be Grieved .....58  
6-105 Grievance Form and Documentation .....59  
6-106 Filing a Grievance .....59  
6-107 Disciplinary Grievances.....60  
6-108 Non-Disciplinary Grievances.....60  
6-109 Grievance Review Panel Procedure.....61  
6-110 Grievant 's Right to Representation.....64

CHAPTER 7                    PROBATION

SECTION

7-101 Probation .....65  
7-102 Probationary Periods .....66  
7-103 Evaluations During Probation .....67

CHAPTER 8                    LEAVE

SECTION

8-100 Introduction.....68  
8-101 Leave Records .....68  
8-102 At-Will Employees .....68  
8-103 Temporary and Contractual Employees .....68  
8-104 Annual (Vacation) Leave .....69  
8-105 Sick and Safe Leave .....70  
8-106 Personal Leave .....76  
8-107 Paid Holidays .....77  
8-108 Family and Medical Leave .....78  
8-109 Military Leave .....85  
8-110 Jury Duty Leave .....86  
8-111 Educational Leave .....86  
8-112 Voluntary Leave Without Pay .....86  
8-113 Furlough .....87  
8-114 Bereavement Leave .....88  
8-115 Unpaid Leave.....88

Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

8-116 Tracking Leave for Units of State Government Funded by the  
County .....88

CHAPTER 9 RETIREMENT, HEALTH, AND OTHER BENEFITS

SECTION

9-101 Retirement .....90  
9-102 Workers' Compensation .....91  
9-103 Health Coverage .....92  
9-104 Disability Insurance .....93  
9-105 Health Care Benefits for Retired Employees .....94  
9-106 Life Insurance .....96  
9-107 Educational Benefits .....97  
9-108 Direct Deposit .....97  
9-109 Early Return to Work Program .....97

CHAPTER 10 EMPLOYEE CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND  
EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS

SECTION

10-101 Employee Career Development Programs .....100  
10-102 Administration of Employee Career Development Programs .....100  
10-103 Employee Orientation .....100  
10-104 Employee Training Opportunities .....100  
10-105 Tuition Reimbursement .....101  
10-106 Educational Leave .....103  
10-107 Suspension of Programs.....104

CHAPTER 11 EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

SECTION

11-101 Performance Evaluation System .....105  
11-102 Personnel Administrator and Performance Evaluations .....105  
11-103 Probationary Period and Performance Evaluation .....106  
11-104 Annual Performance Evaluation .....106  
11-105 Unsatisfactory Evaluations .....107  
11-106 Performance Evaluation Overall Rating Appeal Procedure .....108  
11-107 Other Performance Evaluations .....109

Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

<u>CHAPTER 12</u>	<u>SEPARATIONS</u>	
SECTION		
12-101	Policy .....	110
12-102	Voluntary Separations .....	110
12-103	Involuntary Separations .....	110
12-104	Reduction-in-Force .....	111
<u>CHAPTER 13</u>	<u>COMPENSATION</u>	
SECTION		
13-101	Compensation Plan .....	113
13-102	FLSA Classification of Positions .....	113
13-103	Adoption of the Compensation Plan .....	114
13-104	Administration of the Compensation Plan .....	114
13-105	Amending the Compensation Plan .....	114
13-106	Entrance into Service .....	114
13-107	In-grade Pay Increases .....	114
13-108	Re-classification .....	114
13-109	Temporary Employees .....	115
13-110	Contractual Employees .....	115
13-111	Adjustments to the Pay Rate .....	115
13-112	Compensation During Temporary Assignments .....	115
13-113	Overtime Compensation .....	116
13-114	Cost of Living Increases .....	119
13-115	Travel Compensation .....	119
13-116	Compensation of On-Call Time for Non-Exempt Employees .....	120
13-117	Call Back .....	121
<u>CHAPTER 14</u>	<u>CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS</u>	
SECTION		
14-101	Continuity of Operations Plans.....	124
14-102	Levels of Operation.....	126
14-103	Employee Notification System .....	130
APPENDIX	.....	132

Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

**Chapter 1**  
**The Caroline County Personnel System**

**Article 1. Creation**

Section 1-101. Creation of These Rules and Regulations.

In furtherance of the provisions of Chapter 49 of the Code of Public Local Laws of Caroline County, Maryland, these Personnel Rules and Regulations, which constitute the Caroline County Personnel System, are hereby established.

**Article 2. The Nature of the Personnel System**

Section 1-201. No Property Interest or Contractual Rights Created by the System.

These Personnel Rules and Regulations do not create any property interest in County employment or continued County employment. They do not create any contractual rights and are not intended to be contractual in nature. They establish procedures and guidelines pursuant to which the County and its Employees can be expected to interact, subject to amendment or modification at the sole option and discretion of the County Commissioners. Nothing in these Personnel Rules and Regulations shall prohibit the County Commissioners and/or the Office of Human Resources from instituting processes, forms, procedures, and/or administrative directives to implement or carry out these Personnel Rules and Regulations. Nothing in these Personnel Rules and Regulations shall be interpreted to limit in any way the power and authority of the County Commissioners by motion or resolution, to adjust rates of pay, work schedules, days and hours of employment, methods of scheduling work hours, methods of determining overtime eligibility, or otherwise manage, change, or alter any term or condition of employment, all of which power and authority rests in and may be exercised by the County Commissioners, in their discretion, to meet the County's obligation to operate under law within a balanced budget.

Section 1-202. No Right to Continued Employment.

- A. These Rules and Regulations do not create a continued right to employment.
- B. Employees may be dismissed without cause and at the discretion of the County Commissioners and the County Administrator whenever there are insufficient funds to cover all of the County positions currently filled. When positions are being eliminated for fiscal reasons, no special consideration need be given to Employees on the basis of tenure or years of service with the County.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Pursuant to the Age Discrimination and Employment Act, a senior Employee with a good performance record may not be eliminated in favor of a junior Employee merely because the senior Employee is paid more. See Section 12-104, *infra*.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- C. The County Administrator may recommend a restructuring or reorganization of departments, agencies, and working units, and may recommend the reallocation or elimination of position functions, and the County Commissioners may restructure or reorganize departments, agencies and working units, reallocate or eliminate position functions, and may eliminate positions that are no longer deemed necessary to delivering any service or work product of the County at any time and at their sole discretion and pleasure. (*See* Section 12-104).

### Section 1-203. Freedom to Amend Rules and Regulations at Any Time.

Employer reserves the right to amend, supplement, rescind or otherwise revise any and every provision of these Rules and Regulations, in whole or in part, at any time.

## **Article 3. Construction of Provisions**

### Section 1-301. Definitions.

- A. “Anniversary date” means the month and the day an Employee was hired.
- B. “At-Will Employee” shall mean and include those At-Will Employees who serve at the pleasure of the County Commissioners. (*See* Section 2-102). At-Will Employees also are exempt from the overtime pay provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act (“FLSA”). (*See* 29 U.S.C § 213 and 29 C.F.R Part 541).
- C. “Class” shall mean and refer to the Employee or Employees who are described by and work within a Class Specification.
- D. “Classified Employee” is a Full-Time Employee or a Part-Time Employee who has successfully completed any applicable probation period (*see* Chapter 7) and may only be fired for cause. (*See* Section 2-104). If a Classified Employee also is exempt from the overtime pay provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Class Specification for such Employee’s position shall so state.
- E. “Class Specification” shall mean and refer to the document that describes the minimum qualifications and the duties and responsibilities of each position in the County’s Compensation Plan. The Class Specification shall state whether the position is At-Will, in the Classified Service, or has some other designation and, if a person filling the position is an FLSA-Exempt Employee (*i.e.*, is exempt from the overtime pay provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act) or is a Non-FLSA Exempt Employee (*i.e.*, is entitled to overtime pay for overtime hours worked) (*see* Section 13-102).
- F. “Classified Service” consists of all of the positions filled by Classified Employees. (*See* Section 2-104).

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- G. “Compensation Plan” means the plan prepared pursuant to Chapter 13 of these Personnel Rules and Regulations that determines the grade/level and steps (*i.e.*, the range of pay) for each Class Specification within the Personnel System.
- H. “Contractual Employee” means an Employee hired under a written contract that establishes the terms of employment and is signed by the Employee and the Personnel Administrator with the consent of the County Commissioners. (*See* Section 2-105).
- I. “County Commissioners” means the County Commissioners of Caroline County, Maryland, a body corporate and politic and a political subdivision of the State of Maryland. In these Personnel Rules and Regulations, “County Commissioners,” “County,” and “Employer” may be used interchangeably.
- J. “County” means the “County Commissioners” or the “Employer.”
- K. “Department Head” means the person who is responsible for the overall management and administration of a County department or agency and who reports to no one other than the County Administrator or the County Commissioners.
- L. “Employee” means a person hired to serve the Employer in an employment relationship. Such term excludes persons appointed to serve on a County board, commission, task force or special committee, in such capacity, independent contractors, and similar arrangements. Employees in the Sheriff’s Office, the Office of the State’s Attorney, the Circuit Court, or any other agency or unit of State government are not Employees of Employer and are not included within the meaning of the term “Employee” as defined in this subsection.
- M. “Employer” means the “County Commissioners” or the “County.”
- N. “Equipment” shall mean and refer to any personal property that is owned, purchased, leased or borrowed by the County and used for County business including, but not limited to, any analog, digital or electronic communication systems, cellular phones, computer equipment, electronic mail (e-mail), the internet, the telephone system, intellectual property, and electronic and digitized information and systems.
- O. “Essential Employee” means an Employee who fills a position that is fundamental to the public service mission in the following departments: Emergency Management, Public Works, Emergency Medical Services, and Corrections. (*See* Section 4-104.B).
- P. “Exempt Employee” shall mean an Employee who is paid a salary and who, pursuant to the Fair Labor Standards Act (“FLSA”) including the exemptions for executive, administrative, professional, computer/technological employees, and other exempt classes of employees has been determined to be exempt from the overtime pay requirements of the FLSA and, therefore, is not entitled to overtime pay or compensatory time off.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- Q. “Full-Time Employee” means an Employee who is regularly scheduled to work at least 40 hours each week, or other such other schedule permitted to be treated as a comparable, normal full-time work period under the FLSA.
- R. “Furlough” means when an Employee is placed on leave without pay for budgetary reasons pursuant to Section 8-113 of these Personnel Rules and Regulations.
- S. “Liberal Leave Policy” means a policy allowing Employees who are not designated as Essential Employees to be absent for a portion of a workday or the entire workday and charged paid leave (i.e., annual, compensatory or personal) or leave without pay, as appropriate, for the period of the absence. Employees must notify their supervisors if they intend to take liberal leave. (See Section 4-104).
- T. “Non-Exempt Employee” means an Employee who, pursuant to the FLSA, is entitled to overtime pay for overtime hours worked and who is eligible to earn compensatory time off.
- U. “Part-Time Employee” means an Employee who is regularly scheduled to work less than 40 hours each week.
- V. “Permanent Employee” means a Full-Time or a Part-Time, Classified or At-Will, Employee who is not a Probationary Employee. Contractual and Temporary Employees are not Permanent Employees.
- W. “Personnel Administrator” means that Employee appointed by the County Commissioners to be responsible for managing the day to day responsibilities and functions set forth in sub-section 18-6.C(3) of the Code of Public Local Laws of Caroline County, as assigned by the County Administrator, together with the overall responsibility for the County Personnel System and the attendant functions and responsibilities thereof as set forth in the County’s Personnel Rules and Regulations and as may be prescribed elsewhere in the Code, as assigned by the County Administrator, and shall perform such other duties as may be assigned by the County Administrator and the County Commissioners.. The Director of Human Resources, unless otherwise determined by the County Commissioners, serves as the Personnel Administrator. These titles can be used interchangeably throughout the Personnel Rules and Regulations.
- X. “Personnel and Benefits Coordinator” means that Employee designated and tasked by the Personnel Administrator to assist him/her in the daily management of human resources functions. The Assistant Director of Human Resources, unless otherwise determined by the Director of Human Resources, serves as the Personnel and Benefits Coordinator. These titles can be used interchangeably throughout the Personnel Rules and Regulations.
- Y. “Personnel System” means the Caroline County Personnel System. (See § 1-101.)

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- Z. “Probationary Employee” means an Employee who is serving a probationary period as provided in Chapter 7 of these Personnel Rules and Regulations.
- AA. “Safety Sensitive Employee” means an Employee that occupies a position that frequently requires such Employee to operate a vehicle or operate equipment that may pose a danger to Employee or others working with Employee. A more complete definition is contained in Section 4-103G.5. The Personnel Administrator shall maintain a list of the Safety Sensitive positions that have been developed by the Personnel Administrator and the Department Heads.
- BB. “Service” means the act of being employed by the Employer as an Employee and fulfilling the duties and obligations inherent in and attendant to the Class Specification for the position being filled by Employee.
- CC. “Temporary Employee” means an Employee who is hired as an at-will Employee under the condition that employment with the Employer shall not be permanent while in this status. Temporary Employees include seasonal workers and persons hired for a special or limited function, a summer Employee or someone hired for a special function of limited duration. (*See* Section 2-106).
- DD. “Prohibited Offense” means, as to an applicant for employment or the application to volunteer for any County managed or related activity, (1) conviction of a Crime of Violence, (2) conviction of a Sexual Offense, (3) determination of Sex Offender status, or (4) registration, or a requirement to register, on the Sex Offender Registry or the Child Abuse or Neglect Central Registry. Findings of abuse shall be deemed a per se Prohibited Offense. Findings of neglect may, upon review by the Director of Human Resources and the County Administrator, be waived.
- EE. “Crime of Violence” means a crime any crime described in § 14-101 of the Criminal Law Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland. All references to provisions of current law include subsequent amendments, relocation or renumbering in the Annotated Code, and successor provisions.
- FF. “Sexual Offense” means any offense or conduct described in §§ 3-303 through 3-315 of the Criminal Law Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland.
- GG. “Sex Offender” means a person described in § 11-701 of the Criminal Procedure Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland.
- HH. “Sex Offender Registry” means the registry described in Subtitle 7 of Title 11 of the Criminal Procedure Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland.
- II. “Child Abuse or Neglect Central Registry” means the registry described in § 5-714 of the Family Law Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- JJ. “Criminal Background Check” means a thorough check and review of the criminal background or history of an applicant of volunteer, including the NCIC, CJIS, and other related federal and state systems, as well as a check against the Sex Offender Registry and the Child Abuse or Neglect Central Registry. Use of the central registry shall be restricted to screening for employment or volunteer activities in which the individual will come into contract with children (child caring institutions, schools, recreation and parks, emergency medical services, police protection, corrections) and other positions for which it is likely the individual will come into contact with children.
- KK. “Abbreviated Criminal Background Check” means a criminal background report obtained through an acceptable third-party reporting system as determined by the Director of the Office of Human Resources and the County Attorney, together with a check against the Sex Offender Registry and the Child Abuse and Neglect Central Registry. Use of the central registry shall be restricted to screening for employment or volunteer activities in which the individual will come into contract with children (child caring institutions, schools, recreation and parks, emergency medical services, police protection, corrections) and other positions for which it is likely the individual will come into contact with children.
- LL. “Covered Volunteer” means, for the purposes of Section 3-107, any person retained, accepted, or designated, by the County, to participate as a volunteer in any County operated or managed (in whole or in part) program on a regular or recurring basis, or for a singular purpose or program where the person is expected to have regular, recurring contact with children. Volunteers provided by other organizations are not covered by these provisions (but are expected to take all precautions required by applicable law).
- MM. “Exempt Volunteer” means any person requested or volunteering to perform a volunteer service on a contemporaneous, situational basis (1) (a) where such volunteer activity will not place the person in unsupervised or more than minimal contact with children, or (b) where time or other circumstances do not permit an Abbreviated Criminal Background Check, and (2) where the person is not otherwise known to have committed a Prohibited Offense. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the term “Exempt Volunteer” includes (1) individuals otherwise not permitted to volunteer or be employed hereunder, when volunteering or otherwise providing services for bona fide law enforcement or correctional purposes, including, but not limited to, inmate therapy and education programs, where persons who have Prohibited Offense are a necessary or appropriate part of such programs and (2) persons appointed to County boards or commissioners by the official action of the County Commissioners.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

### Section 1-302. Severability.

If any provision, section, or chapter of these Personnel Rules and Regulations is held by a court of law to be invalid, all other provisions, sections, and chapters that are not held invalid shall continue in full force and effect.

### Section 1-303. Time.

- A. Presumption that reference to days means calendar days. Unless otherwise specified in these Personnel Rules and Regulations, where an action is required within a certain number of days, the reference to days means calendar days.
- B. Counting. In computing any period of time prescribed by these rules, the day of the act or event after which the designated period of time begins to run is not included.
- C. Saturdays, Sundays and County holidays. If the due date for an act or event falls on a Saturday, Sunday or County holiday, then the due date shall be extended to the next day that is not a Saturday, Sunday or County holiday.

## **Article 4. Personnel Administration**

### Section 1-401. Personnel Administrator.

- A. The “Personnel Administrator” shall administer the Personnel System. The duties of the Personnel Administrator shall include, but not be limited to:
  - 1. Developing and maintaining Class Specifications;
  - 2. Developing and administering the Compensation Plan;
  - 3. Developing and maintaining the program by which persons are recruited and selected for employment;
  - 4. Establishing and maintaining personnel records that shall include: a roster of all Employees; Employee Class Specifications, Employee compensation, and Employee status (*e.g.*, performance evaluations, counseling and discipline and performance improvement plans); and other information that may be useful in managing personnel and Employer’s finances;
  - 5. Establishing and maintaining a performance evaluation system; and
  - 6. Establishing and maintaining a personnel file on each Employee.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- B. The Personnel Administrator may appoint a Permanent Employee to serve as the Personnel and Benefits Coordinator, who will share in the Personnel Administrator's human resources responsibilities. The Personnel Administrator may appoint other Employees for purposes of assisting the Personnel Administrator with the performance of his/her responsibilities.

### Section 1-402. Department Heads.

- A. Each Department Head shall have primary responsibility for:
  - 1. Managing and recommending the hiring and the separation of Employees who work in the respective department or agency of each Department Head.
  - 2. Implementing the performance evaluation system and the progressive discipline guidelines established by the Personnel Administrator and these Personnel Rules and Regulations.
- B. Each Department Head may share his/her personnel responsibilities set forth in Subsection 1-402A with those supervisors that work for such Department Head.

### Section 1-403. Employee Advisory Board.

- A. Purpose. The purpose of the Employee Advisory Board (the "EAB") is to provide employees with a group to represent employee interests, generate ideas, and foster communication between administrative staff and County Commissioners and the workforce.
- B. Duties and Responsibilities.
  - 1. The EAB shall provide advice, counsel, and suggestions to the County Administrator, the Director of Human Resources, and the County Commissioners regarding personnel issues, concerns, policies, and initiatives. The County Administrator and Director of Human Resources are committed to a productive working relationship with the EAB and shall provide feedback to formal recommendations and requests for information in a timely manner.
  - 2. The EAB can receive and voice employee human resources issues that may be anonymous but cannot include confidential personnel matters including, but not limited to, specific disciplinary and performance cases.
  - 3. When appropriate, the EAB may consult with, and seek input from, the employees of partner agencies operating under the County Personnel Rules and Regulations under a Memorandum of Understanding with the County Commissioners.
  - 4. The EAB, as a Board and the Board's members individually, shall communicate regularly with the workforce as a whole and the departments they represent

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

regarding the activities, goals, and projects of the EAB and actively seek feedback from the workforce to inform the members of the EAB in the execution of these duties.

### C. Organization.

1. Membership. The Employee Advisory Board will be composed of seven (7) members, as described below:
  - a. Voting members. Voting members shall be selected from each department as stated below:
    - i) Department of Corrections
    - ii) Department of Emergency Services
    - iii) Department of Planning and Codes
    - iv) Department of Public Works
    - v) Department of Recreation and Parks
    - vi) Administrative Departments of the County (Administration Office, County Commissioners Office, Office of Finance, Office of Information Technology, Office of Human Resources, and Economic Development)
  - b. One (1) member shall be an employee from the Department of Human Resources, as determined by the Director of Human Resources. This member shall be a non-voting member.
2. Membership requirements. Only employees who meet the following requirements shall be eligible to serve as a voting member on the Employee Advisory Board:
  - a. Members shall be full time Classified Employees.
  - b. The primary or chief administrative employee of a department may not serve on the Employee Advisory Board, regardless of employment status.
  - c. Members must be employees in good standing and may not be on probation for disciplinary or performance related reasons.
3. Selection. Voting members shall be selected in the following manner:
  - a. Specific voting procedures shall be developed by the EAB in order to facilitate a fair election process and maximize employee participation in the election.
  - b. Elections shall be held by confidential ballot, which shall be tallied by the Office of Human Resources.
  - c. Prior to an employee being placed on a ballot, the Office of Human Resources shall verify that the employee is eligible to serve on the EAB.
4. Terms of Office. EAB members shall serve three (3) year terms on a staggered schedule. Representatives from the Administrative Departments and the Departments of Public Works and Recreation and Parks shall be elected in

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

November for terms which shall commence January 1. Representatives from the Departments of Corrections, Emergency Services, and Planning and Codes shall be elected in May for terms which shall commence July 1.

5. Vacancies and resignation. Vacancies during the course of a term shall be filled in the same manner as the original selection for the unexpired portion of the term. Resignations shall be accepted upon receipt by the Office of Human Resources of a signed, dated letter or electronic correspondence from the member.
6. Removal. The County Administrator may, after consultation with the Director of Human Resources, remove any member for misconduct, neglect of duty, or failure to maintain eligibility. Any member absent from three (3) or more regularly scheduled meetings within one calendar year may be removed from the Board. The position shall be declared vacant and be filled in the same manner as the original selection for the unexpired portion of the term.
7. Officers. Annually the EAB shall select from their number a member to serve as Chair and a member to serve as Vice Chair. The Chair shall be responsible for presiding at all meetings of the EAB, coordinating the meeting agenda, appointing committees, calling special meetings as needed, and performing all duties generally incident to the office of Chair. The Vice Chair shall serve as Chair in the absence of the Chair. The non-voting member representing the Office of Human Resources shall serve as executive secretary, shall attend all meetings, prepare minutes, and be the official custodian of all records of the Board.

### D. Meetings.

1. The EAB shall meet at least every other month on a regular schedule to be set by the members.
2. The EAB shall meet with the County Commissioners at twice a year to review the activities, goals, and projects of the EAB.
3. The EAB shall meet regularly with employees in order to inform them of the activities, goals, and projects of the EAB and to receive feedback from the workforce.

E. Quorum. A quorum shall not be required for general discussion. A quorum of four voting members must be present in order for a vote to be taken on matters.

F. Sunshine Laws. The EAB is not subject to the Open Meetings Act and attendance at meetings is limited to members and invited guests. Records of the EAB may be subject to the Public Information Act.

**Chapter 2**  
**County Employment**

Section 2-101. Equal Employment Opportunity Employer.

The County is an Equal Opportunity Employer and will not discriminate on the basis of ancestry, national origin, race, color, religion, age, disability, marital status, genetics, sex, sexual or gender preference, gender identity, or any basis prohibited by law.

Section 2-102. The At-Will Service.

A. Members. The At-Will Service consists of those Employees who serve at the pleasure of the County Commissioners. The Employees who fill At-Will Service positions will be known as At-Will Employees and are subject to separation from County employment without cause. The following positions are part of the At-Will Service:

1. County Administrator<sup>2</sup>
2. Chief of Staff
3. Director of Public Works
4. Director of Emergency Services
5. Director of Planning & Codes
6. Director of Recreation and Parks
7. Warden, Department of Corrections
8. Comptroller
9. Director of Finance
10. County Attorney

B. Purpose. The At-Will Service consists of those Employees who help to formulate, and are important to the implementation of, the policies and directives that the County Commissioners and the County Administrator establish. They hold positions that, should they not be dedicated to assisting the County Commissioners directly, or through the

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<sup>2</sup> The County Administrator currently holds the additional position of Purchasing Agent (*i.e.*, Director of Procurement). If such position were to be held by an individual other than the County Administrator, such individual would be At-Will Employees of the County.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

County Administrator, in the development and implementations of policies and directives, could frustrate or undermine the implementation of such policies and directives established for the County. It is imperative that the County Commissioners and the County Administrator implicitly trust and retain the utmost confidence in the members of the At-Will Service.

### C. At-Will Employees.

1. An At-Will Employee may be terminated without cause.
2. An At-Will Employee may be terminated for publicly criticizing the County Commissioners or other At-Will Employees because such actions serve to undermine and frustrate the cohesive functioning of the County Commissioners and the core management team, or the obtaining of the objectives thereof.
3. An At-Will Employee may not be terminated for:
  - a. Failure or refusal to support, financially or otherwise, any member of the County Commissioners or any candidate for such office.
  - b. Failure or refusal to attend or work on fundraisers or other campaign activities of any County Commissioner.
  - c. Any private opinions or thoughts relative to the County Commissioners, the policies and practices of the County, or other At-Will Employees that are expressed in a non-public forum to the County Commissioners, other At-Will Employees, or other federal or state officials responsible for enforcing laws or regulations applicable to the County; except that an At-Will Employee may be terminated if any such stated opinions or thoughts have the effect of undermining or frustrating the cohesive functioning of the County Commissioners and/or the core management team, or obtaining the objectives thereof.

### Section 2-103. At-Will Employee Contracts.

- A. Subject to the approval of the County Commissioners, the County Administrator and/or the Personnel Administrator may:
  1. Develop employment contracts for At-Will Employees and require At-Will Employees for whom an employment contract has been developed to execute said employment contract.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

2. Provide six (6) months of severance pay and benefits to an At-Will Employee that is separated from County Employment without cause. No severance pay or benefits shall be provided as a matter of right or entitlement to any At-Will Employee who is terminated for cause in accordance with the executed employee contract.
3. In order to obtain or retain a superior candidate for an at-will position the County Commissioners, in public session, may agree to alter vacation benefits to be granted to such at-will employee.

### Section 2-104. The Classified Service.

- A. Each Employee who is not an At-Will Employee, a Contract Employee or a Temporary Employee shall, unless otherwise provided, be a Classified Employee and the positions filled by Classified Employees shall constitute the Classified Service.
- B. A Classified Employee may only be dismissed from employment for cause.
  1. A Full-Time Classified Employee shall accrue leave and enjoy the benefits set forth in Chapters 8 and 9.
  2. A Part-Time Classified Employee shall accrue leave and accumulate benefits on the same basis as a Full-Time Classified Employee, except such leave and benefits shall accrue on a pro-rata basis, based on the average number of hours worked per week divided by 40 hours per week.
  3. Notwithstanding the foregoing, Classified Employees may be discharged or furloughed without cause as provided in Chapter 12 hereof.

### Section 2-105. Contractual Employees.

- A. A Contractual Employee is a non-Permanent Employee who is not in the Compensation Plan and is hired pursuant to a written contract that specifies the terms of employment and the right to leave or benefits, if any. Often a Contractual Employee is hired pursuant to a grant to perform a specific task or project in accordance with the terms of such grant.
- B. A Contractual Employee shall not accrue leave or benefits pursuant to Chapters 8 and 9 of these Personnel Rules and Regulations, unless required under the terms of the grant providing the support for the position. A Contractual Employee shall only be entitled to leave or benefits as specified in a written contract.
- C. A Contractual Employee is an at-will employee and may be dismissed at the pleasure of the County Administrator, unless contract terms specifically provide otherwise.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

1. The Department Head for whom any Contractual Employee is working shall be responsible for monitoring the performance of, and disciplining, such Contractual Employee.
  2. A Contractual Employee shall be subject to the Work Rules of Chapter 4 of these Personnel Rules and Regulations.
  3. Any supervisor with knowledge that a Contractual Employee has violated or breached any of the Work Rules of Chapter 4 of these Personnel Rules and Regulations, or otherwise is failing to perform the duties and responsibilities assigned to such Contractual Employee, shall promptly notify the Department Head, the County Administrator and/or the Director of Human Resources of such deficiency, so that the appropriate disciplinary action may be initiated.
- D. A Contractual Employee is not entitled to any of the Grievance Procedures set forth in Chapters 6 and 11 of these Personnel Rules and Regulations.

### Section 2-106. Temporary Employees.

- A. A Temporary Employee is an At-Will Employee who serves at the pleasure of the County Administrator in a position that is not in the Compensation Plan for a service that is not needed on a regular, continuous basis. Often, a Temporary Employee provides services pursuant to a recreational program or some unusual or short term need.
- B. A Temporary Employee is entitled only to worker's compensation benefits. A Temporary Employee shall not accrue any leave or benefits pursuant to Chapters 8 and 9 of these Personnel Rules and Regulations.
- C. A Temporary Employee may, but need not be, hired pursuant to a written contract. The only person authorized to execute a written contract with a Temporary Employee that is binding on the County is the Personnel Administrator, or in the absence of the Personnel Administrator and with the approval of the Personnel Administrator, the Personnel and Benefits Coordinator.
  1. The Department Head for whom a Temporary Employee is working is responsible for monitoring the performance of and disciplining such Temporary Employee.
  2. A Temporary Employee is subject to the Work Rules of Chapter 4 of these Personnel Rules and Regulations.
  3. Any supervisor with knowledge that a Temporary Employee has violated or breached any of the Work Rules of Chapter 4 of these Personnel Rules and Regulations, or otherwise is failing to perform the duties and responsibilities

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

assigned to such Temporary Employee shall promptly notify the Department Head, the County Administrator and/or the Director of Human Resources of such deficiency, so that the appropriate disciplinary action may be initiated.

- D. A Temporary Employee is not entitled to any of the Grievance Procedures set for in Chapters 6 and 11 of these Personnel Rules and Regulations.

**Chapter 3**  
**Recruitment and Selection**

Section 3-101. Vacancies.

- A. When a vacancy occurs in any job or position authorized by the annual budget, the Department Head in whose department or agency the vacancy occurs shall notify the Personnel Administrator, in writing, through the completion of the Request to Advertise form, of the vacancy. In conjunction with completion of the Request to Advertise form, the Department Head shall review and, if necessary, request any appropriate revisions to such position's Class Specification. The Department Head shall provide any other information deemed pertinent or appropriate for consideration in filling the vacancy.
- B. The Personnel Administrator shall determine whether the vacancy may be filled.

Section 3-102. Position Vacancy Announcements.

- A. Each vacancy the Personnel Administrator allows to be filled shall be announced and advertised at least once no less than 15 calendar days prior to the closing date for submittal of an application to the Director of Human Resources.
  - 1. Internal Posting. The Director of Human Resources shall provide each Department Head with a notice of vacancy that shall be promptly posted on all employee bulletin boards within each department. Additionally, the Director of Human Resources may provide email notice to Employees and post vacancies on the County's website. Employees are responsible for regularly reviewing the employee bulletin board and web site and timely responding to position vacancies.
  - 2. External Announcement. Position vacancies shall be advertised on at least one external recruitment website and in any other manner deemed appropriate by the Personnel Administrator.
- B. Contents of Announcement. A position vacancy announcement shall contain:
  - 1. The title of the position.
  - 2. The type of the position (*e.g.*, At-Will, Full-Time, Contractual, etc).
  - 3. A summary of the Class Specification and whether the position is Exempt or Non-Exempt.
  - 4. The deadline for submitting an application.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

5. Contact information that explains how an application may be requested and/or obtained.
  6. A statement that Caroline County is an Equal Opportunity Employer.
- C. All applications must be received by the Director of Human Resources by the close of business on the closing date specified in the Vacancy Announcement.
- D. Subject to the process set forth in Section 3-106, qualified internal applicants may be given preference over similarly qualified external applicants.
- E. Where the Personnel Administrator deems expeditious hiring to be in the best interests of the county, external advertisements may occur simultaneously with internal posting.
- F. Non-classified service vacancies are exempt from the provisions of this section above. Non-Classified vacancies may be filled by ongoing, rolling recruitment and/or other nontraditional methods to identify potential candidates for non-classified employment.

### Section 3-103. Employment Applications.

- A. Employer shall create and maintain employment application forms that must be completed by every job applicant seeking to fill a vacancy. The Director of Human Resources shall make employment applications available to the public during regular business hours.
- B. The Director of Human Resources shall establish reasonable deadlines not less than 15 calendar days after publication of notice to the public and transmission of notice for internal posting for the receipt of employment applications for every employment opportunity.
- C. The Director of Human Resources shall maintain all applications and documents relative to the investigation, review, consideration and selection of an applicant for a period of not less than three (3) years (*see also* Section 3-109) following the hiring for a vacancy.

### Section 3-104. Preliminary Rejection of Applicants.

- A. Employer, including the Director of Human Resources, may preliminarily reject any applicant for the following reasons:
1. Failure to complete all material portions of the application.
  2. Failure to meet the minimum qualifications set forth in the Class Specification for the position being filled.
  3. Falsification or material misrepresentation of information in the application.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

4. Conviction of a crime that renders the applicant unfit to hold the position of public trust being filled.
5. Any matter or reason which, in the reasonable discretion of the Director of Human Resources, would create an impediment to the applicant's satisfactory fulfillment of the position's requirements or place the applicant and or other members of the workforce in jeopardy. This provision is not intended to and shall not be interpreted to, affect or interfere with any rights of an applicant or any obligations of the Employer pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act or any other right or obligation mandated by federal or State law.

### Section 3-105. Review of Applicants for At-Will Service.

- A. The applications of all qualified applicants for an At-Will position (*i.e.*, those persons whose applications are not preliminarily rejected pursuant to Section 3-104) shall be forwarded for review by the County Commissioners or the At-Will Employee (*i.e.*, County Administrator and/or Department Head) who will supervise the applicant hired to fill the position.
- B. If applications for more than 10 qualified applicants are received, the person(s) designated in Section 3-105A, in conjunction with the Personnel Administrator, may review the applications and any written materials submitted in conjunction with the application and eliminate all but 10 applicants.
- C. The person(s) designated in Section 3-105A shall interview up to 10 applicants for a vacancy.
  1. Each applicant shall be asked a series of the same basic questions.
  2. The interviewers shall submit a copy of the basic questions asked of all applicants to the Director of Human Resources, who shall maintain a copy of such questions with the application records maintained pursuant to Section 3-103C.
  3. Subject to approval by the County Commissioners, the interviewers shall have broad discretion to recommend the award of the position to the applicant of the interviewer's choice, because such At-Will positions are critical to the development and implementation of County directives and policy. The interviewers must submit a written rating of the top three applicants for the position to the Director of Human Resources that explains the basis for the ratings. The Director of Human Resources shall maintain such ratings with the application records maintained pursuant to Section 3-103C.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

### Section 3-106. Review of Applicants for Classified Service.

- A. A review team shall be formed to select a qualified applicant for any vacancy in the Classified Service filled by advertisement and application. The Department Head shall appoint three members to the review team and shall strive for diversity of membership in light of the position and the persons in the chain of command that will be responsible for the work product of the person filling the vacant position.
- B. All qualified applicants for a Classified Employee position (*i.e.*, those persons whose application is not preliminarily rejected pursuant to Section 3-104) shall be forwarded to the review team.
- C. If there are greater than 10 qualified applicants for a vacant position, the review team may review the applications and any written materials submitted in conjunction with the applications and may, in consultation with the Personnel Administrator, eliminate all but 10 applicants.
- D. The review team shall interview up to 10 applicants for a vacancy.
  1. Each applicant shall be asked a series of the same basic questions.
  2. The members of the review team shall submit a copy of the basic questions asked of all applicants to the Director of Human Resources, who shall maintain a copy of such questions with the application records maintained pursuant to Section 3-103C.
  3. The review team shall rate each applicant interviewed from 1 to 10, with 1 being the best applicant and 10 being the least qualified applicant. Ratings may be weighted based on criteria such as qualifications, past experience and interview results. The Department Head shall establish the rating system when the vacancy is advertised, or the Department Head may delegate that task to the review team. The rating system shall be established prior to distribution of applications and written materials to the members of the review team. The rating team shall score each applicant in all categories being rated (*e.g.*, qualifications, experience and interview) and the score sheets for each applicant shall be submitted to and maintained by the Director of Human Resources pursuant to Section 3-103C.
  4. The rating of each applicant prepared by each member of the rating team shall be averaged to determine the highest rated applicant. The position shall be awarded to the highest rated applicant. The members of the review team shall submit their rating sheets to the Director of Human Resources, who shall maintain a copy of such records pursuant to Section 3-103C.

Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

Section 3-107. Criminal Background Investigation of Applicants.

- A. A Criminal Background Check shall be requested prior to the hiring of any person for employment in the County, including temporary, part-time, or contractual positions. The Criminal Background Check shall be performed only if the Applicant has been preliminarily selected for hiring. The applicant may commence employment prior to the return of the information from the Criminal Background Check, provided that the registry checks have been completed prior to the commencement of employment. If the results of the Criminal Background Check, when completed, indicated that a Prohibited Offense has occurred, the employee's employment shall be immediately terminated.
- B. A Criminal Background Check shall be requested prior to the commencement of volunteer activity as to any person serving or expected to serve as a Covered Volunteer; except that in the judgment of the Director of Human Resources in conjunction with a requesting department head, an Abbreviated Criminal Background Check may be performed. In either case, the volunteer may commence activities prior to the return of the information from the Criminal Background Check, provided that the registry checks have been completed prior to the commencement of activities. If the results of the Criminal Background Check, when completed, indicated that a Prohibited Offense has occurred, the volunteer's services shall be immediately terminated.
- C. No Criminal Background Check or Abbreviated Criminal Background Check is required for an Exempt Volunteer.
- D. No person shall be hired, employed, retained, or permitted to serve as an employee or a Covered Volunteer of or for the County, in any capacity, who is determined to have committed a Prohibited Offense.
- E. In the event a Criminal Background Check or an Abbreviated Criminal Background Check reflects that a person has had a charge the would otherwise constitute a Prohibited Offense result in a nol pros, stet, or probation before verdict or judgment, the Director of Human Resources and the County Administrator, with the advice of the County Attorney, may make a determination that the circumstances warrant acceptance of a person as an employee or a Covered Volunteer.

Section 3-108. Notification to Applicants.

- A. The Director of Human Resources shall notify each unqualified applicant that their application for employment was rejected.
- B. After the selection process is complete, the Personnel Administrator, or the designee of the Personnel Administrator, shall notify each qualified applicant of the results of the selection process.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

### Section 3-109. Selection of Alternative Applicants.

- A. If the highest rated applicant for a position does not accept the offer of employment, the County may offer the position to the next highest rated applicant, and so on.
- B. If a successful applicant resigns or quits during the first year of employment, the County may offer the position to the next highest rated applicant, and so on.
- C. If a successful applicant is eliminated during the probationary period (*see* Chapter 7), the County may offer the position to the next highest rated applicant, and so on.
- D. If a position becomes vacant more than one (1) year after it was last advertised, the position will be re-advertised, not filled from a prior list of applicants.

### Section 3-110. Creation of Personnel File.

- A. The Personnel Administrator shall cause a personnel file to be created for each applicant who is hired as a County Employee.
- B. All personnel records, including the application, any written materials submitted in conjunction with the application, and any written materials relative to the investigation and selection of the applicant, shall be placed in the personnel file.

### Section 3-111. County Assistance to State Agencies, Units of State Government and State Employees.

- A. By law, the County is required to fund all or portions of the budgets, including office supplies and equipment, positions and other agency expenditures, for agencies or units of the State of Maryland, such as the Sheriff's Department, the State's Attorney's Office, the Circuit Court for Caroline County, the Cooperative Extension or the Soil Conservation District, etc. Instead of hiring, or contracting for the services of separate human resources professionals, procurement officers or other administrative support staff for such agencies and units of State government, in the spirit of intergovernmental cooperation and the prudent utilization of limited taxpayer and public resources, the County's human resources, procurement and other administrative Employees and representatives may, from time to time, assist and perform human resources, procurement and related functions for such State agencies, employees and units of State government. In providing such services and assistance, the County is not in any way assuming any liability or responsibility for such State agencies or employees and is not acting as a joint or dual employer of the employees who work for such State agencies and units of State government. Employees that work for such State agencies or units of State government shall remain State officials, agents or

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

employees and shall not be entitled to any rights provided by these Personnel Rules and Regulations for Employees.

- B. Any person who has a question about such person's status as a County Employee versus as an employee of an agency or unit of State government should contact the Director of Human Resources. Regardless of what such person is told by anyone regarding such person's status as an Employee of the County or an employee of the State, the law of the State of Maryland shall be final and dispositive with respect to the employment status of such person.

**Chapter 4**  
**Work Rules**

Section 4-101. Respectful, Professional and Non-Discriminatory Workplace.

- A. The County is committed to maintaining a mutually respectful work environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Each individual has a right to work in a professional atmosphere that promotes equal opportunities and prohibits discriminatory practices.
- B. Any Employee who fails to maintain a mutually respectful work environment and to treat individuals with respect and dignity shall be subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

Section 4-102. Harassment Policy.

- A. Introduction. Caroline County government is a professional workplace where employees are expected to act in a mature, considerate, and respectful manner. Discrimination against or harassment of fellow employees or citizens is against the law, morally wrong, and is contrary to the positive organizational culture the County Commissioners desire to maintain.

The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) website offers the following concise definition of harassment:

“Although the law doesn’t prohibit simple teasing, offhand comments, or isolated incidents that are not very serious, harassment is illegal when it is so severe or pervasive that it creates a hostile or offensive work environment or when it results in an adverse employment decision (such as the victim being fired or demoted).”

A comment or action can be found offensive, but not meet the standard of harassment. In turn, a comment or action can be considered harassment, even if no one present is offended, if the comment is severely offensive. While a place of work, Caroline County government also is an environment where there are thousands of interpersonal interactions every day. As in any complex social setting, there is the possibility of misunderstandings, miscommunication and, unfortunately, inappropriate behavior.

The County Commissioners are committed to maintaining an organization where a diverse range of employees can work together in a climate of mutual respect and trust. The Commissioners also recognize that this is a goal the County cannot achieve solely through the Personnel Rules and Regulations. A positive working environment—free of harassment and discrimination—is a responsibility that rests squarely on the shoulders of all employees. This means more than individual employees following the rules; it means

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

no employee can turn a blind eye to harassing or discriminatory behaviors.

- B. Individuals covered: The policy and rules relating to Harassment shall apply to all County officials (including the County Commissioners), Employees (whether Full-Time, Contractual, Temporary, At-Will, or otherwise).
- C. Training. All new individuals covered must be provided with a copy of this policy as part of their orientation. The policy will be reviewed with each new individual. The individual must certify by signing the prescribed form that the individual has been advised of this policy, is aware of and understands its contents, and agrees to abide by its provisions during the individual's term with the County.

All individuals must receive training on an annual schedule on the requirements of this policy and must certify by signing the prescribed form that they have reviewed the policy, understood its contents, and agree that they will continue to abide by its provisions.

To the extent possible volunteers and consultants will be provided training to ensure that their behavior does not violate this policy.

### D. Definitions:

- 1. Harassment. Unwelcome conduct that is based on sex, race, color, religious beliefs, national origin, disability (mental or physical), age, sexual orientation, gender identification, genetic information, or hairstyle/hair texture or other protected status that unreasonably interferes with another employee's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. Harassment is a form of employment discrimination that may violate several Federal and State anti-discrimination laws, including Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 and the Americans with Disability Act of 1990.

The harasser can be the victim's supervisor, a supervisor in another area, a co-worker, or someone who is not an employee of the employer, such as a client or customer. Harassment outside of the workplace may also be illegal if there is a link with the workplace. For example, it is harassment if a supervisor harasses an employee while driving the employee to a meeting. Mere rudeness or personal dislike will usually not be considered to be harassment under this policy.

- 2. Sexual Harassment. When workplace harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature or based on another person's sex or sexual orientation, it is considered

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

“sexual harassment.” Sexual harassment is illegal under federal and state laws. Sexual harassment includes practices ranging from direct requests for sexual favors to workplace conditions that create a hostile environment for a person of either gender, including same sex harassment.

3. Hostile Work Environment – Unwelcome conduct that unreasonably interferes with an individual’s work or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.
4. Bullying – Unreasonable behavior that demeans, intimidates or humiliates employees either as individuals or as a group.
5. Acting in Good Faith - An allegation of harassment or discrimination is very serious. Any employee making a complaint is required to act in good faith and have reasonable grounds to believe harassment or discrimination has occurred. An employee who makes a complaint of harassment that he/she knows is false or complains for a malicious or improper purpose may be subject to discipline up to and including termination from employment.
6. Retaliation – Occurs when employers treat applicants, employees or former employees, or people closely associated with these individuals, less favorably for:
  - Reporting discrimination
  - Participating in a discrimination investigation or lawsuit (for example, serving as a witness)
  - Opposing discrimination (for example, threatening to file a charge or complaint of discrimination).
  - Verbal abuse, threats, or physical assaults.
7. Discrimination – While many employees are familiar with prohibitions against discrimination because of race, religion, and national origin, the law has expanded to cover other areas like age, genetic information and pregnancy. The following types of discrimination and harassment are prohibited:
  - Age discrimination involves treating someone less favorably because of his age. The Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) forbids age discrimination against people who are age 40 or older.
  - Genetic information includes information about an individual’s genetic tests and the genetic tests of an individual’s family members, as well as

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

information about the manifestation of a disease or disorder in an individual's family members (i.e. family medical history). Federal law prohibits the use of genetic information in making employment decisions.

- National origin discrimination involves treating people unfavorably because they are from a particular country or part of the world, because of ethnicity or accent, or because they appear to be of a certain ethnic background (even if they are not).

National origin discrimination also can involve treating people unfavorably because they are married to (or associated with) a person of a certain national origin or because of their connection with an ethnic organization or group.

- Pregnancy discrimination involves treating a woman unfavorably because of pregnancy, childbirth, or a medical condition related to pregnancy or childbirth. The Pregnancy Discrimination Act (PDA) forbids discrimination based on pregnancy when it comes to any aspect of employment.
- Race/Color discrimination involves treating someone unfavorably because he/she is of a certain race or because of personal characteristics associated with race (such as hair texture, skin color, or certain facial features). Color discrimination involves treating someone unfavorably because of skin color complexion.

Race/color discrimination also can involve treating someone unfavorably because the person is married to (or associated with) a person of a certain race or color or because of a person's connection with a race-based organization or group, or an organization or group that is generally associated with people of a certain color.

- Religious discrimination involves treating a person unfavorably because of his or her religious beliefs. The law protects not only people who belong to traditional, organized religions, such as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism, but also others who have sincerely held religious, ethical or moral beliefs.

Religious discrimination can also involve treating someone differently because that person is married to (or associated with) an individual of a particular religion or because of his or her connection with a religious

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

organization or group.

- Sex discrimination involves treating someone unfavorably because of that person's sex, gender identity or sexual orientation. Sex discrimination also can involve treating someone less favorably because of his or her connection with an organization or group that is generally associated with people of a certain sex. Discrimination against an individual because that person is transgender is discrimination because of sex in violation of Title VII. This is also known as gender identity discrimination.

### E. Procedure – Harassment

1. Offensive conduct or harassment of a sexual nature, or based on race, color, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identification, genetic information, hairstyle/hair texture or other protected status is prohibited. This may include but is not limited to:
  - Offensive speech including written or spoken words and/or graphic communication.
  - Physical contact, including but not limited to unwelcome touching
  - Expectations, requests, demands or pressure for sexual favors
  - Slurs, jokes, posters, cartoons, photographs, or e-mails that contain demeaning/derogatory terms, offensive symbols and offensive gestures.
2. Any such offensive conduct will be considered a prohibited form of harassment in the following circumstances:
  - There is a promise or implied promise of preferential treatment or negative consequence regarding employment decision or status.
  - Such conduct has the effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment or unreasonably interferes with a person's work performance.
  - A third party is offended by the conduct or communication of others
3. At times an individual may do or say something that is unintentionally offensive to another employee. The offended individual may find it effective to simply tell the individual that what they have done or said is offensive and this may resolve the

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

matter.

4. An employee who believes they have been harassed shall immediately report such conduct to their supervisor, or they may report to their Department Head or to the Director of Human Resources.
5. Any supervisor who becomes aware of alleged harassment shall inform the alleged victim that Caroline County is committed to maintaining a workplace that is free from any type of intimidating, hostile or offensive behaviors or displays. The supervisor must immediately report the alleged harassment to their department head and the Director of Human Resources. Any supervisor who has knowledge of such behavior yet takes no action address to address it is also subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.
6. Each complaint of harassment shall be fully investigated. The County Attorney, the County Administrator and the Director of Human Resources will review the complaint and determine the appropriate investigative process on a case-by-case basis. The complainant shall be notified that their complaint has been received. The investigative process will be determined within 48 hours.
  - a. Harassment Investigation Guide (Internal Investigations)
    - i. Investigation process will begin within 7 calendar days of receiving the complaint.
    - ii. Determine whether the alleged harasser may need to be transferred to another position and/or department or placed on paid administrative leave during the investigation.
    - iii. Interview the complainant - to get details of the allegations and explain that a charge of discrimination/harassment is a serious matter, that will be thoroughly investigated before reaching any conclusions.
    - iv. Interview the alleged harasser – explain that a complaint has been filed and the nature of the allegations. Advise the alleged harasser that a thorough investigation will be completed prior to reaching any conclusions.
    - v. Interview any witnesses - that may have been identified during interviews with the complainant and the alleged harasser.
    - vi. Resolving the complaint - fully document the investigation,

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

determine if appropriate discipline, and/or remedial training/counseling on harassment. Meet with the complainant and the alleged harasser to inform them that matter has been resolved.

- b. The complaint and investigation will be conducted as a confidential personnel matter with communication limited to those persons directly involved in the investigation and any subsequent personnel actions.
- c. Harassment is considered a form of employee misconduct. Disciplinary action up to and including termination shall be taken against any employee determined to be engaged in this type of behavior.

### F. Procedure – Bullying

- 1. Bullying behavior is often persistent and part of a pattern. It is usually carried out by an individual but can also be an aspect of group behavior. Examples include:
  - Teasing
  - Abusive and offensive language
  - Spreading rumors or innuendos
  - Unreasonable criticism
  - Trivializing work and achievements
  - Excessive demands
  - Setting impossible deadlines
  - Unfairly blaming for mistakes
  - Excessive supervision
  - Setting people up for failure
  - Deliberate exclusion
  - Criticizing in public
  - Belittling or disregarding opinions or suggestions

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- Pushing, shoving
  - Assault or threat of physical assault
  - Cyberbullying
  - Socially and physically excluding an employee
  - Sabotage of an employee's work
2. Bullying is unacceptable behavior that breaches principles of equality and fairness and frequently represents an abuse of power and authority.
  3. Employees have a responsibility to conduct themselves in a manner which ensures the proper performance of their job responsibilities and maintains co-worker and citizen confidence.
  4. If an employee believes that the employee has been a victim of bullying or has witnessed bullying in the workplace, the employee should report to the Employee's Department Head and/or the Director of Human Resources. An employee who experiences bullying may find it effective to simply tell the individual that what they had done or said is offensive and this may resolve the matter.
  5. Any supervisor who becomes aware of alleged bullying shall inform the alleged victim that Caroline County is committed to maintaining a workplace that is free from bullying. The supervisor must immediately report to their department head and the Director of Human Resources. Any supervisor who has knowledge of such behavior yet takes no action to address it is also subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.
  6. Each complaint of bullying shall be fully investigated. The Director of Human Resources, the County Administrator and Department Head will review the complaint and determine the appropriate investigative process on a case-by-case-basis. The complainant shall be notified that their complaint has been received. The investigative process will be determined within 48 hours.
    - a. Complaints will be treated confidentially to the extent possible for a thorough investigation and resolution.
    - b. Individuals involved in an investigation shall be treated professionally and shall not be subjected to retaliation in any form.
    - c. Employees who are found to have engaged in retaliation or who have failed

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

to cooperate with an investigation shall be subject to disciplinary action.

- d. Bullying is considered a form of employee misconduct. Disciplinary action up to and including termination shall be taken against any employee engaging in this type of behavior.

### Section 4-103. Substance Abuse

#### A. Policy.

1. The County is committed to providing a safe, efficient, and productive work environment through a substance free workplace. The purpose of this policy is to prevent the risks and negative effects that are brought about by substance abuse while respecting the dignity and privacy of Employees. Illegal or irresponsible drug or alcohol use by Employees is not consistent with the County's goal to operate in a safe and efficient manner.
2. Violation of any portion of this policy will subject Employee to appropriate disciplinary measures, up to and including termination. Although this policy has been written to address as many of the pertinent issues in this sensitive area as possible, Employer reserves the right to modify or amend it. Any Employee who has questions or concerns about this policy should contact the Personnel Administrator.

- #### B. Pre-Employment Testing. Employer shall test each successful applicant for drugs and alcohol prior to awarding applicant a position. If an applicant tests positive for drugs or alcohol, Employer shall send applicant a notice of the applicant's right to an independent test. Employer shall not hire anyone who has a positive result from a pre-employment drug and alcohol test. Employer also shall not consider for hire anyone who refuses to take a pre-employment drug and alcohol test.

#### C. Prohibitions.

1. Entry upon or into County premises or property, or presence at work, under the influence of illegal or abused drugs or alcohol, or any combination thereof, is strictly prohibited. No Employee shall possess, conceal, promote, sell or bring alcohol, illegal substances, which term includes any related paraphernalia, onto County property. County property includes, but is not limited to, County premises, including leased premises, and/or County property (including County vehicles) and/or any place where Employee is conducting business for or on behalf of the County, or where the County conducts business. If the County has reasonable grounds to believe that an Employee possesses, is concealing, or has brought

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

substances onto County property, Employer reserves the right to conduct a reasonable search for those substances, including but not limited to, a search of the Employee's office, desk, locker, or County vehicle.

2. An exception is made for Employees who take prescription medicines according to instructions given by a licensed physician or medical provider. However, an Employee who is taking prescription medications that may impair his or her ability to perform his or her job has an affirmative duty to report the usage of such medications to his or her supervisor. This reporting is required to assess the Employee's ability to conduct County business, drive a vehicle, or operate machinery. If Employee does not report the usage of prescription drugs and causes an accident upon, with, or while operating County property, Employee will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
- D. Reporting. An Employee who receives either an alcohol driving conviction (defined below) or a drug conviction (defined below) has an affirmative duty to report that conviction within five (5) working days to the Personnel Administrator. Generally, the first alcohol driving or drug conviction will subject Employee, at a minimum, to mandatory participation in a sanctioned alcohol and/or substance abuse treatment program. A second alcohol driving or drug conviction may result in termination of employment. Nothing in these Personnel Rules and Regulations shall be interpreted to prohibit the termination of an Employee on a first offense for a drug or alcohol related incident if the Personnel Administrator or the County Administrator deems the offense to be of a magnitude or severity that may reasonable be believed to place the County, its Employees, and/or the public at large at risk. If Employer learns of an alcohol driving or drug conviction that was not reported by Employee, such failure constitutes grounds for termination, and Employee shall be subject to mandatory participation in a sanctioned alcohol and/or substance abuse treatment program if not terminated. Safety Sensitive Employees who have prior alcohol driving or drug convictions, or plea or resolution of criminal charges other than an acquittal, may be tested as a continuing condition of employment for up to a total of three years after their last conviction, or plea or resolution of criminal charges other than an acquittal.
- E. Alcohol and Drug Testing.
1. All Safety Sensitive Employees shall be subject to drug or alcohol testing: (1) on a yearly basis, (2) prior to being transferred or promoted to a Safety Sensitive position, or (3) prior to returning to duty after failing a previous test. Moreover, any Employee (whether in a safety sensitive position or not) whose conduct, appearance or behavior provides reasonable suspicion that the Employee is using drugs or alcohol at work or any Employee whose job performance inexplicably deteriorates, or whose demeanor becomes erratic, may be required to submit to testing for drugs and alcohol. Reasonable suspicion is a belief that Employee has

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

violated the alcohol or drug prohibitions of this policy based on specific, contemporaneous, describable observations concerning such factors as appearance, behavior, speech or body odors of Employee.

2. The first confirmed positive test result of any Employee will, at a minimum, require Employee to undergo and successfully complete a sanctioned alcohol and/or substance abuse treatment program. A second confirmed positive test result might subject Employee to termination. After any positive result, Employee shall be furnished with a notice that will indicate the test results, a copy of this policy, Employer's intent to take disciplinary action, and a statement that permits Employee to request independent testing of the same sample. (*See Appendix; Notice Following A Positive Drugs and Alcohol Test.*) Refusing to submit to testing, or tampering with a specimen for testing, shall subject Employee to termination. All testing will be conducted by a laboratory that holds a license under Section 17-205 of the Health General Article of the Code of Maryland and in a manner that respects and recognizes the dignity and privacy of the Employee. Therefore, Employer will endeavor, to the greatest extent possible, to protect the confidentiality of information regarding individual test results.
- F. Treatment and Continued Employment. Employer realizes that alcoholism and drug addiction can be illnesses for which there is effective treatment and rehabilitation. Prior to reaching a point where an Employee's judgment, performance or behavior leads to disciplinary action, it is Employee's responsibility to seek assistance from a sanctioned alcohol and/or substance abuse treatment program. Please note that participation in a sanctioned alcohol and/or substance abuse treatment program may be covered, in part, under Employer's health benefits. Employees will not be terminated for voluntarily seeking assistance for a substance abuse problem. An Employee who continues to work and who is participating in a sanctioned alcohol and/or substance abuse treatment program will be expected to meet existing job performance standards and established work rules. Continued performance, attendance or behavior problems may result in termination. Employer will attempt to make reasonable accommodations for an Employee who voluntarily initiates participation in and adheres to a sanctioned alcohol and/or substance abuse treatment program.
- G. Definitions as used in this policy.
1. Alcohol – means ethyl alcohol or ethanol.
  2. Alcohol Driving Conviction – means a violation of the laws of Maryland or any other jurisdiction involving driving or attempting to drive while intoxicated or under the influence of alcohol, for which the Employee pleads guilty, pleads nolo contendere (“no contest”), is found guilty, is given probation before judgment or

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

verdict, or otherwise receives a disposition other than not guilty or a complete dismissal of charges.

3. Drug – means any substance taken into the body, other than alcohol, which may impair one’s mental faculties and/or physical performance. This definition includes controlled dangerous substances as defined in Maryland’s criminal statutes, prescription drugs, glue, paint thinner or any other item that when abused or improperly administered, may impair one’s mental faculties and/or physical performance.
4. Drug Conviction – means a conviction for violation of any controlled dangerous substance law or illegal substance law, whether a violation of the controlled dangerous substance laws of Maryland or the illegal/improper drug use laws of federal or state jurisdiction, or involving driving or attempting to drive while under the influence of a substance, for which the Employee pleads guilty, pleads nolo contendere (“no contest”), is found guilty, is given probation before judgment or verdict, or otherwise receives a disposition other than not guilty or a complete dismissal of charges.
5. Safety Sensitive Employee – means (1) all Employees whose job duties require the Employee to drive a motor vehicle during normal working hours or operate Equipment that may pose a danger to Employee or others working with Employee; (2) all Employees who have been convicted of an alcohol driving offense or drug offense (as defined in Section 4-103, above); and (3) all Employees that occupy positions determined to be Safety Sensitive by the Personnel Administrator and the Department Heads.
6. Substance – means and includes Alcohol and Drugs and related drug paraphernalia.
7. Substance Abuse – means the use, sale, distribution, possession and manufacture of alcohol or drugs in a manner prohibited by law or in such a way that the user-Employee’s performance of his or her job is affected negatively.

### Section 4-104. General Policies Governing Employee Conduct.

- A. Violations of the following rules of conduct may result in immediate termination:
  1. Employee shall not fight or use abusive or physically threatening language while on duty or on County premises.
  2. Employee shall not possess any unauthorized firearms or weapons while on duty or on County premises.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

3. Employee shall follow all safety regulations, including wearing safety clothing and using protective equipment.
4. Equipment and personal property.
  - a. Employee shall be responsible for and shall not misuse or remove from the workplace, without prior written permission, any Equipment or personal property of the County.
  - b. A violation of this policy shall be considered misappropriation or theft of County property.
  - c. This policy applies to all Equipment and other personal property procured (*i.e.*, purchased, leased, borrowed or otherwise obtained by the County) by the County including but not limited to documents and public records and identification cards in the care, custody, and control of any Employee. An Employee shall immediately report any lost Equipment or property to his/her supervisor.
5. Employee shall not destroy or damage Equipment or County property. Malicious or wanton and reckless destruction of Equipment or County property shall subject an Employee to discipline up to and including termination.
6. Employee shall address and deal with the public, co-workers and other officials, Employees and agents of Employer in a courteous and professional manner.
7. Employee shall not gamble, including but not limited to selling raffle tickets or engaging in sports pools, or wager while on duty or on County premises.
8. Employee shall not bribe, blackmail, extort or otherwise offer, give or promise to give money, sexual favors or something of value to a County official, agent or representative, or to another Employee that may cause such County official, agent or representative, or other Employee to act in conflict with the interest of, and/or the duty of loyalty owed to, the County.
9. Employee shall not make false reports or otherwise falsify or alter public records.
10. An Employee assigned to a position that requires the operation of County-owned vehicles shall maintain a favorable driving record. An Employee having four or more cumulative points on his/her driving record shall immediately report this information to his/her supervisor and the Director of Human Resources. Employer may revoke permission for an Employee with a deficient driving record to drive

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

any County vehicle or to drive any vehicle on behalf of the County. If driving is an essential function of an Employee's job and such Employee has five or more points, such Employee may be terminated.

11. Employee shall immediately report any citation for or charge of "driving while intoxicated" (DWI), "driving under the influence" (DUI), motor vehicle citation arising out of an accident and driver's license suspension to his/her department head, the Risk Management Coordinator, and the Director of Human Resources. Employee shall cooperate in any investigation by Employer into such charges for purposes of determining whether Employee's authority to drive a County vehicle or to drive on behalf of the County should be suspended or revoked. Employer may suspend or revoke permission for an Employee to drive a County vehicle or to drive on behalf of the County as the result of such citation or charges. If driving is an essential function of Employee's job, the County may suspend without pay or terminate such Employee.
12. Employee shall not violate any federal State or local laws, ordinances or regulations and shall report, within two business days, any arrest for a felony, any indictment for commission of a crime or any conviction for a crime.

B. Repeated (or grievous) violations of the following rules of conduct may result in termination:

1. An Employee must perform and fulfill the required duties and obligations of Employee's position in a timely and efficient manner on a continuous basis. An Employee must consistently and regularly perform at a satisfactory level that meets expectations of the position held by Employee.
2. Employee must be at his/her designated work area on time and ready to work and shall continue to work in that location unless permission to leave is granted by the supervisor.
3. Where operations are continuous, Employee shall not leave his/her post until replaced by the next shift Employee or until relieved by Employee's supervisor.
4. Employee shall not conduct private or personal business or a trade on Employer's premises during working hours without express authorization.
5. Except in an emergency, Employee shall not use Employer's property, including telephones and computers, for personal business or matters. An Employee may use Employer's phones to make local personal calls or may use other technology Equipment in a reasonable manner that does not incur additional expense during an approved break or lunch period. (See Section 4-106C).

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

6. Employee shall immediately report to his/her supervisor all accidents/incidents/injuries occurring within the course of employment. If the immediate supervisor is unavailable the accident/incident/injury must be reported to the Risk Management Office within 24-hours and, preferably, on the same day of the accident/incident/injury. An accident, incident or injury not reported in compliance with this provision may be handled as a questionable accident, incident or injury, and an Employee may be disciplined for failure to report and notify as required herein. In addition, Employee may be left personally responsible for defending or resolving any claim arising from any accident, incident or injury not reported as required herein.
7. Employee shall be responsible for reporting, in writing, any inoperable vehicle restraint device (safety belt) or other essential safety equipment for repair.
8. Employee shall not litter the work area.
9. Employee shall not park in prohibited areas or areas designated for others on County premises.
10. Employee shall notify his/her supervisor whenever there is a change in Employee's personal data, such as changes in Employee's address, phone number, emergency contact, or number of dependents.
11. Employee shall not restrict, interrupt or interfere with the work of other Employees or agents of Employer.
12. Employee shall not post notices on County premises without prior written approval from the appropriate authority and may only post in approved, designated areas.
13. In addition to the foregoing general rules of conduct that are applicable to all Employees, a Department Head, may promulgate special rules applicable to all of the Employees in the department, or equally applicable to all Employees in a subgroup of the department, provided that such rules, policies or procedures are first reviewed and approved by the Personnel Administrator.

### Section 4-105. Technology, Cellular Phone, E-Mail, Internet, and Telephone Policy.

- A. This section sets forth Employer's policy for proper use of any technology or technological equipment owned, leased, borrowed, or paid for by the County, including but not limited to any analogue, digital, or electronic communication systems, cellular phone, computer equipment, electronic mail (e-mail), the internet and the telephone system (hereinafter "Technology Equipment"). The policy applies to anyone who may use Technology

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

Equipment of Employer. Violation of this policy will be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

- B. Employer can limit or deny access to Technology Equipment at any time.
- C. Technology Equipment of Employer shall be used solely for business purposes. Limited personal use will be allowed, however, misuse, abuse, use that causes the County to incur additional expense, or use for personal business venture or profit will be cause for disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal when the use is disruptive of job performance or Technology Equipment is otherwise used in violation of this policy. (*See Section 4-105B.5*).
- D. The use of Technology Equipment shall act as consent by the Employee to Employer to monitor, review and retain any and all data and information on or relative to the Technology Equipment. There shall be no expectation of privacy regarding any data or information on or relative to the Technology Equipment. Employer reserves the right to access, maintain, and disclose all data, information, transmissions, messages, and files generated or maintained by the Technology Equipment.
- E. All data, information, records, files, messages, transmissions and software utilized, maintained or processed by anyone using Technology Equipment of Employer shall be considered the property and a resource of Employer.
- F. All users of Technology Equipment shall use it in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations, and in accordance with all instructions and manuals showing the correct means of operation.
- G. The following uses of Technology Equipment are expressly prohibited:
  - 1. Sending or receiving sexual or racial content or content that is inconsistent with the Employer's policies involving equal employment opportunity and sexual harassment.
  - 2. Any form of harassment, whether through inappropriate language, frequency of messages, or size or tone of messages.
  - 3. Sending unsolicited messages, advertising materials, political material, or other non-work related information or materials to or through any Technology Equipment of Employer, including but not limited to:
    - a. "SPAM" (*i.e.*, unauthorized or unsolicited mass mailings or communications) or junk email or messages;

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- b. “Chain letters”, “Ponzi” or other “pyramid” scheme type mail, messages or information.
4. Violation of the legal rights protected by copyright, patent or other similar laws, including but not limited to:
  - a. The installation or distribution of “pirated” software or products that are not appropriately licensed by the County;
  - b. Copying or retransmitting copyrighted information or materials including distribution of digitized photographs from magazines or journals; and
  - c. The public playing or presentation of radio stations or non-County sources of information or materials on Technology Equipment.
5. The introduction of malicious, disruptive or injurious programs to any Technology Equipment, including but not limited to viruses, worms, Trojan horses, e-mail bombs, etc.
6. Imposing, transmitting, circulating, or responding to political or religious messages or materials.
7. Unauthorized interception of communications between Employees or other persons or improperly accessing, misappropriating, or misusing the information and files of others.
8. Sending, displaying or publishing personal or unofficial opinions or similar non-business related messages to large numbers of users of any Technology Equipment.
9. Displaying or publishing content regarding Employer that has not received prior approval for dissemination to the public.
10. Intentionally or wantonly and recklessly causing the disruption of the normal functioning of Employer’s Equipment.
11. Advertising items for sale or announcing sales.
12. Revealing accounts, passwords or other information designed to preserve the privacy of and limit access to Technology Equipment and/or the work product or information of users of Technology Equipment.
13. Violating any other County policies, rules, or regulations through the use of or with the assistance of Technology Equipment.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- H. The County's Office of Technology or information systems department may, from time to time, publish policies and guidelines on the proper use and protection of Equipment. Employees shall be responsible for reviewing such policies and guidelines and complying therewith.

### Section 4-106. Employee Use of Social Networking Software & Systems.

- A. Social networking software and systems are defined as any software that allows users to interact and share data. This definition includes, but is not limited to, systems such as Facebook, Twitter, My space, You Tube, chat rooms, and blogging sites.
- B. The County recognizes the general, inherent value in the exchange of ideas and information through the various online community and communication opportunities available to County employees.
- C. The County expects its employees to utilize online social networking communities in a manner that is consistent with the policies and procedures outlined.
  - 1. Personal social networking sites should only be used during an employee's breaks, lunch periods, or other off-duty periods. Employees are not permitted to utilize County equipment during off-duty hours for purely personal purposes.
  - 2. This policy cannot prescribe acceptable and unacceptable speech. Because of the innately public nature of social software, Employees should have no expectation that what is said or written on a social software platform will be afforded the same levels of privacy typically associated with a conversation.
  - 3. County equipment or systems may not be used at any time to transmit or receive statements that may be construed as threatening, harassing or defamatory, or that may be obscene, or that may violate any law or any policy of the County. Sending or receiving sexual or racial content or content that is inconsistent with County policies involving equal employment opportunity and sexual harassment are likewise prohibited.
  - 4. The use of County equipment for social networking purposes is subject to review and consideration under all other applicable County policies and existing laws, and based on content and severity may be addressed through established disciplinary actions.
  - 5. Employees should recognize that County customers, other employees, and the general public ("customers") who read content posted by a County employee could easily construe those messages as being representative as those of the County, even

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

if that is not the intent. Employees should also recognize that while the County does not discourage the use of social media for personal reasons, it can blur the line between one's personal and professional life. Employees are prohibited from making any statement on any social networking site, or otherwise, that states, implies, or leads the reader or recipient to think that the statement represents the official policy or position of the County when it is in fact, not. Employees are prohibited from making any statement on any social networking site, or otherwise, that may reasonably be expected or predicted to interfere with, or cause interference with, the functioning of the County and/or its use by its customers.

6. Employees may wish to consider creating a separate social media presence. We recommend that one's personal profile should use the highest privacy settings possible. Extreme caution should be used when interacting with a County customer since that customer will have access to all of your personal information.
7. For the benefit of the employee, we recommend that personal employee social software accounts should have clear disclaimers that the views expressed are the employee's alone and do not represent the views of the County in cases where the employee's comments could potentially be construed to represent the County.
8. Under no circumstances should confidential County strategies, personnel disciplinary situations, etc., be posted to or discussed on an online community.
9. Information published on employee's social software accounts must comply with the County's confidentiality policy.
10. County logos and trademarks may not be used without written consent.
11. Employees are not required nor expected to participate in County branded social software during non-working hours.
12. Employees are not, and should not feel, obligated to accept social connections from fellow employees or County customers. Employees are encouraged to create either a formal or informal personal social software policy to use as a guideline when presented with requests.
13. Supervisors will address directly with the individual employee those situations where it appears the employee is engaged in excessive non-work-related online social networking activities.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

### Section 4-107. Confidentiality.

Employment with the County may expose the Employee to matters and information that are highly sensitive, confidential, and/or not generally the subject of, or which may by law be barred from, public disclosure. Employees must keep all such matters and information confidential as directed by the County Commissioners and/or as may be required by law. Privilege as to confidentiality and non-disclosure is a privilege under the control of the County and not the Employee. An Employee shall not use any such information to Employee's personal advantage or the advantage of others in a manner different from that available to the general public. A violation of this provision shall also constitute a violation of the County's Ethics Law.

### Section 4-108. Code of Ethics.

Employees shall comply with any code of ethics adopted by the County Commissioners. A copy of the code of ethics is distributed to all new Employees, is available on the County website under the Code of Public Local Laws icon, and is available in hard copy from the Office of Human Resources. A violation of the County's Code of Ethics shall also constitute a violation of these Personnel Rules and Regulations.

### Section 4-109. Smoking on County Property.

- A. Policy. Scientific evidence has established that smoke from tobacco products is harmful to the health and welfare of users and individuals exposed thereto, because it causes and contributes to cancer and can aggravate cardiac, respiratory and allergic conditions. The County Commissioners, pursuant to Resolution #2004-011, which expands upon Resolution #92-022, have exercised their responsibility to promote a healthy and safe environment for all Employees and individuals who conduct business at and visit County buildings and facilities by banning lighted tobacco products at such buildings and facilities.
- B. Ban. Smoking or carrying any lighted tobacco product is prohibited without exception as to person or space at all of the following County properties and facilities:
1. In the Caroline County Courthouse, Market Street, Denton in all interior spaces of the building, including the attic, basement and vestibule, and the outside of the Courthouse on the front portico.
  2. In the Caroline County Department of Public Works buildings, Wilmuth Street, Denton, and outside and in front of the main building to the Public Works fenced perimeter.
  3. On the premises of Caroline County Government landfills and waste transfer stations.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

4. In the Caroline County Health and Public Services (“HAPS”) building, South 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Denton – all interior spaces and outside of the HAPS building within 100 feet of any building entrance or exit.
  5. In the Caroline County Detention Center, and the Caroline County Sheriff’s Department building, 101 Gay Street, Denton, and outside and in front of this building to Gay Street; and as the Superintendent of Corrections may further restrict.
  6. In the County-owned Goldsborough House, 103 Gay Street, Denton, and outside and in front of this building to Gay Street;
  7. In the leased building occupied by the Caroline County Department of Emergency Management, 7 North First Street, Denton, and outside and in front of this building to First Street, and to the north side of this building to Gay Street.
  8. In all spaces leased by the Caroline County Department of Emergency Medical Services.
  9. On the premises of the County-owned Caroline County 4-H and Youth Park, Detour Road.
  10. In the County-owned block building at the intersection of Franklin and 5<sup>th</sup> Streets, Denton, and outside and in front of this building to Franklin Street, and to the east of this building to 5<sup>th</sup> Street.
  11. In any other County-owned or leased buildings.
  12. In all vehicles owned or leased by Caroline County.
- C. Enforcement. The Department Heads are responsible for enforcing this policy and training and educating the Employees in their departments of this policy, the places where smoking is banned, and the consequences for violating this policy. All County supervisory Employees ultimately are responsible for enforcing this policy.

### Section 4-110. Criminal Background Investigation of Employees.

The Personnel Administrator may request, initiate, or authorize a criminal background investigation of an Employee if there is a reasonable basis for suspecting that an Employee may have engaged in illegal criminal conduct.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

### Section 4-111. Relatives Policy.

- A. No Employee may appoint, employ, promote, or advance, or advocate for the appointment, employment, promotion, or advancement, to a County employment position over which the Employee exercises jurisdiction, supervision, or control, any individual who is related to the Employee by blood, marriage, or adoption, or other close personal relationship, including a domestic partnership, romantic or sexual relationship, or cohabitation.
- B. No individual shall otherwise be appointed, employed, promoted, or advanced to a position within the jurisdiction, supervision, or control of any individual who is related to such individual by blood, marriage, or adoption, or other close personal relationship, including a domestic partnership, romantic or sexual relationship, or cohabitation, except on the written approval of the County Administrator; provided, however, that if such individual is related the County Administrator by blood, marriage, or adoption, or other close personal relationship, including a domestic partnership, romantic or sexual relationship, or cohabitation, the written approval shall be made by action of the County Commissioners.
- C. No Employee shall be employed in any position which employment shall create, or give the appearance of creating, a conflict of interest as to such Employee or any other Employee of the County or compromise, or give the appearance of compromising, the objectivity of the County or any Employee thereof. Resolution of issues arising under this Section 4-110.D, shall be resolved by advisory opinion from the Ethics Commission at the request of the County Administrator, in accordance with the procedures of the Ethics Commission.
- D. All individuals who currently are employed in positions under the jurisdiction, supervision, or control of any individual who is related to such employee by blood, marriage, or adoption, or other close personal relationship, including a domestic partnership, romantic or sexual relationship, or cohabitation, may continue to serve in such position without further action required; provided, however, that any subsequent appointment, advancement, or promotion of such individual shall be subject to Section 4-110 A, and B, above, and provided that such employment does not create an actual conflict of interest. All relationships governed by this Section 4-110, including grandfathered relationships, shall be disclosed to the County Administrator or to the Director of Human Resources within ninety (90) days of the effective date of this Section or, if later, with thirty (30) days from when the relationship is created or becomes known. These disclosures shall not be disclosed except for valid, specific cause, such as the need to investigate an allegation of a violation of this regulation or to determine whether a conflict or potential conflict exists.

### Section 4-112. Pregnancy Policy.

- A. Pursuant to the Maryland Fair Employment Practices Law as amended by the Reasonable Accommodations for Disabilities due to Pregnancy Act, (the "Act") Caroline County,

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

Maryland must provide pregnant employees with reasonable accommodations for disabilities due to or contributed to by pregnancy. Employees may request a reasonable accommodation, and the county will explore all available options for accommodations as required by the act.

B. The County may consider a variety of options in accommodations for pregnancy related disabilities including:

1. Changing job duties
2. Changing work hours
3. Relocation
4. Providing mechanical or technical aids
5. Transfers to less strenuous or less hazardous positions in accordance with §4-113.E. of this section.

C. Providing leave:

Caroline County may require a certification from the employee's health care provider regarding the medical advisability of a reasonable accommodation to the same extent certification is required for other temporary disabilities. Certification shall include: date of reasonable accommodation is medically advisable; probably duration; explanation as to the medical advisability of the reasonable accommodation.

D. Pregnancy related disabilities shall be treated as temporary disabilities under health and/or temporary disability insurance or sick leave plan available in connection with employment.

E. If an employee requests a transfer to a less strenuous to less hazardous position as a reasonable accommodation under the act, Caroline County shall transfer the employee for a period of time up to the duration of the employee's pregnancy if the employee's health care provider advises the transfer and the County can provide the reasonable accommodation by transferring the employee:

1. Without creating additional employment that the County would not otherwise have created
2. Discharging any employees
3. Transferring any employee with more seniority than the employee requesting the reasonable accommodation, or

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- 4. Promoting any employee who is not qualified to perform the job.
- F. This information should be placed in the Caroline County Maryland Employee Handbook, Personnel Rules and posted in a conspicuous location(s) advising employees of their rights under the act.
- G. The County will not interfere with, restrain, or deny the exercise of, or the attempt to exercise, any rights set forth in the act.

### Section 4 -113. Whistleblower Policy.

- A. Introduction/Policy. The Caroline County Commissioners are committed to supporting their employees and providing a safe and effective workplace in compliance with all applicable state and federal laws. As such, the County encourages its employees to report instances of employee misconduct, a failure to comply with law, waste and abuse of government resources and other related activity that is harmful to the County and its citizens. Caroline County prohibits retaliation by any County agency or agency employee against another employee because the employee exercised his or her constitutional or statutory rights, and/or an employee has made a report of gross mismanagement, abuse of authority, waste of resources, substantial danger to public safety or a violation of law committed by another employee.
- B. Complaints. If a Caroline County employee has a reasonable, good faith belief that another employee of Caroline County has violated any applicable law, rule or regulation, the employee is expected to immediately report that information to his or her supervisor or department head. If the employee in question is the supervisor or department head, the employee should make the report to the Director of Human Resources. If the complaint involves the Director of Human Resources, the complaint should be made to the County Administrator or the County Attorney. If an employee is not comfortable making a complaint directly to their supervisor it is the intent of this policy to allow employees to report violations of law, rule or regulation outside their chain of command. The employee should make the report promptly upon he discovery of the suspected misconduct or irregularity. Note: While the County Commissioners are elected representatives for their constituent base, and therefore most County employees, it is not within their normal and customary duties to handle personnel or serious legal complaints of this nature. Direct reporting to a Commissioner is therefore not encouraged and is disfavored. Employees are directed to follow the reporting methods set forth in this policy. A complainant that reports

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

violations any applicable law, rule or regulation to a member of the County Commissioners will be directed to file their complaint with Human Resources.

- C. Acting in Good Faith. An employee who makes a complaint of whistleblowing that he/she knows is false or complains for a malicious or improper purpose may be subject to discipline up to and including termination from employment.
- D. Retaliation. No employee of the Caroline County will retaliate against a another employee in the terms and conditions of employment because that employee: (a) reports to a supervisor, department head, Human Resources director, or to a federal or state agency, what the employee believes in good faith to be a violation of the law; or (b) participates in good faith in any resulting investigation or proceeding, or (c) exercises his or her rights under any state or federal law(s) rule(s) or regulation(s) to pursue a claim or take legal action to protect the employee's rights.

The County may take disciplinary action (up to and including termination) against an employee who has engaged in retaliatory conduct in violation of this policy, in accordance with existing disciplinary procedures.

In addition, the County will not, with the intent to retaliate, take any employment action harmful to any employee who has provided to law enforcement personnel or any court, truthful information relating to the commission or possible commission by Caroline County government or any of its employees of a violation of any applicable law, rule or regulation.

- E. Investigations. The County will investigate all such reports either by assigning a department head or other County official to investigate, or obtaining the services of outside counsel or investigator, at the discretion of the County Administrator and County Attorney. In conducting its investigations, the County will strive to keep the identity of the complaining individual as confidential as possible, while conducting an adequate review and investigation.
- F. Disposition. If the investigation substantiates an allegation of criminal conduct on the part of any Caroline County employee, the County Attorney will notify the appropriate enforcement authorities.

The County Commissioners will be notified of the findings of complaints, including complaints of retaliation.

**Chapter 5**  
**Discipline of Employees**

Section 5-101. Policy.

Disciplinary action against a Classified Employee shall be initiated with reasonable promptness. Except for serious violations of policies, procedures, or acceptable standards of workplace conduct, disciplinary actions shall be progressive in severity. The severity of the action shall be determined after consideration of the nature and gravity of the offense, its relationship to the Employee's assigned duties and responsibilities, the Employee's work record, and other relevant factors.

Section 5-102. Causes for Disciplinary Action.

- A. The following, while not inclusive, are serious violations of policies and procedures that may be cause for immediate disciplinary action up to and including termination:
1. Violation of the Principles of Section 4-101 of these Personnel Rules and Regulations;
  2. Violation of the Sexual Harassment Policy (*see* Section 4-102);
  3. Violation of the Substance Abuse Policy (*see* Section 4-103);
  4. Violation of the General Rules Governing Employee Conduct set forth in Section 4-105A;
  5. Violation of the Technology, Cellular Phone, E-Mail, Internet and Telephone Policy (*see* Section 4-106); or
  6. Falsifying material information on an employment application, submissions concerning promotion or leave of absence, or County records.
  7. Violation of the County's Code of Ethics.
- B. The following, while not inclusive, are cause for disciplinary action, and, in severe or repeated cases, may result in termination:
1. Violation of the General Rules Governing Employee Conduct set forth in Sections 4-105B, including but not limited to:
    - a. Failing to perform duties in a competent or acceptable manner, including the negligent performance of duties or insubordinate behavior, and

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- b. Unauthorized absence (including leave that is not pre-approved) or chronic tardiness;
  2. Physical ailment that prevents an Employee from performing the essential functions of Employee's position, subject to the constraints of the Family and Medical Leave Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Maryland Workers' Compensation Act or any other applicable federal or State law;
  3. Failing to report to work without permission or proper excuse, subject to the constraints of the Family and Medical Leave Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Maryland Workers' Compensation Act or any other applicable federal or State law;
  4. Soliciting endorsements for employment or promotions from persons who are or may be engaged in doing business with or for Employer; or
  5. Violation of the ban on smoking at County facilities and premises (*see* Section 4-108).
- C. The appropriate discipline for violation of the Caroline County Code of Ethics (*see* Section 4-107) will depend on the nature of the violation. Engaging in patently wrongful conduct or acting in ways that clearly conflict with an Employee's duty of loyalty and fidelity to the County will be grounds for immediate discipline up to and including termination, while lesser violations, particularly if a first time offense, may warrant less severe disciplinary action.

### Section 5-103. Types of Disciplinary Measures.

- A. Employer, in the exercise of its discretion and consistent with the policy set forth in Section 5-101, shall utilize the following disciplinary procedures:
  1. Counseling. Counseling is a personal meeting between supervisor and Employee to alleviate minor problems or errors of judgment. Counseling should be quickly employed to address any performance issue or problem that arises. A supervisor should make a note of each counseling of an Employee, which the supervisor should keep in a file on such supervisor's Employees, but which should not be placed in Employee's personnel file. If repeat counseling on the same matters becomes necessary, such notes can be used to prepare documented counseling or a performance evaluation that then will become part of an Employee's personnel file and may be grieved pursuant to the applicable procedures in Chapter 6 or Chapter 11.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

2. Documented Counseling. Documented counseling is a verbal discussion that is documented by placement of an Employee Contact Plan Form in Employee's personnel file. Documented counseling should be used by a supervisor to document a repeat violation of a relatively minor infraction, a minor violation of a policy or procedure, or to alert an Employee of unsatisfactory job performance that could result in a poor performance evaluation and/or further disciplinary action. A copy of any Employee Contact Plan Form completed by a supervisor should be sent to the Director of Human Resources for inclusion in Employee's personnel file.
3. Written Reprimand. A written reprimand is a written statement of dissatisfaction with an Employee's conduct that is documented by placement of a Written Reprimand Employee Contact Plan Form in the Employee's personnel file. This form of disciplinary action shall be used for matters rising above those where documented counseling is appropriate but that do not warrant more serious disciplinary action. An Employee who receives a written reprimand may not receive an annual merit increase or bonus during the fiscal year immediately following the receipt of the written reprimand.
4. Suspension. Suspension is the barring of an Employee from work for a period of time and the withholding the wages of the Employee. An Employee who receives a suspension shall not receive an annual merit increase or bonus during the fiscal year immediately following imposition of the suspension. No suspension shall be imposed without the approval of the Personnel Administrator, or, in the absence of the Personnel Administrator, the County Administrator.<sup>3</sup> A suspension may be issued for any of the following:
  - a. A serious infraction of the rules or policies of the Employer;
  - b. Two or more offenses for which written reprimands are received in a six-month period may be cause for suspension for a period not to exceed five working days; or
  - c. Three or more offenses during a 12-month period for which written reprimands are received may be cause for suspension for a period not to exceed five working days.
5. In-Grade Reduction. An in-grade reduction is a demotion in the form of a reduction in the step (*i.e.*, the current salary level) within the limits of the pay grade or classification to which the Employee's position is assigned in the Compensation Plan. An in-grade reduction may be the disciplinary action taken for an Employee who has not mastered all of the skills required in his/her position, although such Employee possesses the minimum qualifications of the Class Specification. An

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<sup>3</sup> A suspension may have FLSA implications; therefore the County Attorney should be consulted.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

Employee who receives an in-grade reduction shall not receive an annual merit increase or bonus during the fiscal year immediately following imposition of the in-grade reduction.<sup>4</sup>

6. Demotion. A demotion is the movement of an Employee from a position with a higher pay grade/ classification within the Compensation Plan to a position with a lower step and/or pay grade/classification within the Compensation Plan that results in a reduction in current salary. A demotion may be the disciplinary action taken for an Employee who repeatedly fails to perform the work assigned and/or who lacks the skills requisite for such Employee's Class Specification.
  7. Suspension, Pending Resolution of Criminal Charges. An Employee who is charged with committing an indictable offense while in the execution of his or her office may be suspended without pay at the discretion of the County Commissioners until such time as the case has been resolved by the appropriate court. The salary such employee otherwise would earn shall continue to accrue and shall be held in escrow pending resolution of the criminal charges. The employee shall continue to receive health benefits and the cost for such health benefits ordinarily payable by such employee shall be deducted from the amount of salary escrowed. An Employee who is acquitted on the merits after a trial shall have any amounts of salary that have been held in escrow paid to him/her, along with the accrued interest at the prevailing savings account rate. If such Employee is found guilty or negotiates a plea bargain indicative of guilt, such Employee shall be considered as being terminated effective as of the date of suspension without pay. Such Employee shall receive any payments to which such Employee was entitled effective as of the date of suspension without pay less the cost of the health benefits provided to such Employee, and Employer shall keep all remaining sums. In cases where charges are disposed of by non-prosecution, or dismissed on a basis than the merits, the Personnel Administrator may make an independent determination of the matter and determine whether the event merits discipline or termination; such termination to be decided by the County Administrator. An Employee terminated under such circumstances may be denied the payment of escrowed salary.
  8. Dismissal. Dismissal is the removal of Employee from Employer's service.
- B. The order in which the types of disciplinary measures are listed in Subsection A does not dictate or equate to the order in which discipline must be applied to an Employee.

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<sup>4</sup> An in-grade reduction may have FLSA implications.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

### Section 5-104. Who May Discipline Employees

#### A. At-Will Employees.

1. Counseling and documented counseling may be provided by the County Administrator or the County Commissioners acting as a committee of the whole.
2. Written reprimands may be provided by the County Administrator or the County Commissioners acting as a committee of the whole.
3. Suspensions, in-grade reductions, demotions, suspensions pending resolution of criminal charges, and dismissals shall be decided and acted upon by the County Commissioners.

#### B. Classified Employees.

Subject to any right of appeal (*see* Chapter 6):

1. Counseling and documented counseling may be provided by any supervisor.
2. Written reprimands may be provided by a Department Head or the County Administrator, although any supervisor may request a written reprimand be provided to an Employee.
3. Suspensions, in-grade reductions, demotions, suspensions pending trial, and dismissals may be decided and acted upon by the County Administrator, although any Department Head or supervisor may request a suspension, in-grade reduction, demotion, suspension pending resolution of criminal charges or dismissal. Following such action, the County Administrator shall inform the County Commissioners.

#### C. Contract Employees.

1. Any Department Head for whom a Contract Employee works, or the County Administrator, may initiate any kind of counseling, documented counseling, written reprimand or similar discipline of such Contract Employee.
2. The Personnel Administrator with the advice of the County Attorney shall determine any breach of contract and issue any notice or declaration of breach, although a Department Head may recommend such action.
3. The County Administrator may declare any Contract Employee to be in default of the employment contract or may dismiss or discharge such Contract Employee.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

Following such action, the County Administrator shall inform the County Commissioners.

### D. Temporary Employees.

1. Any Department Head, and/or the immediate supervisor for whom a Temporary Employee works, if the Department Head so designates, and/or the County Administrator, may counsel, reprimand or discipline a Temporary Employee.
2. The County Administrator, upon the advice and recommendation of the Department Head for whom a Temporary Employee works, may suspend, demote or dismiss a Temporary Employee.

## Section 5-105. Suspension, In-Grade Reduction, Demotion and Dismissal Procedures

### A. At-Will Employees.

1. Suspension, In-Grade Reduction or Demotion. The suspension, in-grade reduction, or demotion of an At-Will Employee will be coordinated among the County Attorney, the County Commissioners or the County Administrator, and the Personnel Administrator. Such At-Will Employee shall be given written notice, by delivery in person or by registered mail, return receipt requested, of such personnel action and a copy of such written notice shall be placed in such At-Will Employee's personnel file. Any documentation supporting such personnel action also shall be included in the At-Will Employee's personnel file.
2. Dismissal. An At-Will Employee is an at-will Employee who may be dismissed without Cause.
  - a. In the event an At-Will Employee does not have a contract that differentiates between the compensation due such At-Will Employee if dismissed without cause as opposed to being dismissed for cause, or such At-Will Employee has a contract that so differentiates and he/she is dismissed without cause, the County Attorney, the County Commissioners or the County Administrator, and the Personnel Administrator shall coordinate the preparation of a written notice, which shall be delivered in person or by registered mail, return receipt requested, advising of the dismissal. A copy of such written notice shall be placed in such At-Will Employee's personnel file. Documentation, if any, supporting such personnel action also shall be included in the Employee's personnel file. Any Compensation due such At-Will Employee upon dismissal shall be provided to him/her within 30 days.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- b. In the event an At-Will Employee has a contract that differentiates between the compensation due such At-Will Employee if dismissed without cause as opposed to being dismissed for cause and such At-Will Employee is being dismissed for cause:
  - i. Such At-Will Employee shall be provided with written charges indicating the cause or causes for dismissal prepared by the County Administrator or the County Commissioners along with an explanation of why disciplinary action other than dismissal is inappropriate.
  - ii. After deliberation on the written charges, the County Commissioners, if they wish to proceed with the matter, shall forward to such At-Will Employee the written statement that sets forth the reasons for the dismissal. The written statement shall include a notification that such At-Will Employee has ten (10) calendar days from the date of receipt of the notification in which to request a termination hearing. Such request for a termination hearing shall include a statement by such At-Will Employee of the reasons why there is no just cause for dismissal. Such request and statement of reasons shall be delivered to the Personnel Administrator within the ten (10) day period allowed.
  - iii. If such At-Will Employee does not respond within the time limits provided in Subsection (ii), the County Commissioners may consider such At-Will Employee to be dismissed for cause. If such At-Will Employee requests a termination hearing within the time limits provided in Subsection (ii) and provides a written justification of the reasons why there is no cause for dismissal, the Personnel Administrator shall provide a copy of the written charges and the response to the County Commissioners, which shall promptly set the matter for review to determine whether the dismissal was for cause or without sufficient cause.
    - a) The County shall have the burden of establishing cause for dismissal.
    - b) After the termination hearing is completed, the County Commissioners shall make a written determination of whether the dismissal was for cause or without cause, which shall include a written statement of the facts and findings. The County shall compensate such At-Will Employee

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

pursuant to the terms of the employment contract based on the findings.

- iv. The final decision of the County Commissioners on the “for cause” issue may be petitioned to the Circuit Court of Caroline County pursuant to Title 7, Chapter 200 of the Maryland Rules.
- B. Classified Employees. The suspensions, in-grade reduction, demotion or dismissal shall be in writing and shall be delivered to the Classified Employee in person or by certified mail, return receipt requested. Such written notification shall outline, with reasonable specificity, the reasons for the adverse employment action, and may reference supporting documentation. A copy of the written statement shall be placed in the personnel file of the Employee. A Classified Employee shall have an opportunity to grieve such employment action pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 6 of these Personnel Rules and Regulations.
- C. Contractual or Temporary Employees. The suspension, in-grade reduction, demotion or dismissal of a Contractual or Temporary Employee will be coordinated between the County Attorney, the County Commissioners or the County Administrator, and the Personnel Administrator. Such Employee shall be given written notice, by delivery in person or by certified mail, return receipt requested, of such personnel action and a copy of such written notice shall be placed in such Employee’s personnel file. Any documentation supporting such personnel action also shall be included in such Employee’s personnel file.

### Section 5-106. Discipline Record

- A. Any records related to employee discipline shall be maintained in the employee’s personnel file.
- B. Disciplinary records for employees may be expunged by the Director of Human Resources in accordance with the following schedule:
  1. Documented Counseling forms shall be automatically expunged three years after the date of counseling if there has not been any recurrence of the behavior
  2. Written Reprimands may be expunged at the request of the employee five years after the date of the reprimand upon review and approval of the department head and with the concurrence of the Director of Human Resources if there has not been any recurrence of the behavior.
  3. A Suspension or Demotion may be expunged at the request of the employee seven years after the date of the suspension or demotion upon the review and approval of

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

the department head and with the concurrence of the Director of Human Resources and the County Attorney if there has not been any recurrence of the behavior.

- C. If disciplinary records are expunged in accordance with this section, any and all material, documentation, notes, or correspondence related to the expunged disciplinary record shall also be expunged and removed from the employee's personnel file.

**Chapter 6**  
**Employee Grievance Procedures**

Section 6-101. Introduction.

Caroline County is committed to providing a safe and pleasant place to work. The County encourages an open and honest atmosphere in which concerns, or complaints can be handled promptly, based on all the facts available. In meeting this objective, the County is devoted to providing ways for employees to discuss and address issues. This Chapter discusses a formal dispute resolution practice available to employees if issues cannot be resolved through alternative resolution actions.

Employees are free to make complaints without fear of retaliation or harassment. The County is dedicated to resolving employment disputes in a fair, equitable, and timely manner, protecting employees from retaliation, minimizing operational disruptions, and minimizing false or frivolous complaints. Caroline County promotes employees resolving issues at the lowest level possible within the organization.

Section 6-102. Employees Covered.

Unless otherwise specified, the provisions of this Chapter shall apply only to Classified Employees. Recently hired Probationary Employees and At-Will Employees have no rights under the County's grievance procedure system except for the right to file a grievance of the matters set forth under Section 6-103 B.2. The Office of Human Resources can confirm whether an employee is a Classified Employee.

Section 6-103. Reasons for Filing a Grievance.

- A. A disciplinary action against a Classified Employee which results in termination, demotion, reduction in pay, and/or suspension without pay.
  - 1. A grievance regarding termination of employment shall proceed directly to the Employee Grievance Panel.
- B. Non-disciplinary actions directed at a Classified Employee by a supervisor, the Employer, or another person such as:
  - 1. An alleged violation, misinterpretation, or improper application of a law, rule, regulation, procedure, or policy.
  - 2. An alleged improper or unfair act directed at a Classified Employee, Probationary Employee or At-Will Employee by a supervisor or other employee, including an act of coercion, restraint, retaliation, harassment, or intimidation. This includes but

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

is not limited to sexual harassment, discrimination, workplace violence, or direction to work in an unsafe manner. Sexual harassment, discrimination and harassment are investigated under the guidelines within Chapter 4; however, an employee may file a grievance if they feel the investigation has not been done properly or has been unfair.

3. An alleged improper, inequitable, or unfair act in the administration of involuntary transfer, reduction in force not approved by the County Commissioners, promotional action that was arbitrary and capricious or in violation of established procedures, or denial of an opportunity for training.
4. An alleged improper, inequitable, or unfair application of the compensation policy and employee benefits, which may include salary, a pay differential, overtime pay, leave, insurance, retirement, or a holiday.
5. An alleged action taken in retaliation towards a Classified Employee for filing a grievance.
6. An alleged action taken in retaliation towards a Probationary Employee or At-Will Employee for filing a grievance under Section 6-103 B-2.

### Section 6-104. Matters That May Not Be Grieved.

The following matters are not grievable:

- A. Ratings in personnel evaluations.
- B. Class specifications, grade assignments, and position reclassifications.
- C. Adverse employment actions taken against an employee during a probationary period.
- D. Not being selected for a position or promotion.
- E. Action terminating a temporary promotion and returning the employee to the position previously held.
- F. Termination of employment due to a reduction in force or other elimination of positions approved by the County Commissioners.
- G. Lack of a pay increase or reduction in pay due to a budgetary decision by the County Commissioners.
- H. Verbal or documented counseling.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- I. Actions taken by the Personnel Administrator, County Attorney, and/or County Administrator in the administration of the grievance procedures set forth in this Chapter.
- J. Any action approved by the County Commissioners.
- K. Discharge of an appointed employee.
- L. The content of published County policy.
- M. A supervisor's determination of the job responsibilities and performance standards of an employee's position.

### Section 6-105. Grievance Form and Documentation.

- A. Employee Grievance Forms can be obtained from the Office of Human Resources.
- B. Employee Grievance Forms, supporting documentation, grievance investigations, and Employee Grievance Panel recommendations are confidential personnel information and shall not be disclosed. All records related to a grievance shall be kept in a separate file from the Classified Employee's personnel record.

### Section 6-106. Filing a Grievance.

Disciplinary grievances must be filed within fifteen (15) calendar days after the date of the action. Non-Disciplinary grievances must be filed within fifteen (15) calendar days of the non-disciplinary action. If a grievance is not timely filed, no further grievance or appeal shall be made. The filing of a grievance does not automatically stay the action at issue in the grievance.

- A. The employee must complete the Employee Grievance Form and submit it to the Director of Human Resources.
- B. The Director of Human Resources will:
  - 1. Review the Employee Grievance Form to determine if the event is a grievable matter, if it was filed within the time frame permitted, and if it otherwise complies with the grievance process;
  - 2. If determined to be grievable, notify the County Administrator that a grievance has been filed; and
  - 3. Determine the type of grievance as Disciplinary or Non-Disciplinary.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

### Section 6-107. Disciplinary Grievances.

- A. The County Administrator will investigate the disciplinary grievance; provided, however, that if the disciplinary grievance filed directly involves the County Administrator, then the Director of Human Resources will receive the disciplinary grievance and investigate, and if the grievance filed directly involves the Director of Human Resources and the County Administrator, then the County Attorney will receive the grievance and investigate. Disciplinary grievance investigation may include, but is not limited to, interviewing the Grievant and other persons believed to have personal knowledge of the problem or issue, and reviewing any relevant documentation. In investigating and deciding a disciplinary grievance, the Director of Human Resources and the County Attorney shall have the same powers and duties as the County Administrator set forth in this Section.
- B. The County Administrator may designate a supervisor or other qualified person(s) to help him or her investigate the matter, provided that that person or those persons do not have direct involvement in the matter.
- C. The County Administrator may consult the County Attorney or an outside counsel to conduct or review the investigation when deemed necessary if they do not have direct involvement in the matter.
- D. The County Administrator has twenty (20) days to complete an investigation and provide a report to the Director of Human Resources. The report will affirm or overrule the disciplinary action, and relevant documentation shall be attached to the written report. An extension may be allowed for the investigation by the County Administrator if extenuating circumstances require more than twenty (20) days to complete.
- E. The County Administrator's decision will be delivered to the Grievant either by hand delivery or certified mail. The County Administrator's decision in a disciplinary grievance is final and not subject to further appeal or review, except that a decision to terminate employment and/or a suspension without pay of three (3) or more days may be reviewed by the Grievance Review Panel as set forth below in Section 6-109.

### Section 6-108. Non-Disciplinary Grievances

- A. The Director of Human Resources will investigate the non-disciplinary grievance; provided, however, that if the grievance filed directly involves the Director of Human Resources, then the County Attorney will receive the non-disciplinary grievance and investigate. Non-disciplinary grievance investigation may include, but is not limited to, interviewing the Grievant and other persons believed to have personal knowledge of the problem or issue and reviewing any relevant documentation. In investigating a non-

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

disciplinary grievance, the County Attorney shall have the same powers and duties as the County Administrator set forth in this Section.

- B. The Director of Human Resources may designate a supervisor or other qualified person(s) to help him or her investigate the matter, provided that that person or those persons do not have direct involvement in the matter.
- C. The Director of Human Resources may consult the County Attorney or an outside counsel to conduct or review the investigation when deemed necessary if they do not have direct involvement in the matter.
- D. The Director of Human Resources has twenty (20) days to complete an investigation and provide a report to the County Administrator. The report may make recommendations for change or action to be taken, and relevant documentation shall be attached to the written report. An extension may be requested for the investigation by the Director of Human Resources to the County Administrator if extenuating circumstances require more than twenty (20) days to complete.
- E. Within five (5) days after receipt of the report of the Director of Human Resources, the County Administrator shall decide whether to affirm or overrule the non-disciplinary action.
- F. The County Administrator's decision will be delivered to the Grievant either by hand delivery or certified mail. The County Administrator's decision in a non-disciplinary grievance is final and not subject to further appeal or review.

### Section 6-109. Grievance Review Panel Procedure.

- A. A Grievant whose termination and/or suspension without pay of three (3) or more days has been decided or upheld by the County Administrator may file an application for review of the decision by the Grievance Review Panel. The application must be submitted in writing to the Director of Human Resources within ten (10) working days of the Grievant's receipt of the decision of the County Administrator, and must:
  - 1. Set forth the basis for the contention that the decision to terminate or suspend without pay for three (3) or more days was not consistent with County laws, Personnel Rules and Regulations, policies, processes, and/or directives.
  - 2. List the names of all witnesses and those whom the Grievant desires to have appear before the Grievance Review Panel. Whether to appear before the Panel is the choice of the witness.
  - 3. Provide notice as to whether the Grievant intends to be represented by legal counsel and, if so, the name and contact information for the counsel.
  - 4. The Director of Human Resources may reject the application for review if application was not presented within the ten (10) day, time limit or does not provide

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

a clear statement of the basis for the Grievant 's contention that the decision to terminate and/or suspend without pay for three (3) or more days was not consistent with County laws, etc. The Director of Human Resources may return the application to the Grievant for clarification or additional information. The Grievance Review Panel is authorized to hear and make recommendations for grievances which arise from a decision to terminate employment and/or an appeal to a County Administrator's review for discipline which resulted in a suspension without pay form three (3) or more days.

- B. The Grievance Review Panel is authorized to conduct a hearing and issue an advisory opinion as to whether the termination and/or suspension without pay of three (3) or more days was consistent with County laws, Personnel Rules and Regulations, policies, processes, and/or directives. The Grievance Review Panel may not dictate an alternate type or level of discipline.
- C. The Grievance Review Panel shall be comprised of three (3) panelists selected by a blind draw from a larger pool appointed by the County Commissioners.
- D. The County Commissioners shall maintain appointment of no less than seven (7) individuals to the Grievance Review Panel. Members must be qualified voters of the County. The appointments shall be made without regard to political party. Members shall be selected for their recognized general intelligence and reputation for integrity. Familiarity with labor, employment or personnel matters is beneficial but not necessarily required. No person in an employment relationship or family member of a person in an employment relationship with the County shall serve on the Employee Grievance Panel except for the member of the Employee Advisory Board that is appointed by the County Commissioners. All other members of the Employee Grievance Panel shall be citizens and residents of Caroline County. The County Commissioners may designate an alternate member of the Employee Advisory Board to sit on the Employee Grievance Panel in cases in which the primary Employee Advisory Board member has a conflict of interest, or the matter being grieved involves the primary member's department.
- E. Membership on the Grievance Review Panel shall be for a term of three (3) years. A member may be reappointed for an unlimited number of terms.
- F. Upon receiving a notice of a grievance to the Grievance Review Panel, the County Attorney and/or the Director of Human Resources shall conduct the blind draw, continuing until a three-person Panel can be seated to conduct the hearing. At their first meeting, the Panel shall elect one of their number to serve as the Panel Chair. The Director of Human Resources shall provide a copy of the grievance case file to each member of the Panel and the County Attorney.
- G. The Personnel Administrator or his or her designee shall assist the Grievance Review Panel

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

and the parties to the hearing in making sure that all relevant material to the issue is presented to the Panel. Within twenty-one (21) calendar days following the conclusion of the hearing, the Grievance Review Panel shall prepare and submit a written advisory opinion to the County Administrator. Copies of the Grievance Review Panel's report shall be given to the Grievant, the Grievant's Department Head, and the Personnel Administrator.

- H. Grievance Review Panel members are prohibited from communicating with any party involved in the hearing about the issues of the case.
- I. Hearing. Grievance Review Panel hearings are not open to the public. The Panel Chair shall always preside at hearings and have full authority to maintain orderly procedure and restrict the hearing to relevant and material facts.
  - 1. The Grievant has the burden of establishing his or her case by a preponderance of evidence; therefore, the Grievant shall present his or her case first. The Grievant may reiterate the application for review, present additional evidence relevant to the application, and may call any witness who can be expected to contribute materially to the issue(s).
  - 2. Each party shall have the opportunity to make an opening statement, present their case, including witnesses, and make a closing statement. Following the opportunity for each party to make closing statements, the record shall be closed, and the Grievance Review Panel will deliberate in private, with the County Attorney, to make its findings of fact and render its advisory opinion. The Panel's findings of fact, advisory opinion, and any recommendations shall be by majority vote. The Chair of the Panel shall vote.
  - 3. The Grievance Review Panel hearing is a quasi-judicial hearing. The hearing is not a court proceeding, and the rules of evidence do not necessarily apply. The Grievance Review Panel shall determine the validity of and the weight to be given the evidence submitted based upon its relevancy and probative value. Relevant evidence is that which a reasonable person would agree has tendency to prove or disprove any fact that could be of significance in deciding the case. The Grievance Review Panel may exclude material that is not relevant or is repetitious testimony and may limit the number of witnesses when testimony is cumulative in nature.
  - 4. The County Attorney shall advise the Panel regarding their authority/scope of review, standard of review, burden of proof, relevancy of evidence, and to ensure no error of law is made during deliberations, or in their recommendations, which will be provided in a report prepared by the County Attorney. The County Attorney ensures that the hearing proceeds in a timely manner and that questions remain relevant and not repetitive.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

5. *Management.* The Department Head of the Grievant, with such assistance as may be appropriate, shall represent management in the hearing, and shall present all facts and evidence available to the Department Head which bear on the application for review. While the burden of proof is on the Grievant, the management representative must not only attempt to refute any inaccurate information, but also present all material information known to the representative, even if that information may support the contentions of the Grievant.
6. *Recording.* The Grievance Review Panel hearing shall be recorded. This recording and the findings of the Grievance Review Panel, along with all exhibits presented, shall be preserved in accordance with the County's record retention policy as related to personnel documents.
7. *Witnesses.* Both the Grievant and the County may call appropriate witnesses while presenting their case. All witnesses, including the Grievant, shall be sworn and subject to direct and cross examination. Panel members and the County Attorney may ask questions of any witness. Witnesses shall only be present when giving testimony. Witnesses are not to discuss their testimony with each other, or the matters discussed at a Grievance Review Panel Hearing at any time thereafter. A witness who is a County employee scheduled to work is not required to use leave to attend the hearing.
8. *Standard of review.* The Grievance Review Panel shall render its advisory opinion and any recommendations based upon the testimony and evidence presented. The scope of the appeal shall conform to the matters which were raised by the Grievant in the application for review as set forth in Section 6-109. The Grievance Review Panel shall not exercise its authority in an arbitrary or capricious manner. The County Attorney shall prepare the findings of fact and advisory opinion of the Panel.
9. The County Administrator is not bound by the Grievance Review Panel's advisory opinion or recommendations. The County Administrator's decision shall be final and is not subject to further appeal or review.

### Section 6-110. Grievant's Right to Representation.

A Grievant, at his or her sole cost and expense, may have an attorney at law, or a representative who is not a County employee or a member of the Panel, assist him or her in preparing any written submission under this Chapter. However, a Grievant is not entitled to or permitted to have a representative at any inquiry or interview of Grievant conducted pursuant to this Chapter except in a hearing before the Grievance Review Panel.

**Chapter 7**  
**Probation**

Section 7-101. Probation

- A. Probation Defined. Probation is the period of time specified in Section 7-102 when the work of a recently hired Employee or a newly promoted Employee is closely observed for compliance with the Employee's Class Specification and performance standards. The probationary period allows the Employee to make needed adjustments in his or her work performance and it allows the Employer to determine whether the Employee fits into the position.
1. If a Contract Employee or a Temporary Employee is awarded a position in the Classified Service, such Employee shall be considered a recently hired Probationary Employee.
  2. If a Classified Employee in good standing is promoted, such Employee shall be considered a newly promoted Probationary Employee.
  3. If a Classified Employee in good standing is promoted to an At-Will position (*see* Section 2-102), such Employee shall be an At-Will Employee, not a newly promoted Probationary Employee.
  4. If a Classified Employee was not in good standing (*e.g.*, such Employee had poor performance evaluations, had received written warnings or other more serious disciplinary admonishments (*see* Sections 5-103A.3 through 5-103A.7) during the year prior to transfer to a new position, and instead of pursuing dismissal or other employment sanctions against such Employee, Employer and such Employee agreed to try such Employee in a new position, such Employee shall be considered a recently hired Probationary Employee when transferred or moved to the new position.
- B. Dismissal of Recently Hired Probationary Employee.
1. A recently hired Probationary Employee is employed on an "at-will" status and may be separated from County employment with or without cause.
  2. A recently hired Probationary Employee may be dismissed upon being provided with written notification of the date of dismissal.
  3. The immediate supervisor may request the dismissal of a recently hired Probationary Employee, but the Department Head and the Personnel Administrator must concur in the recommendation before the dismissal is effected. All records

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

concerning the Employee's performance prior to dismissal and the reasons for dismissal shall be maintained in the Probationary Employee's Personnel file.

4. The decision to dismiss a recently hired Probationary Employee is final and may not be grieved or appealed.

### C. Benefits.

1. A recently hired Probationary Employee shall not be a Permanent Employee and shall not enjoy all the job protections and job benefits provided to a Permanent Employee under these Personnel Rules and Regulations.
2. A newly promoted Probationary Employee, who previously was a Classified Employee in good standing, shall retain (if promoted to a position in the Classified Service) or shall carry over (if promoted to an At-Will position) the same job benefits he or she had in the former Classified position.

### D. The probationary status of an Employee shall end if:

1. The Employee serves the probationary period provided in Section 7-102 and receives an overall rating of "meets expectation" or higher on the Employee's most recent performance evaluation; or
2. If the Employee is separated from service.

### E. When an Employee's probationary status terminates, the Personnel Administrator shall notify the Employee by mail, which may include county interoffice mail or e-mail, of the change in status.

## Section 7-102. Probationary Periods.

- A. Recently hired and newly promoted Employees in clerical, technical, and hourly wage positions shall each serve a six-month probation.
- B. Recently hired and newly promoted Employees in management and administrative positions that are not clerical positions or At-Will positions (*see* Section 2-102A) shall each serve a one-year probation.
- C. A recently hired or a newly promoted correctional officer shall serve a one-year probation. Successful completion of probation for correctional officers shall require the Employee to pass state-required training classes during probation.
- D. A recently hired or a newly promoted public safety dispatcher, EMT-B, EMT-I, and EMT-P shall serve nine month probation.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- E. An Employee's Department Head, with the approval of the Personnel Administrator, may extend the probationary periods provided under Subsections 7-102A through 7-102D upon request. The extension shall not exceed one-half of the period initially provided for probation. A newly promoted Probationary Employee whose probationary period is extended pursuant to this Subsection shall not be entitled to placement in the same or an equivalent position previously held by such Employee in the event Employer decides not to retain such Employee in the newly promoted position. The newly promoted Probationary Employee therefore shall be afforded an opportunity to accept demotion pursuant to Section 7-101C in lieu of an extension of the probationary period pursuant to this Subsection.

### Section 7-103. Evaluations During Probation.

- A. An Employee serving probation shall, at a minimum, be evaluated by his/her immediate supervisor at least once during the probationary period, if such Employee is not dismissed prior to the midpoint of the probationary period. (*See* Section 11-103A).
- B. In addition to the evaluation required under Subsection (A) of this section, performance evaluations may be conducted at other times during probation when the Employee's supervisor believes an evaluation would be useful.
- C. A copy of any completed evaluation made pursuant to this section shall be forwarded to the Personnel Administrator within seven (7) working days after the date on which the evaluation was completed and shall be placed in the Employee's personnel file.

**Chapter 8**  
**Leave**

Section 8-100. Introduction.

The goal of the County's Employee leave system is to maximize the wellness, safety, and productivity of its workforce. The County grants employees leave time for a wide range of reasons. Some types of leave are required by state and federal laws. Others exist to allow employees to pursue interests outside of work, enjoy time with family and friends, and hopefully achieve a positive "work-life balance." As compared to most employers, the County offers a very generous leave system. It is important for employees to use this system responsibly. This means seeking permission when required, providing documentation when requested, completing necessary forms, and using leave for the reasons intended. Leave time is awarded based on 8 hours per day.

Section 8-101. Leave Records.

The Director of Human Resources shall be responsible for establishing and maintaining accurate records of leave earned and taken by Employees. All Employees have access to leave balances through the County's electronic payroll system. If an Employee feels a leave balance is incorrect, the Employee should contact the Office of Human Resources immediately. All leave taken by an Employee shall be properly and promptly recorded in the County's electronic payroll system. Failure to report leave taken, misstating leave taken, and/or submitting false information of any kind related to leave may be subject to other disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Section 8-102. At-Will Employees.

The leave to which an At-Will Employee is entitled may be altered by written contract or agreement where all such contracts must comply with state and federal leave laws. If an At-Will Employee does not have a written employment contract, or such contract does not modify or alter the leave provided pursuant to this Chapter, the leave benefits afforded such At-Will Employee shall be in accordance with this Chapter.

Section 8-103. Temporary and Contractual Employees.

- A. Temporary and Contractual Employees shall not be entitled to any of the leave benefits of this Chapter except as follows:
1. "Sick and safe leave" if qualified under the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act "MHWFA".
  2. Family and Medical Leave Act ("FMLA") leave if qualified under the Family Medical Leave Act of 1993.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

3. Annual, personal and holiday leave if authorized in a signed employment agreement.

### Section 8-104. Annual Leave (Vacation).

- A. Permanent full-time Employees including probationary Employees shall accrue annual leave according to the schedule established in this section.
- B. A Permanent Employee may use accrued annual leave. Each Permanent Employee shall use at least five days of accrued annual leave each year.
- C. Leave Reset: An Employee may carry forward unused, accrued, annual leave up to a maximum of 440 hours (55 days) into the next calendar year. Annual Leave amounts that exceed 440 shall be added to the employee's sick leave balance after January 1st of next calendar year. In rare occurrences an extension may be granted by the County Administrator for annual leave exceeding 440 hours.
- D. New Employees during their first (6) six months of employment, who are still within their probationary period, may request to use accrued annual leave. This leave request shall be approved at the sole discretion of their Department Head.
- E. The Department Head, in his/her sole discretion, may allow a newly promoted Probationary Employee to use accrued annual leave.
- F. In the absence of an unusual or extraordinary circumstance, an Employee may not use annual leave without obtaining the prior approval of the Department Head. Each Department Head may establish procedures or a system for scheduling annual leave that assures the least interruption to the efficient operation of the department. In the absence of unusual or extraordinary circumstances, at a minimum, seven (7) calendar days' notice shall be required before annual leave may be taken, and consideration may be given to whether other Employees previously requested and had leave approved, which could affect coverage, in determining whether to approve a request for annual leave.
- G. Subject to any written employment agreement and the requirements of Chapter 12 of these Personnel Rules and Regulations, an Employee who separates from service with Employer may be paid for any amounts of accrued and unused annual leave, up to a maximum of 440 hours of unused annual leave, at his or her highest level of pay under the Compensation Plan. Upon the death of an Employee, the Employee's designated beneficiary or Employee's estate (if no beneficiary) shall receive payment of up to 440 hours of accrued and unused annual leave at the highest level of pay under the Compensation Plan held by the decedent.

Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- H. Using an Employee’s anniversary date to compute years of service with Employer, a Full-Time Employee shall accrue annual leave as follows:

<u>Years of Service</u>	<u>Annual Accumulation</u>
0 through 5	80 hours (3.08 hours biweekly)
6 through 10	120 hours (4.62 hours biweekly)
11 through 20	160 hours (6.15 hours biweekly)
More than 20	200 hours (7.69 hours biweekly)

- I. A Part-Time Employee shall accrue annual leave as provided herein, except that the rate of accrual shall be prorated to be commensurate with the hours the Employee is scheduled to work, using a 40-hour work week as a basis for the computation.

Section 8-105. Sick and Safe Leave.

- A. Policy. Sick and Safe leave (SSL) is provided so that a qualifying Employee may obtain necessary medical care and treatment and/or assist in providing necessary medical care and treatment to such Employee’s family and for the other reasons listed below. SSL should be used only for the reasons defined in this section. SSL is not to be used as additional vacation or personal time.

An employee who abuses SSL may be subject to other disciplinary action up to and including termination. Examples of abuse of using SSL may be defined by the following patterns:

1. Use on Mondays or Fridays
2. Before or after holidays or other types of leave, in order to extend time off from work
3. Use of SSL with another type of leave within the same shift

- B. FMLA. In accordance with federal law (FMLA) and its regulations, qualifying employees may take up to 12 weeks of leave during a 12-month period for events, such as a serious medical condition, to care for a spouse, child or parent with a serious medical condition or to care for a newborn or adopted child. Regardless of total amount of sick leave accrued, an employee is not entitled to nor will be allowed to take more than 12-weeks of sick leave (paid or unpaid) in any 12-month period. Under extraordinary circumstance the County Administrator, may approve sick leave beyond 12-weeks in any 12-month period.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

Employee's employment may be terminated at the expiration of FMLA sick leave. In such event, unused sick time will be paid to the employee in accordance with policies then in effect.

- C. Who May Accrue Sick and Safe Leave. Permanent Employees including employees on probation shall accrue sick and safe leave (SSL). Temporary, part-time, seasonal, and contractual employees who are regularly scheduled to work 12 or more hours per week also are eligible for SSL. Part-time, contractual employees who can accept or decline shifts and who are not required to work a regularly scheduled schedule are not eligible for SSL.
- D. Rate of Accrual. A Full-Time Employee shall accrue 3.39 hours of sick and safe leave per biweekly pay period. Excepted as provided herein, temporary, part-time, seasonal, and/or contractual employees who are regularly scheduled to work 12 or more hours per week shall accrue sick and safe leave at the rate of one (1) hour for every 30 hours worked.
- E. Definition of Family Member. For the purpose of this section, family member means:
1. A biological child, an adopted child, a foster child, or a stepchild of the employee.
  2. A child for whom the employee has legal or physical custody or guardianship.
  3. A child for whom the employee stands in loco parentis, regardless of the child's age; a biological parent, an adoptive parent, a foster parent, or a stepparent of the employee or of the employee's spouse.
  4. The legal guardian of the employee.
  5. An individual who acted as a parent or stood in loco parentis to the employee or the employee's spouse when the employee or the employee's spouse was a minor.
  6. The spouse of the employee.
  7. A biological grandparent, an adopted grandparent, a foster grandparent, or a step grandparent of the employee.
  8. A biological grandchild, an adopted grandchild, a foster grandchild, or a step grandchild of the employee; or
  9. A biological sibling, and adopted sibling, a foster sibling, or a step sibling of the employee.
- F. Use of Sick and Safe Leave. Accrued sick and safe leave (SSL) must be used:

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

1. To care for or treat an Employee's mental or physical illness, injury, or condition including leave that qualifies for Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leave.
2. To obtain preventive medical care for the employee or employee's family member.
3. To care for a family member with a mental or physical illness, injury, or condition.
4. For maternity or paternity leave; or
5. To care for an Employee or family member where a work absence is necessary due to domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking committed against the Employee or their family member. This includes:
  - a. Medical or service mental health attention.
  - b. Services from a victim service organization.
  - c. Legal services.
  - d. Attendance at legal proceedings.

G. FMLA/MHWA Sick and Safe Leave Interface. Caroline County is required to comply with two different laws governing employee sick leave: The Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act (MHWA). In broad terms, FMLA requires the County to provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave per year. It also requires that their group health benefits be maintained during the leave. Also in broad terms, MHWA requires the County to provide paid "sick and safe leave" to qualified full and part-time employees.

It is beyond the scope of the County's Personnel Rules & Regulations to explain in detail the complex rules and regulations of FMLA and MHWFA. The goal is to explain how the two types of leave work and to emphasize the importance of an Employee working closely with the County's Office of Human Resources.

In general, an Employee with an accrued balance of sick and safe leave (SSL) is expected to exhaust this paid leave before taking unpaid FMLA leave. An Employee eligible for SSL may not be eligible for FMLA leave. For FMLA leave, an Employee must have: 1) worked for the County for at least 12 months, and; 2) worked at least 1,250 hours for the County during the 12 months prior to the FMLA leave. For SSL, the accrual of leave begins immediately upon employment for qualified employees. For employees not qualified to earn sick leave under the

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

previous Personnel Rules & Regulations but qualified to earn SSL under the MHWA and working for the County on January 1, 2018, shall begin accruing SSL as of that date.

### H. Obligations regarding Sick and Safe Leave (SSL).

1. If the need to use earned Sick and Safe Leave (SSL) is foreseeable, the Employee will provide notice to his or her supervisor and/or Department Head at least seven calendar days before the leave begins.
2. If the need to use the leave is not foreseeable, the Employee must provide notice to his or her supervisor and/or Department Head as soon as practicable.
3. A Department Head may deny a request to take earned Sick and Safe Leave (SSL) if the Employee fails to provide the required notice and if the employee's absence will cause a disruption.
4. During the first 120 days of employment, an Employee using Sick and Safe Leave (SSL) is required to provide verification of the reason for the leave use.
5. If an Employee uses Sick and Safe Leave (SSL) for more than two consecutive scheduled shifts, he or she may be required to provide verification of the reason for the leave use
6. If an Employee fails or refuses to provide verification as required, the Department Head may deny a subsequent request for leave for the same reason.
7. An Employee who becomes ill or incapacitated while at work shall inform his or her supervisor (or the next person up the chain of command in the absence of the immediate supervisor) prior to departing the workplace. Employee's supervisor shall ask Employee directly, or shall otherwise ascertain, whether the event that requires Employee to discontinue work qualifies as a workers' compensation claim. Employee's supervisor shall require Employee to see a physician if a workers' compensation claim is likely, in the supervisor's judgment.

I. Accrual limit. A Full-Time Employee shall not be limited in Sick and Safe Leave (SSL) accrued. A temporary, part-time, seasonal, and/or contractual employees shall be limited to an annual accrual of no more than forty (40 hours) with a maximum cap of sixty-four (64 hours) of Sick and Safe Leave.

### J. Benefit Upon Separation/Retirement.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

1. LEOPS participants: Employees enrolled in the Law Enforcement Officers' Pension System (LEOPS) shall be eligible to turn in accrued Sick and Safe Leave for retirement credit as allowed by LEOPS and as may be amended from time to time.
2. Caroline County pension participants: Upon retirement or voluntary separation, an employee enrolled and vested in the County pension plan shall be eligible to turn in accrued Sick and Safe leave for retirement credit in the County pension plan at the same ratio as afforded to participants in the Law Enforcement Officers' Pension System (LEOPS) and as may be amended from time to time. Retirement credit earned from sick leave turn in shall not count towards the service time required for eligibility to retire.
3. Other employees. Other employees earning Sick and Safe Leave shall not receive any payment or credit for unused SSL upon termination of employment.

### K. Hardship Leave Bank.

1. Purpose. The purpose of the Hardship Leave Bank is to provide paid leave to employees facing significant medical or personal issues, when they have exhausted all sick and safe leave, vacation, and personal leave time and are not receiving temporary disability benefits under workers' compensation.
2. Accrual.
  - a. Effective September 19, 2018, the hours accumulated in the County's previous Sick Leave Bank shall be transferred to the Hardship Leave Bank.
  - b. All full-time employees shall be automatically enrolled in the Hardship Leave Bank.
  - c. The County shall deposit 0.31 hours of leave per employee, per pay period into the Hardship Leave Bank. This is the equivalent of one day of leave per employee, per year deposited into the bank.
3. Permitted Uses. The Hardship Leave Bank may be used for the following purposes:
  - a. Sick and Safe Leave as defined by State law:
    - i. Care for or treat an Employee's mental or physical illness, injury, or condition including leave that qualifies for Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leave.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- ii. Preventive medical care for the employee or employee's family member.
    - iii. Care for a family member with a mental or physical illness, injury, or condition.
    - iv. Maternity or paternity leave; or
    - v. Care for an Employee or family member where a work absence is necessary due to domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking committed against the Employee or their family member (including attending legal proceedings)
  - b. Hardship: Any situation of a serious nature that may cause the employee to miss a significant amount of time, but does not fall under the definition of Sick and Safe Leave. Examples of purposes for which the Hardship Bank may be used include the loss of a home due to fire or extended bereavement leave.
  - c. Flexible Use Permitted. Unless an employee is taking leave under the Family Medical Leave Act, leave used from the Hardship Bank may be tailored to meet the employee's specific situation. For example, Hardship Leave may be used for partial days or non-consecutive days.
4. Process.
- a. Application.
    - i. An Employee shall make application to the Hardship Leave Bank in writing to his or her Department Head who will forward the request to the Director of Human Resources.
    - ii. All requests should indicate the estimated number of hardship leave days required and how the leave time is requested to be structured, as well as information related to any pending disability claims and detailed description of the reason for the leave.
    - iii. Requests for withdrawal should be made by the employee or his/her designee at least ten (10) working days prior to all accrued sick, vacation, and personal leave time has been exhausted unless the need was unforeseen.
  - b. Approval.
    - i. Within ten (10) days of the receipt of the Hardship Leave Bank application, the Hardship Bank Leave Panel shall convene either in person or virtually.
    - ii. This Panel shall consist of the Employee's Department Head, the

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- Director of Human Resources, and the County Administrator. Panel members may designate an alternate with approval by the Director of Human Resources or the County Administrator's approval on a case-by-case basis.
- iii. The Panel shall review all information and grant the amount of hardship leave requested for all documented absences in excess of 5 days (40 hours), The structure for the use of the hardship leave will be approved and documented in notification to employee and their Department Head.
  - iv. The Panel may on rare occasions deny an employee's request for Hardship leave if the employee has been disciplined for leave use within 6 months of their request. If denied employee will be notified of the denial and reason they were denied.
    - 1. If an employee is denied Hardship leave this would not impede their ability to make future request as needed.
    - 2. All new requests will be reviewed based on length of time absent and whether they have been disciplined within 6 months of the new request.
- c. Limits.
- i. The maximum amount of hardship leave given shall not exceed 240 hours (30 days).
  - ii. No employee may receive more than 240 hours (30 days) in any calendar year.
  - iii. If the Employee returns to work before the received hours have been expended, the hours shall be returned to the Hardship Leave Bank.
- d. Review. On an annual basis, the Employee Advisory Board will review the balance of the Hardship Leave Bank, as well as the number of applications filed and the decisions of the Panels. The Employee Advisory Board may recommend changes to the Hardship Leave Bank policy based on their review. Information provided to the Employee Advisory Board will be redacted as necessary to protect the employees' privacy and comply with HIPPA requirements.

### Section 8-106. Personal Leave.

- A. Defined. Personal leave is paid leave that may be taken for any reason by an eligible Employee. Personal leave developed from a contraction of paid holidays, so that Employees of differing traditions and faiths could have a day off that accommodated their individualized needs. Personal leave is not a benefit that is paid out upon separation of employment.

Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

B. Accrual Rate.

1. Full-Time and Part-Time Employees will not be awarded personal leave until after six (6) months of employment. all personal leave will be prorated during their first year based on the remainder of the year after six (6) months of employment.
2. A Full-Time Employee shall be awarded 2.5 days January 1<sup>st</sup> and 2.5 days July 1<sup>st</sup> of each calendar year.
3. A Part-Time Employee shall be awarded personal leave in the same manner as a Full-Time Employee, except that the rate of the award shall be prorated to be commensurate with the amount of hours such Part-Time Employee is scheduled to work, using a 40-hour workweek as a basis for the computation.

C. Notice. An Employee shall notify his or her immediate supervisor and Department Head in advance of the date or dates Employee intends to use personal leave. A Department Head shall accommodate an Employee's request for personal leave whenever the normal operation of the department is not adversely affected by the use of personal leave.

D. Use. Personal leave must be used within the calendar year in which it has been awarded.

E. Leave accrual reset. Personal leave will reset January 1<sup>st</sup> of every calendar year.

Section 8-107. Paid Holidays.

A. Permanent and Probationary Employees shall be paid for all holidays observed by Employer. Part-Time Employees shall be paid for holidays in an amount that is prorated in accordance with the number of hours worked each week, using a 40-hour week as the basis for the computation.

B. The following holidays are observed by Employer:

New Year's Day  
Martin Luther King Day  
Presidents Day  
Memorial Day  
Juneteenth Day  
Independence Day  
Labor Day  
Veterans Day  
Thanksgiving Day  
Friday after Thanksgiving  
Christmas Day

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

### Presidential Election Day

- C. Employer may designate additional holidays.
- D. Any holiday falling on Saturday shall be honored on the Friday preceding the Saturday on which the holiday falls. Any holiday falling on Sunday shall be honored on Monday immediately following the Sunday on which the holiday falls.
- E. Holiday Work. An Employee who is required to work on a holiday shall receive their total annual allowance of holiday leave hours (*i.e.*, the number of County holidays times eight hours per holiday) off sometime within the same calendar year.

### Section 8-108. Family and Medical Leave.

- A. Purpose. The purpose of this policy is to provide family and medical leave to eligible Employees in accordance with the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA).
- B. Leave Provided.
  - 1. Eligible Employees may, with appropriate notice, take up to 12 weeks of family and medical leave during a rolling 12-month period for one or more of the following reasons:
    - a. The birth of Employee's child;
    - b. The placement of a child with Employee for adoption or foster care;
    - c. To care for a child, spouse, or parent of an Employee if such family member has a serious health condition;
    - d. Employee is unable to perform the essential functions of the Employee's position because of the Employee's own serious health condition.
  - 2. The 12-month period is calculated on a "rolling" 12-month basis, measured backward from the date leave begins.
- C. Eligibility.
  - 1. To be eligible for Family and Medical Leave, Employee must have continuously worked for Employer at least 12 months before the request for leave and at least 1,250 hours during the 12 months preceding the leave. All paid leave and holiday hours are excluded in this calculation.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

2. Leave due to the birth or placement of a child must be completed within the 12-month period beginning on the date of conception, birth or placement. In addition, if a husband and wife both are employed by Employer and both request leave due to the birth or placement of a child or to care for an ill parent, both spouses together may take only a combined total of 12 weeks during any rolling 12-month period.

### D. Definitions.

#### 1. Child

Any person who is under 18 years old or any person 18 years old, or older, who is incapable of self-care because of a mental or physical disability, if the person's relationship to Employee is that of:

- a. A biological, adopted, or foster child;
- b. A stepchild;
- c. A legal ward; or
- d. A child of an Employee that provides day-to-day care for and financially supports the child.

#### 2. Health care provider

A Doctor of Medicine or osteopathy who is authorized to practice medicine or surgery by the State in which the doctor practices or any other person authorized to diagnose and treat physical or mental conditions in the state in which the person practices without supervision by a doctor or other health care provider and performing within the scope of their practice as defined under state law. Examples of health care providers are listed below:

- a. Physician;
- b. Physical therapist;
- c. Clinical psychologist;
- d. Dentist;
- e. Oral surgeon;
- f. Chiropractor,
- g. Podiatrist;

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- h. Certified nurse practitioner;
- i. Certified nurse-midwife;
- j. Licensed certified clinical social worker, or
- k. Accredited Christian Science practitioner listed with the First Church of Christ, Scientist in Boston, Massachusetts. (If the Employee or family member is receiving treatment from a Christian Science practitioner, Employer may require the Employee or family member to submit to examination to obtain a second or third certification from a health care provider other than a Christian Science practitioner.)

### 3. Parent

The biological parent of Employee or an individual who had day-to-day responsibility to care for and financially support Employee when Employee was a child.

### 4. Spouse

A husband or wife as defined or recognized under State law for purposes of marriage in the State where Employee resides.

### 5. Serious health condition

An illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves one or more of the following:

- a. An incapacity or treatment in connection with inpatient care in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical care facility;
- b. An incapacity requiring absence of more than three consecutive calendar days and continuing treatment (two or more times) by a health care provider;
- c. Continuing treatment by a health care provider of a chronic or long-term condition which if left untreated will likely result in incapacity of more than three consecutive calendar days;
- d. Incapacity due to pregnancy, including prenatal care.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

### E. Procedures.

#### 1. Notice of Leave

- a. Employees who are considering applying for FMLA leave should contact the Benefits Coordinator to obtain the necessary forms and to discuss the process.
- b. Employee should complete the *Request for Family and Medical Leave* form and submit it to the Benefits Coordinator.
- c. If the need for FMLA leave is foreseeable, Employee must give Employer 30 days prior written notice by completing the *Request for Family and Medical Leave* form as indicated above. Failure to provide such notice may be grounds for delay of leave. Additionally, an Employee who requests leave for planned medical treatment must consult with his/her immediate supervisor and make a reasonable effort to schedule the leave so as not to disrupt unduly the operations of Employer.
- d. Where the need for leave is not foreseeable, notice must be given as soon as practicable, usually within one or two business days of learning of the need for leave, except in extraordinary circumstances.
- e. When absent without prior approval, an Employee is expected to contact his immediate supervisor or the Personnel and Benefits Coordinator, in the absence of the immediate supervisor, to explain the reason for his/her absence and to indicate the date when Employee expects to return to work. If Employee will be out for a reason that may qualify as FMLA job protected leave, Employee should inform his/her immediate supervisor or the Personnel and Benefits Coordinator, in the absence of the immediate supervisor, to request the appropriate forms to apply for FMLA leave.
- f. If an Employee does not request FMLA leave, but is out on sick leave or leave that is not pre-approved for a period of over 3 consecutive calendar days (including weekends and holidays) and/or for repeated absences for a reason that may be FMLA qualified, Employee's immediate supervisor or the Personnel and Benefits Coordinator may forward Employee an FMLA packet in order to determine if the leave should be designated as FMLA leave. Employee shall complete the packet and, where appropriate, have Employee's health care provider complete the appropriate forms.
- g. Whenever Employer has sufficient information to determine that an Employee is absent for an FMLA qualifying reasons, Employer reserves the

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

right to designate the leave as FMLA leave and count it toward Employee's 12-week entitlement.

### 2. Medical Certification

- a. If the reason for leave is for Employee's own or a covered family member's serious health condition, Employee and Employee's health care provider or the health care provider for the qualifying relation (e.g., child or parent) may be required to provide appropriate medical certification, unless Employer determines that such certification is not required.
- b. Medical certification is due within 15 days after Employee requests leave or Employer provides Employee with FMLA forms pursuant to Subsection 8-108E.1.f. Failure to provide requested medical certification in a timely manner might result in denial of leave until such information is provided, which could result in leave without pay and an unexcused absence on Employee's record.
- c. Employer, at its expense, may require an examination by a second health care provider designated by Employer. If the second health care provider's opinion conflicts with the original medical certification, Employer, at its expense, may require a third, mutually agreeable, health care provider to conduct an examination and provide a final binding opinion.
- d. Employee may be requested to provide re-certification on a monthly basis to verify the need for Employee to remain on FMLA leave.
- e. Falsification of medical certification records or other false information supplied by Employee to obtain approval for leave will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

### 3. Length of Leave

- a. Eligible Employees may take up to 12 weeks of leave in a rolling 12-month period. For approved FMLA leave, the 12-month period is calculated on a "rolling" 12-month basis, measured backward from the date leave begins. For instance, if Employee requests an 8-week leave beginning August 1, 2004, and Employee was on FMLA leave from October 3, 2003 to November 11, 2003 (6 weeks), Employee would only be able to take 6 additional weeks under FMLA. (Thereafter, the County is not required to hold Employee's position (or an equivalent position) open for Employee, and if Employee does not have accrued and unused leave and does not

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- obtain approval to use such leave, Employee may be separated from Employment).
- b. Employee's entitlement to FMLA leave for birth or placement of a child expires 12 months after the birth or placement. (Note, if the child develops a serious health condition and Employee has FMLA Leave available, it could be used – this applies to “bonding” leave).
  - c. FMLA leave may be taken intermittently (in separate blocks of time) where medically necessary because of a serious health condition of Employee or a covered family member. Time taken intermittently for FMLA purposes will be tracked and deducted from Employee's 12-week entitlement. If the need for the leave is foreseeable, Employee must try to schedule the leave so as to not unduly disrupt Employer’s flow of work. Employer reserves the right to transfer Employee to a position with equivalent pay and benefits that better accommodates Employee's intermittent leave. Leave to care for a newly born child or a child placed with Employee for adoption or foster care may not be taken intermittently.
  - d. An Employee who fails to return to work immediately following expiration of the authorized leave period is subject to termination. All leave taken under this policy and leave for any other reason which would qualify under FMLA will be counted against Employee's 12 week leave entitlement under FMLA.
  - e. An Employee who has utilized FMLA for his/her own serious medical condition and cannot return to work within twelve (12) weeks shall complete a reasonable accommodation form. The form must be submitted five (5) days before the expiration of FMLA. The County will utilize the completed reasonable accommodation form to determine whether the employee may be eligible for a reasonable accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act.
4. Reporting While on Leave. Employees on approved FMLA leave are required to contact the Personnel and Benefits Coordinator on the first Monday of each month regarding their status and intention to return to work.
  5. Use of Benefit Accruals
    - a. FMLA leave will run concurrently with Employee's paid leave. All paid leave will be exhausted before Employee may begin taking leave without pay. If all accrued paid leave (*i.e.*, annual, sick and personal leave) is exhausted while Employee is on FMLA leave, any approved balance of the

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

FMLA leave is unpaid. An Employee will not accrue benefits during unpaid FMLA leave. (See Section 8-112B).

- b. After 12 workweeks of paid and/or unpaid FMLA leave has been taken in a rolling 12-month period, Employee may be dismissed from County Employment and his/her position will no longer be protected. An employee is entitled only to twelve (12) work weeks of FMLA leave in a rolling twelve (12) month period before being subject to dismissal for failure to come to work and perform Employee's duties and obligations.

### 6. Health and Other Benefits

- a. During an approved FMLA leave, Employer will maintain Employee's health benefits, as if Employee continued to be actively employed.
- b. Employees using benefit accruals (sick, vacation and/or personal leave) while on leave will continue to have the contributory portion of their health benefits deducted from their paycheck.
- c. Premiums paid by Employer are continued as a condition of Employee's expected return to work. If Employee elects not to return to work at the end of the leave period, Employee will be required to reimburse Employer for the cost of premiums paid for maintaining coverage during the leave, unless Employee cannot return to work because of a serious health condition or other circumstances beyond his/her control. Employer may deduct the amount due from any sums owed the non-returning Employee (such as final paycheck and leave accruals).
- d. An Employee on FMLA leave is not eligible for COBRA (*i.e.*, the Comprehensive Omnibus Budget and Reconciliation Act of 1985) coverage unless he/she does not return from leave.

7. Outside Employment. An Employee who accepts outside employment while on FMLA leave will have the leave revoked and will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

### 8. Returning from Leave

- a. An Employee returning from leave due to a serious health condition will be required to provide medical certification from his/her health care provider to the Personnel and Benefits Coordinator that he/she is able to resume work and perform all of the essential functions of Employee's position.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- b. An eligible Employee returning from FMLA leave shall be restored to the same position that Employee held when the leave started, or to an equivalent position. An equivalent position is one with equivalent benefits, pay and other terms and conditions of employment.
  - c. Any increase in pay or changes in benefits that occurred during the time when Employee was on FMLA leave will be made effective upon Employee's return to work.
9. Failure to Return to Work. Failure to return to work on the originally scheduled return date from FMLA leave will be considered a voluntary termination by Employee, unless:
- a. The failure to return was caused by legitimate medical reasons or circumstances beyond the control of the Employee and Employee promptly notified Employer of the circumstances;
  - b. Employee obtained prior approval from the Personnel Administrator (*i.e.*, the County Administrator) to continue leave beyond the 12 week period;
  - c. Employee obtained approved leave without pay pursuant to Section 8-112A.2.
- F. Resource: If you anticipate the possibility of taking FMLA leave, or if you have any questions about the application of this policy to your particular situation, please contact the Personnel and Benefits Coordinator.

### Section 8-109. Military Leave.

- A. In accordance with Article 65, Section 42 of the Annotated Code of Maryland, an Employee who serves in the organized militia or in the Army, Navy, Air, Marine, Coast Guard or National Guard Reserve is entitled to up to fifteen (15) additional days of leave to engage in such service. The County, accordingly, will provide an Employee who is an active member of Maryland's organized militia or the Army, Navy, Air, Marine, Coast Guard or National Guard Reserve up to fifteen (15) days of leave per calendar year solely for the purpose of engaging in or other mandated military service.
- B. Requests for military leave shall be made in writing, accompanied by paperwork verifying the orders, training or assignment pursuant to which the leave is being requested, and delivered to the Department Head at least two weeks prior to the first day of requested leave. The Department Head shall forward a copy of Employee's request to the Personnel Administrator.

Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- C. The County will comply with any federal or Maryland law regarding leave for military service.

Section 8-110. Jury Duty Leave.

A Permanent Employee or a Probationary Employee on jury duty shall be paid at his or her usual rate of pay minus any per diem received for jury service. Such Employee shall notify his or her supervisor immediately upon receipt of a request for jury duty. An Employee serving jury duty shall return to work immediately if the Employee is excused from jury duty prior to the end of his/her scheduled work day/shift. An employee who fails to promptly return to work upon release from jury duty shall be subject to the disciplinary sanctions set forth in Section 5-105.

Section 8-111. Educational Leave.

Employer may provide educational leave pursuant to Chapter 10 of these Personnel Rules and Regulations.

Section 8-112. Voluntary Leave Without Pay.

A. When Granted.

1. Leave without pay may be granted for up to one year to a Permanent Employee who wishes to attend school or to engage in other approved activities that will enhance skills pertinent to Employee's Service. Employee shall submit a written request for such leave to the Department Head. The Department Head shall forward the request and a recommendation to accept or deny the leave to the Personnel Administrator. The Personnel Administrator may grant the leave with the consent of the County Commissioners, and with or without conditions.
2. Leave without pay shall be granted to an Employee entitled to FMLA leave who has exhausted all of his/her paid leave but is still entitled to additional FMLA leave before the County no longer needs to protect such Employee's position with the County. (See Section 8-108E.5.a).

B. An Employee on leave without pay may remain in the retirement and insurance systems, provided the Employee pays both the Employee and Employer share of the costs.

C. Prior to accepting other employment during a leave without pay, Employee shall make a written request to the Department Head, who will forward the request to the Personnel Administrator. The Personnel Administrator will submit the request, along with his or her recommendation, to the County Commissioners, which may deny or grant the request. If

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

the request is denied, Employee shall not accept the employment, or, if Employee accepts the employment, that shall constitute a resignation of his/her position with the County.

### Section 8-113. Furlough.

- A. An Employee may be furloughed under any of the following circumstances:
1. A revenue shortfall during the fiscal year that requires a reduction in expenditures for a department, agency, or office; or
  2. A budgeted reduction in salaries, wages, and fringe benefits for a department, agency, or office.
- B. When a furlough is considered, the County Administrator shall submit a plan for furloughing Employees to the County Commissioners. The County Commissioners may modify and revise the proposed plan and, ultimately, may adopt a furlough plan by resolution. An adopted furlough plan shall, at the minimum, set forth the following:
1. The circumstances necessitating the furlough;
  2. The methods or rationale used to identify or determine the persons or groups to be furloughed;
  3. The Employees or groups of Employees to be furloughed and those who will not be furloughed;
  4. The number of days and hours such Employees will be furloughed and the specific dates furloughs will occur;
  5. The estimated dollar amount of savings anticipated from the furlough plan.
- C. Generally, a furlough plan will not require any Employee to take more than one furlough day or eight (8) furlough hours of regularly scheduled work time, whichever is greater, in any given two-week period. The furlough plan may require an Employee to take more than one furlough day or eight furlough hours in a two-week period only if the County Commissioners determine that closing offices will be the most efficient method of resolving the fiscal problems necessarily the furlough.
- D. A furlough shall not affect an Employee's group health insurance coverage with Employer.
- E. While on furlough, an Employee who is eligible to accrue leave benefits shall continue to accrue leave as though not on furlough.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

### Section 8-114. Bereavement Leave.

- A. A Full-Time Employee shall be paid for three (3) days of bereavement leave. A Part-Time Employee shall be paid some fraction of the three (3) day bereavement leave based on the number of hours worked per week divided by forty (40) hours per week times three days. After three days, accumulated annual, personal or sick leave may be used.
- B. Bereavement leave shall be provided only for the death of an Employee's:
1. Spouse. A husband or wife as defined or recognized under State law for purposes of marriage in the State where employee resides;
  2. Child. A biological, adopted or foster child, a stepchild, a legal ward, or a child in which employee provides day-to-day care for and financial supports;
  3. Parent or in-law parent, if Employee is still married to the child of the in-law parent;
  4. Stepparent, if employee's parent is still married to the stepparent;
  5. Grandparent or grandchild;
  6. Brother or stepbrother;
  7. Sister or stepsister;

### Section 8-115. Unpaid Leave

A newly hired employee may take 2 days of unpaid leave during their first six (6) months of employment with approval by their Department Head, this leave can be taken for any reason. An Employee shall notify his or her immediate supervisor and Department Head in advance of the date or dates Employee intends to use unpaid leave. A Department Head shall accommodate an Employee's request for unpaid leave whenever the normal operation of the department is not adversely affected by the use of unpaid leave.

### Section 8-116. Tracking Leave for Units of State Government Funded by the County.

The employees of certain State agencies and units of State Government, such as the Sheriff's Department, the State's Attorney's Office, the Caroline County Circuit Court, the Board of Elections, the Cooperative Extension or the Soil Conservation District, etc., that are not Employees of Employer, the County, but that are funded by the County pursuant to State law, have provided leave benefits that mirror those provided to Employees pursuant to this Chapter of the Personnel Rules and Regulations. Where the County assists such State agencies and units of State

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

Government with their payroll, and thus, with tracking the leave provided to the employees of those State agencies and units of State government, such assistance does not make those State employees County Employees, and does not entitle those State employees to the leave provided pursuant to this Chapter of the County's Personnel Rules and Regulations. The State officials responsible for establishing the leave policies for such agencies and units of State government do not have to adopt the County's leave system. The fact that those officials have chosen to adopt the County's leave system and have requested the County, in the spirit of intergovernmental cooperation and the judicious use of public funds and taxpayer revenues to track leave for their employees shall not make the State employees of such agencies and units of State government County Employees, and does not give the County any right to dictate the leave that, ultimately, will be provided to such State employees.

**Chapter 9**  
**Retirement, Health and Other Benefits**

Section 9-101. Retirement.

A. Caroline County, Maryland Employees' Pension Plan.

1. All Permanent Employees, except those who are eligible for and enrolled in the Public Safety Retirement Plan (*see* Subsection A.5 below), who are scheduled to work at least 20 hours per week are eligible for and automatically enrolled in the Caroline County, Maryland, Employees' Pension Plan (the "Pension Plan") from their date of hire.
2. The language and terms of the Pension Plan shall control eligibility and entitlement to benefits. The below synopsis is provided solely as an approximate overview of the Pension Plan. Generally, the Employees listed in Subsection A.1 become eligible for full retirement benefits when they separate from County employment after either:
  - a. Thirty (30) years of eligible service; or
  - b. Reaching age 62 or older and completion of five (5) full years of eligible service.
3. A detailed copy of the Pension Plan, the terms of which control eligibility and entitlement to benefits, is maintained and available for review in the Office of Human Resources.
4. Some employees of certain State agencies and units of State Government that are not Employees of Employer, the County, but that are funded by the County pursuant to State law, also have been allowed to participate and become enrolled in the Pension Plan. Participation in the Pension Plan has been afforded to such State employees in the spirit of intergovernmental cooperation, prudent expenditure of taxpayer revenue and as an accommodation to the State officials that oversee such agencies, so that they do not have to hire and support separate administrative employees to process payroll and procure and manage an alternative pension system. State officials and employees of the following State agencies and units of State government have been included in the Pension Plan:
  - a. The State's Attorney's Office; and
  - b. The Circuit Court for Caroline County.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

5. The County has funded a separate Public Safety Retirement Plan for certain of its Employees and for members of the Sheriff's Department. Providing such benefit to members of the Sheriff's Department has been offered to such State employees in the spirit of intergovernmental cooperation, prudent expenditure of taxpayer revenue and as an accommodation to the Sheriff, so that he/she does not have to hire and support separate administrative employees to procure and manage an alternative pension system.
  6. Sharing and procuring a pension benefit with the above mentioned State agencies and units of State government shall not make the State officials and/or employees with and for whom such pension benefit is shared and procured County Employees, does not give the County any right to control such State officials or employees or to interfere in any way with the supervision and management of such State officials or employees, and is not intended to make the County a dual employer of such State officials or employees.
- B. Permanent Employees shall have the option of enrolling in a deferred compensation plan at their own expense.
- B. The County Commissioners, at their sole discretion, may provide retirement benefits to other Employees.

### Section 9-102. Workers' Compensation.

- A. Employer and Employees shall comply with the provisions of Maryland's Workers' Compensation Act. (*See* Title 9 of the Labor and Employment Article of the Maryland Annotated Code).
- B. An Employee shall not be entitled to double benefits as the result of a workers' compensation claim or award. For example, an Employee is not entitled to holiday pay from the County and wage reimbursement for the same day pursuant to an award of the Workers' Compensation Commission.
- C. If an injury for which an Employee makes a workers' compensation claim is found to be non-compensable or not covered under Maryland's Workers' Compensation Act, and the Employee has missed work as a result of the injury, such Employee shall use, and therefore lose, accrued sick leave, annual leave and/or personal leave equivalent to the Employee's period of absence. If Employee has insufficient accrued leave, Employee shall reimburse the County for days compensated while such Employee was off work for the injury.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

### Section 9-103. Health Coverage.

- A. Employer has provided health coverage to Permanent and Probationary Employees, although this is subject to change. Currently, such health coverage becomes available the first of the month following employment. The language and terms of each health coverage plan offered by the County will control eligibility for and the benefits provided by such plan notwithstanding any statement in this Section.
- B. An eligible Employee may elect not to obtain health coverage through Employer. Employees receiving a payment for not participating in the County's health insurance plan as of June 30, 2014, may continue to receive such payment, however, 1) The amount shall be frozen at the rate paid effective June 30, 2014; 2) The amount shall not be increased thereafter; and 3) If an employee leave County employment and returns or enrolls in the County's health insurance plan, the employee shall no longer be eligible for the payment.

Employees receiving such payment shall provide proof of health insurance annually to the Office of Human Resources.

For all other employees, the County shall make no payment nor provide other compensation for not participating in the County's health insurance plan.

The County reserves the right to phase in or eliminate the subsidy provided to employees for not participating in the County's health insurance plan at any time. Whatever the County elects and agrees to do will be implemented on a uniform and non-discriminatory basis.

- C. Employer has provided a dental plan for Permanent and Probationary Employees, although this is subject to change. The language of any such plan will control eligibility for and the benefits provided by such plan. Employer's dental plan currently is available the first day after 30 calendar days of employment. The cost of coverage is paid entirely by covered Employees through payroll deductions. If Employee does not enroll in the Employer-sponsored health plan, Employer, upon request, has, in the past, and may, but is not obligated to pay a portion Employee's cost for the dental plan. Under such circumstances, Employer's contribution shall equal the lesser of the cost of the dental plan or the amount Employer would pay for the Employee under the Employer-sponsored health plan, less any amounts the Employer pays for health insurance coverage as provided in Subsection 9-103B.
- D. A Contractual Employee may receive health and dental benefits only if specified in a written employment contract.
- E. The employees of certain State agencies and units of State Government that are not Employees of the County, but that are funded by the County pursuant to State law, also

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

may be provided health coverage through the County's health program. Such health coverage is offered to these State employees in the spirit of intergovernmental cooperation, prudent expenditure of taxpayer revenue and as an accommodation to the State officials that oversee these agencies, so that they do not have to hire and support separate administrative employees to procure health coverage for their employees, process payroll deductions, and administer a health coverage plan. Health coverage currently is offered to State officials and employees of the following State agencies and units of State government are included:

1. The State's Attorney's Office;
2. The Circuit Court for Caroline County; and
3. The Sheriff's Department.

Sharing this benefit with these State agencies and units of State government shall not make the State officials and/or employees with whom this benefit is shared County Employees, does not give the County any right to control such officials or employees or interfere in any way with the supervision and management of such officials or employees, and is not intended to make the County a dual employer of such officials or employees.

- F. The most up-to-date information about health care benefits, as well as copies of all applicable plans and plan summaries may be obtained from the Personnel and Benefits Coordinator.
- G. Once the County Commissioners elect the health care benefits that will be provided and the level of funding for such benefits, the Personnel Administrator is responsible for delivery and administering such benefits in a non-discriminatory manner.

### Section 9-104. Disability Insurance.

- A. Employer has provided long-term disability insurance for Permanent Employees and has paid the entire (100%) premium cost, although this is subject to change. The plan language will control eligibility and coverage notwithstanding any statement in this Section.
- B. The employees of certain State agencies and units of State Government that are not Employees of the County, but that are funded by the County pursuant to State law, also have been allowed to participate in the County's long-term disability program. Such long-term disability insurance has been offered to these State employees in the spirit of intergovernmental cooperation, prudent expenditure of taxpayer revenue and as an accommodation to the State officials that oversee these agencies, so that they do not have to hire and support separate administrative employees to procure a long-term disability insurance benefit for their employees and process payroll deductions and administer such

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

benefit. Long term disability insurance has been offered to State officials and employees of the following State agencies and units of State government:

1. The State's Attorney's Office;
2. The Circuit Court for Caroline County; and
3. The Sheriff's Department.

Sharing such benefit with such State agencies and units of State government shall not make the State officials and/or employees with whom this benefit is shared County Employees, does not give the County any right to control such officials or employees or to interfere in any way with the supervision and management of such officials or employees, and is not intended to make the County a dual employer of such officials or employees.

### Section 9-105. Health Care Benefits for Retired Employees.

A. The Employer provides certain health insurance benefits for retired employees. The benefit differs based on the age of the Retiree and the Retiree's qualified years of pension service.

1. Retirees eligible for Medicare

If a qualified Retiree has at least 20 years of qualified service and is eligible for Medicare, the Employer may provide a Medicare supplement plan. If a Retiree does not have at least 20 years of County service and is eligible for Medicare, the Retiree may purchase the County's Medicare supplement plan at the full normal cost.

2. Retirees not eligible for Medicare

The Employer may provide a subsidy to qualified Retirees through a Health Reimbursement Account (HRA) to help Retirees not yet eligible for Medicare pay health insurance premiums. To receive this reimbursement payment through the HRA, the Retiree must meet the following conditions:

A. Retirees that retired prior to July 1, 2023

- a. Be 50 years of age or older, have 30 years of Caroline County Service, and be retired under the County's normal pension plan, the County's public safety pension plan, or the Law Enforcement Officer's Pension System (LEOPS);

OR

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- b. Be 60 years of age or older, have 20 years of Caroline County Service, and be retired under the County's normal pension plan, the County's public safety pension plan, or the Law Enforcement Officer's Pension System (LEOPS).
- B. Retirees that retire after July 1, 2023
- a. Have 25 years of Caroline County Service and be retired under the County's normal pension plan or the Law Enforcement Officer's Pension System (LEOPS)

The only allowable expense through the County's HRA is the reimbursement of health insurance premiums for the Retiree. A retiree who is eligible for employer-sponsored health insurance through his/her employer or his/her spouse's employer shall not be eligible for this benefit.

For the purpose of Section 9-105.A.2., "County service" shall mean years of full-time employment in Caroline County government or the Caroline County Sheriff's Office where the employee participated in the Caroline County pension system or the Maryland Law Enforcement Officer's Pension System.

For the purpose of Section 9-105.A.2.A, "30 years of CAROLINE County service" under the Law Enforcement Officer's Pension System (LEOPS) shall be the equivalent of thirty (30) years of service as calculated by LEOPS, and as may be subsequently amended from time to time.

### 3. Retiree Spouse

The spouse of a Retiree who is eligible to participate in the County's Medicare supplement plan may purchase the County's Medicare supplement plan at the full normal cost. A spouse eligible to purchase the County's Medicare supplement under this Section may continue to purchase the insurance after the death of the Retiree.

- B. The County Commissioners, at their discretion, may elect to discontinue this benefit, or to substantially alter or amend this benefit. To the extent that the County Commissioners elect to fund and make such a benefit available, the Personnel Administrator shall be responsible for delivering such benefit in a non-discriminatory manner to the members of any group to whom such benefit is afforded

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

### Section 9-106. Life Insurance.

- A. The Employer may provide life insurance coverage for each Permanent Employee. The County is under no obligation to continue to provide such benefit, although to the extent such benefit is provided, the Personnel Administrator shall be responsible for delivering such benefit in a non-discriminatory fashion to all employee groups entitled to such benefit. The language of any plan or policy that provides such life insurance shall control and dictate eligibility for and entitlement to such life insurance benefit.
- B. A Contractual Employee may receive life insurance benefits only if specified in the employment contract.
- C. The employees of certain State agencies and units of State Government that are not Employees of the County, but that are funded by the County pursuant to State law, also may be provided group life insurance. Such group life insurance is offered to such State employees in the spirit of intergovernmental cooperation, prudent expenditure of taxpayer revenue and as an accommodation to the State officials that oversee those agencies, so that they do not have to hire and support separate administrative employees to procure a life insurance benefit for their employees, to process payroll deductions and to administer a life insurance benefit. Group life insurance has been offered to State officials and employees of the following State agencies and units of State government:
  - 1. The State's Attorney's Office;
  - 2. The Circuit Court for Caroline County; and
  - 3. The Sheriff's Department.

Sharing such benefit with such State agencies and units of State government shall not make the State officials and/or employees with whom such benefit is shared County Employees, does not give the County any right to control such officials or employees or interfere in any way with the supervision and management of such officials or employees, and is not intended to make the County a dual employer of such officials or employees.

- D. The County Commissioners, at their discretion, may elect to discontinue this benefit, or to substantially alter or amend this benefit.
- E. Historically, the employer has made available to retired employees a \$5,000 life insurance policy at nominal cost. Effective July 1, 2016, the employer shall discontinue this practice. the office of human resources shall create a roster of retirees enrolled in the \$5,000 life insurance provided by guardian as of June 1, 2016. In lieu of subsidizing life insurance

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

coverage for those enrolled retirees, the employer shall instead provide a lump sum death benefit in the amount of \$5,000 per retiree. This payment shall be made from the other post-employment benefits (OPEB) fund to the beneficiary designated by the retiree. Payment of the lump sum death benefit shall be made by the office of finance upon submission of an application and official verification of the retiree's death subject to the review and approval of the personnel administrator.

### Section 9-107. Educational Benefits.

Employer currently provides educational benefits to Employees, as provided in Chapter 10 of these Personnel Rules and Regulations.

### Section 9-108. Direct Deposit.

All persons who receive a paycheck through the County's payroll system will complete a direct deposit form and have their pay directly deposited into their personal bank account. The direct deposit system benefits the County by reducing the cost to process payroll. The system benefits all persons receiving a paycheck through the County payroll system by promptly and automatically replenishing their personal accounts without any time, effort or expense.

### Section 9-109. Early Return to Work Program.

- A. Purpose: The Early Return to Work Program's primary purpose is to lessen the impacts to the County Workers Compensation Insurance premiums, if an employee experiences a workplace injury or illness and has been cleared to return to work at a modified level. Additionally, the Early Return to Work Program will lessen the financial burden placed on employees who have experienced a workplace injury or illness by allowing the employee to return to full pay at an earlier time.
- B. Participation: Any employee who has experienced a work-related injury or illness, that has received a modified work release from a treating physician and is currently receiving wage payments from the county workers compensation policy, will be automatically placed into the Program.
- C. Length of Participation: Qualified employees will be placed in an initial modified work assignment within the County for up to 30 days. After the initial 30 days, continuation in this program will be determined by the Human Resources Director in direct consultation with the County Administrator. Continuation in the program will be dependent upon an evaluation of best interest of both the County and the employee.
- D. Temporary Work Assignments: Depending upon availability, an employee may be assigned to work in any County Department with varying hours, assignments outside of an employee's originating department will only be considered if no assignment is

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

available within their department. The assignments of work location and type will be determined by the Human Resources Director and the Department Head, based on employee's capabilities and County needs. County departments or agencies are not required to create work or positions but are encouraged to find flexible solutions to assist with placing these employees in productive temporary roles.

### E. Procedures:

#### 1. Participation Notice:

- A. All qualifying employees shall deliver a return to work note and the Return to Work Capacity Form within 72 hours of receipt from their physician to the Office of Human Resources. Return to Work Capacity Form will be provided to employee by the Director of Human Resources.
- B. The Human Resources Director will determine if the employee can, based on restrictions, be placed into a modified work assignment.
  - 1. The Human Resources Director will work with employee to complete an analysis of their individual capabilities.
  - 2. The Human Resources Director will discuss with the originating Department Head the capabilities of the employee to determine if a suitable assignment can be found within their department.
  - 3. If a suitable assignment cannot be found within originating department, then other departments and locations will be evaluated to determine an appropriate work assignment.
  - 4. The Human Resources Director, employee, and Department Head will meet to discuss available work assignment. If an employee has concerns with proposed temporary work assignment, they can document on the Early Return to Work Agreement Form. Employee concerns will be discussed to ensure that the work assignment is suitable.
- C. The Human Resources Director will remain in frequent contact with the employee to re-evaluate the employee's status in the program, based on the schedule of medical treatment and/or appointments.
- D. Any time off necessary for the medical treatments or appointments required as a result of the injury or illness will take priority and leave will be automatically granted for these activities. It is, however, the

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

responsibility of the employee to communicate these requirements to their supervisor to avoid unnecessary confusion or conflict.

2. The employee is required to immediately notify the Office of Human Resources of any changes in their medical status.

**Chapter 10**  
**Employee Career Development and Educational Benefits**

Section 10-101. Employee Career Development Programs.

Employer shall foster and promote the training and development of Employees where such training and development will improve the quality of services rendered to Employer, equip Employees for County career advancement, and provide Employer with a reservoir of skills necessary to meet current and future employment needs.

Section 10-102. Administration of Employee Career Development Programs.

- A. The Personnel Administrator shall have the overall responsibility for the development, administration, and evaluation of Employee career development programs.
- B. Department Heads shall develop Employees under their supervision by assessing needs; working with the Personnel Administrator to develop, conduct, and evaluate training and development programs; and providing sufficient time for Employees to participate in approved training and career development programs.

Section 10-103. Employee Orientation

- A. The Personnel Administrator is responsible for developing and implementing a program to orient each new Employee.
- B. Employee's Department Head, or designee, will provide job specific orientation for new Employees on the first day of employment.
- C. Within the first five (5) working days, the Personnel Administrator, or designee, will meet with each new Employee to review these Personnel Rules and Regulations, payroll issues, Employee benefits, and any other pertinent rules, procedures, guidelines or standards.

Section 10-104. Employee Training Opportunities.

Every Employee shall be assured equal consideration for appropriate training opportunities. When an Employee successfully completes a training program, Employee's Department Head shall forward a certificate or record of completion to the Personnel Administrator for placement in Employee's personnel file.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

### Section 10-105. Tuition Assistance Program.

#### A. Eligible Employees.

1. Permanent Full-Time Employees who have successfully completed their probationary periods of employment with Employer or;
2. Contractual Employees may be eligible for tuition assistance as specified in their employment contract or;
3. The Department Head in consultation with the Personnel Administrator may determine that an employee is eligible for tuition assistance based on the individual employee's career path within the County and the best interest of the County's continuity plan. Personnel Administrator will provide notification to the County Administrator.

#### B. Prerequisites.

1. The Department Head and the Personnel Administrator must determine that the course for which tuition assistance is sought is a job-related course or will provide an Employee with skills relevant to Employee's current or expected position within the county.
2. Employees are required to provide the County with authorization to all academic information (grades and attendance)
3. The Personnel Administrator must determine that an approved institution offers the course, including accredited colleges, universities, and technical and vocational schools.
4. The course must be offered at a time when Employee is not working or expected to be required to work, unless Employee has received educational leave approval pursuant to Section 10-106 before commencement of the course. All courses shall be taken on Employee's own time and shall not interfere with work assignments and performance.
5. At least 20 working days before the scheduled course begins, Employee shall complete a tuition assistance application and submit it to Employee's Department Head for review. Employee may include any other information Employee deems pertinent to determining how the course will benefit Employee's job performance, service to the community or the mission of the County. If approved by the

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

Department Head, the application shall be submitted to the Personnel Administrator for review and approval or disapproval.

6. A Contract for all College degree programs will need to be completed by Employee prior to their first tuition assistance payment and each subsequent payment.
  - a. The contract will require that an Employee pay back the County for tuition assistance on a prorated scale based on when tuition payment occurred if they leave full-time employment within 2 years of the date in which tuition is paid.
  - b. Employees will be required to pay back a portion of the tuition cost if they receive a Grade “C” or below.
7. A Contract for all Certifications/Licensing programs will be completed prior to first reimbursement.
  - a. Employees will be required to complete the full program and pass all Certification/Licensing requirements.
  - b. Failure to pass the full program and/or the testing requirements will require the employee to fully reimburse the county for all cost outline in their Tuition Assistance Contract.
  - c. Employees will be required to pay back a portion of the tuition cost if they receive a Grade of “C” or below.
  - d. The contract will require that an employee pay back the County for tuition assistance on a prorated scale as outlined in their Tuition Assistance Contract, if they leave full-time employment within that timeframe.
    - The requirement to remain employed full- time with the County after completion of the program and passing Certification/Licensing requirements will be a minimum of 1 year.

### C. Amount of Assistance.

1. Eligible Employees may receive tuition assistance for approved courses up to one hundred percent of full tuition costs and registration fees, not to exceed the per credit course fee based on the local university in-state tuition
2. Tuition assistance for associate’s degree classes is limited to cost per credit course fee based on local community college if they have the class available within their curriculum. Local university in-state tuition.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- D. Books and other course fees will be reimbursed at full cost.
- E. The decision to provide tuition assistance shall be rendered on a course-by-course basis. Merely because tuition assistance for a course was allowed in the past does not mean that assistance for the same course will be allowed in the future.
- F. The tuition assistance program is subject to available funding.
- G. Upon completion of the course, Employee shall complete the tuition assistance grade report, attach proof of the final grade, and submit the form to the Personnel Administrator. Employee will be billed for a portion of their tuition if they receive a grade lower than a "C" based on the scale below:
  - 25% for Grade "C"
  - 100% for Grades below "C"
  - Employees will only be allowed to take a class that is "pass or fail" if it is approved by the Department and Personnel Administrator.

### Section 10-106. Educational Leave.

- A. Employer, with the recommendation of the Personnel Administrator and the County Administrator and the approval of the County Commissioners, may provide an Employee with unpaid leave for up to one year to attend a course of instruction in a subject or subjects that are Service related.
- B. Employer, with the approval of the Personnel Administrator and the County Administrator, may allow an Employee to use accumulated annual, personal, and/or sick leave on a weekly periodic basis, where employee seeks to use such leave for a portion of one or several days, accumulating to no more than two days of work absence per week, for no more than one year, to attend a Service related educational program that is not reasonably available or offered at an off-duty time. The availability of the course or educational program, the Employee's performance record, the Employee's years of service, and the Employee's use/abuse of leave will be considered in determining whether to allow such use of annual, personal and/or sick leave.
- C. Requests for educational leave shall be made in writing to Employee's Department Head at least four weeks prior to commencement of the course or training for which leave is sought. The Department Head shall forward a copy of Employee's request to the Personnel Administrator along with a recommendation to grant or deny the leave. The Personnel Administrator will review the request and approve or deny the leave, with or without conditions.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

### Section 10-107. Suspension of Programs

Nothing in this Chapter 10 shall be interpreted as limiting the power and right of the County Commissioners to limit, alter, or suspend the programs in this Chapter 10 due to financial considerations including, but not limited to, shortfalls in anticipated tax revenues, cuts in federal or State funding, termination of grants, unforeseen financial demands, or otherwise.

**Chapter 11**  
**Employee Performance Evaluation**

Section 11-101. The Performance Evaluation System.

- A. Overview. The Employee performance evaluation system is a process for observing and reviewing work performance; recognizing its quality; identifying needs for improvement; and working with an Employee to improve effectiveness in order to maximize the use of Employee's knowledge, skills and abilities.
- B. Purpose. The Performance evaluation process provides a structured opportunity for an Employee to meet with his/her direct supervisor and discuss the supervisor's expectations of Employee, Employee's strengths and weaknesses, and other issues that affect the job and Employee's ability to succeed at the job.
1. A supervisor's performance evaluation will, in part, be predicated on such supervisor's ability to motivate, manage, and obtain productivity from such supervisor's direct reports. Therefore a supervisor must critically assess the strengths and weaknesses of the Employees that he/she directly supervises, quickly address deficiencies, and positively reinforce strengths and valuable contributions.
  2. An Employee must always be respectful of his/her supervisor. An Employee should use the evaluation process to self assess areas where he/she might improve his/her performance and the overall performance of the team for which he/she works. An Employee should feel comfortable respectfully voicing concerns and suggestions for training or operational enhancements as part of the evaluation process. An Employee must recognize that suggestions may not be acted upon for any number of reasons, but there is value in such exchanges to all concerned when conducted in a respectful and professional manner.
- C. Impact to Employee. The evaluation shall be considered in determining an Employee's pay increment.

Section 11-102. Personnel Administrator and Performance Evaluations.

The Personnel Administrator shall be responsible for the overall administration of Employee performance evaluations. Responsibilities include training and advising Department Heads and supervisors to ensure performance evaluations are conducted properly, communicating the intent and process of performance evaluations to Employees, and overseeing the appeals process.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

### Section 11-103. Probationary Period and Performance Evaluation.

- A. Each Probationary Employee shall be evaluated by his or her supervisor at the midpoint of the probationary period. However, failure to conduct a written evaluation within the probationary period does not deprive Employer of its right to terminate a Probationary Employee at will and without cause with the concurrence of the Personnel Administrator.
- B. Additional evaluations may be conducted during probation at the discretion of the supervisor.
- C. Copies of the completed evaluation forms shall be forwarded to the Personnel Administrator within seven (7) working days after the date on which the evaluation was completed.
- D. Only Probationary Employees receiving at least an overall “meets expectations” rating on their evaluation shall be moved from probationary status to permanent status. A letter of permanent appointment shall be sent to the Employee by the Personnel Administrator informing them of their change in status.

### Section 11-104. Annual Performance Evaluation.

- A. Each Permanent Employee shall receive an annual performance evaluation at a time specified by the Personnel Administrator. All other Employees may receive annual performance evaluations at times set by their supervisors. Employees may obtain from the Personnel Administrator a copy of the form used for the evaluation.
- B. An Employee’s supervisor shall prepare the performance evaluation of the Employee. The performance of the supervisor in managing and obtaining productivity from the Employees he/she directly supervises, including the proficient evaluation of the work of such Employees shall be considered in the supervisor’s performance evaluation, along with the performance of other duties and responsibilities of the supervisor.
- C. Before meeting with an Employee for a performance evaluation, the supervisor shall submit a preliminary evaluation of the Employee to the “Review Officer.” For purposes of these Personnel Rules and Regulations, the “Review Officer” shall be the person who supervises the person preparing the performance evaluation of an Employee, such as the Department Head.
- D. After meeting with the supervisor for purposes of discussing a performance evaluation, the Employee who was evaluated shall sign the performance evaluation. The signature by itself shall not signify that an Employee agrees with the evaluation. The signature shall signify that the Employee has received the evaluation personally and is aware of its content.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- E. The completed performance evaluation shall be forwarded through the Department Head to the Personnel Administrator. The personnel file of the Employee shall contain each performance evaluation that pertains to the Employee.
- F. An overall rating of “meets expectations” on the annual performance evaluation is required in order for an Employee to be eligible for an increase in in-grade pay increment.
- G. The Personnel Administrator shall certify to the payroll clerk when a given Employee is entitled to an increase in pay increment.

### Section 11-105. Unsatisfactory Evaluations.

- A. An Employee who receives an overall rating that is below the “competent” or “meets expectation” level (*i.e.*, a rating of “unsatisfactory” or “needs improvement”) on the annual evaluation shall not be eligible to receive an increase in-grade pay increment.
- B. During the meeting between the supervisor and the Employee for a performance evaluation, if Employee receives an unsatisfactory or needs improvement in any element of a performance evaluation, the supervisor shall prepare, submit and discuss with Employee a performance improvement plan that identifies the steps required for improvement and continued employment. A written summary of the meeting shall be prepared and a copy forwarded to the Employee and the Employee’s Department Head. The original written summary of the meeting shall be forwarded to the Personnel and Benefits Coordinator or the Personnel Administrator and shall be placed in Employee’s personnel folder.
- C. The supervisor shall conduct a follow-up performance evaluation after 90 days following the receipt of a rating of unsatisfactory or needs improvement in any element of a performance evaluation by an Employee. The 90-day performance evaluation and a written summary of the meeting shall be prepared and forwarded to:
  - 1. The Personnel Administrator;
  - 2. The Employee;
  - 3. The Employee’s Department Head.
- D. Prior to conducting the performance evaluation provided in Subsection 11-105C, the supervisor shall consult with the Review Officer, the Department Head and the Personnel Administrator or the Personnel and Benefits Coordinator on matters pertaining to the evaluation of the Employee.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- E. Even if performance in all areas rated unsatisfactory, needs improvement or lower improves to competent or meets expectations at the first 90-day review, a second 90-day review will be conducted to ensure that Employee sustains an acceptable level of performance. Such second 90-day performance evaluation and a written summary of the meeting shall be prepared and forwarded to:
1. The Personnel Administrator;
  2. The Employee;
  3. The Employee's Department Head.
- F. An Employee who receives an overall rating of "unsatisfactory" on the annual performance evaluation and fails to show significant and sustained improvement in the interim 90-day follow-up evaluations and/or the next annual evaluation shall be subject to dismissal.

### Section 11-106. Performance Evaluation Overall Rating Appeal Procedure.

- A. Employee performance evaluations of an Employee shall not be subject to the grievance procedure provided in Chapter 6 of these Personnel Rules and Regulations. An Employee in the Classified Service, nevertheless, shall have the right to appeal his/her overall performance evaluation, but not any specific rating or specific comment pertaining to his/her formal evaluation, in accordance with the following procedure.
1. Within fourteen (14) calendar days of receiving a performance evaluation, a Classified Employee who feels the overall rating is unfair and has an overall rating that is below "Meets Expectations" or "Competent" (*i.e.*, the level where the Classified Employee no longer is entitled to an increase in in-grade pay increment) may request a meeting with the Review Officer to review the overall rating.
  2. The Review Officer shall meet with the Classified Employee within fourteen (14) days after receiving a request for review. Within fourteen (14) days following the meeting, the Review Officer shall dispose of the matter by rendering a written decision and forwarding it to the Classified Employee, with a copy to the supervisor and the Personnel Administrator, who shall place the decision in the Classified Employee's personnel file. If the Review Officer has not met with the Classified Employee within fourteen (14) days after receipt of a request for review, the Classified Employee shall consider the request denied and may proceed to request review from the Personnel Administrator by following the Procedure in Subsection 11-106A.3 (*i.e.*, filing an appeal with the Personnel Administrator within seven (7) days after the tenth day after requesting a meeting with the Review Officer).

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

3. If the Classified Employee is dissatisfied with the Review Officer's decision, Employee may, within seven (7) days of receipt of the decision, appeal the performance evaluation report in writing to the Personnel Administrator. The Personnel Administrator shall, within twenty-one (21) days of receipt of the written request, meet with the Classified Employee. If the Review Officer *is* the Personnel Administrator, the appeal shall be directed to the County Administrator. The County Administrator shall meet with Classified Employee within twenty-one (21) days of receipt of the request, whichever is shortest. Within seven (7) days of the meeting, the Personnel Administrator or the County Administrator, whoever conducted the meeting, shall dispose of the matter by rendering a written decision and forwarding a copy to the Classified Employee, the Classified Employee's Department Head and the Classified Employee's immediate supervisor. A copy of the decision shall be placed in the Classified Employee's personnel file.
- B. There shall be no right to grieve a performance evaluation beyond the procedure provided for Classified Employees, as set forth in Subsection 11-106A above.

### Section 11-107. Other Performance Evaluations.

- A. A supervisor may conduct a performance evaluation at any time deemed prudent by the supervisor.
- B. Prior to leaving a supervisory position or being transferred to a new position, a supervisor shall complete a performance evaluation on each Permanent and Probationary Employee under his/her supervision who has not been evaluated within the last six months.
- C. Prior to leaving a position either by transfer or promotion, any Employee whose performance has not been evaluated during the preceding twelve months shall have that performance evaluated.

**Chapter 12**  
**Separations**

Section 12-101. Policy.

- A. Employer shall separate all Employees equitably and fairly.
- B. At the time of separation, an Employee shall return all County Property to his/her immediate supervisor or Department Head, including keys, badges, Equipment, and uniforms.

Section 12-102. Voluntary Separations.

- A. Retirement. Any Employee who is eligible for retirement may retire from service in accordance with the procedures established under Employer's pension plan. (See Section 9-101, Retirement).
- B. Resignation. In order to resign in good-standing and to receive payment for a portion of unused sick leave (see Section 8-105G), an Employee shall give at least fourteen (14) days written notice to his/her Department Head of Employee's intent to resign and must be available during that fourteen (14) day period to wrap up business and assist Department Head with any pressing matter within such Employee's scope of business.
- C. Abandon/Quit. An Employee who fails to come to work or who separates from service without two weeks prior notice as provided in Subsection 12-102B, or who is terminated for cause shall forfeit any right to payment for a portion of unused sick leave pursuant to Section 8-105G.

Section 12-103. Involuntary Separations.

- A. Dismissal. Employer may separate an Employee from service, which shall constitute dismissal. (See Section 5-105 of these Personnel Rules and Regulations).
- B. Disability. An Employee who can no longer perform the essential functions of his/her job on a daily basis, even if reasonable accommodations are made with respect to such disability, may be separated from Service.<sup>5</sup> (See Section 9-104, Disability Insurance, and Section 9-101, Retirement.) Separation for disability will not restrict eligibility to receive payment for accrued and unused annual, sick and/or personal leave. (See Sections 9-107, Life Insurance, 8-104E, Annual Leave, 8-105G, Sick Leave, and 8-106E, Personal Leave).

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<sup>5</sup> The Americans with Disability Act establishes parameters that must be considered when terminating a disabled Employee.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- C. Death. Separation resulting from the death of Employee will not restrict eligibility to receive payment for accrued and unused annual, sick and/or personal leave. (See Sections 9-107, Life Insurance, 8-104E, Annual Leave, 8-105G, Sick Leave, and 8-106E, Personal Leave).
- D. Layoff. An Employee may be separated from service due to a reduction-in-force.

### Section 12-104. Reduction-in-Force.

- A. Definition. Reduction-in-force occurs when any of the following occurs: a shortage of funds, a shortage of work, a re-organization, or an abolishment of positions.

The County Commissioners, working with the County Administrator, designate positions to be affected.

- B. Notification. Employees selected for reduction-in-force will be given written notice at least 30 days prior to the last day of employment. The notice shall include the reason for the reduction in force, the proposed final date of employment, and an explanation of any benefits to be received. The written notice shall be deemed given when hand delivered to the Employee or, if provided by mail, three days after being deposited with the United States Postal Service, first class postage paid, addressed to the Employee's last known address in the personnel records of the County.
- C. Continuing Benefits for Permanent Employees. For each Permanent Employee laid off pursuant to a reduction in force, Employer will:
  1. Pay all medical insurance costs for two months after the separation date;
  2. Pay life insurance premium for one month after the separation date; and
  3. If the reduction in force is not due to fiscal concerns or constraints, or, if the reduction in force is due to fiscal constraints and the County Commissioners, in their sole discretion, deem the County has the fiscal capability, Employer and may pay one week of wage compensation, computed at such Employee's highest pay level, for each year of service and/or may pay the benefit for accrued and unused sick leave provided in Section 8-105G. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Employee will be paid not less than the Employee's accrued annual leave.
  3. An At-Will Employee with a written employment contract that provides for continuing payments or a lump sum payment in the event of termination without cause shall not qualify for any of the payments in this Subsection 12-104, other than accrued annual leave.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- D. **Rehire Eligibility.** An Employee who has been terminated due to a reduction in force may apply for advertised vacancies, and is eligible for rehire, on the same terms and conditions as other applicants, with due regard given for job related experience relative to the advertised position and for the Employee's prior performance evaluations.

**Chapter 13**  
**Compensation**

Section 13-101. Compensation Plan.

- A. Employer shall maintain a Compensation Plan adequate to recruit and retain competent Employees.
- B. Each position with Employer shall be assigned a Class and a pay grade that establishes the current pay for the person filling the position and the pay range within the Class (*i.e.*, minimum, intermediate, and maximum pay that an Employee filling a position within the Class could receive).
- C. Positions shall be classified and the range of pay will be set based on consideration of the following principles:
  - 1. Equal-pay-for-equal-work regardless of ancestry or national origin, race or color, religion, age, disability, genetics, or sex or marital status;
  - 2. The relative difficulty of the work assigned;
  - 3. The recruiting experience of Employer;
  - 4. Any compensation comparison or review studies prepared for the County; and
  - 5. The budget constraints of the County.

Section 13-102. FLSA Classification of Positions.

The Federal Fair Labor Standards Act (“FLSA”) establishes criteria for determining whether a position is exempt from, or subject to, the overtime pay requirements of the act. Periodically, the County will review Class Specifications and the work actually performed by Employees to determine whether a position is exempt from, or subject to, the overtime pay requirements of the FLSA. The County will endeavor to have the Compensation Plan denote whether a Class Specification position is exempt from the overtime pay requirements (*i.e.*, “FLSA Exempt”) or subject to the FLSA overtime pay requirements (*i.e.*, “FLSA Non-Exempt”).

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

### Section 13-103. Adoption of the Compensation Plan.

- A. In conjunction with the annual budget cycle, the County Administrator, with the assistance of the Personnel Administrator, shall develop the Compensation Plan.
- B. The Compensation Plan shall be adopted by the County Commissioners in conjunction with the adoption of the operating budget.

### Section 13-104. Administration of the Compensation Plan.

The Personnel Administrator is responsible for the administration of the Compensation Plan.

### Section 13-105. Amending the Compensation Plan.

The Personnel Administrator is responsible for monitoring the Compensation Plan. Periodically, the Personnel Administrator shall prepare for the County Administrator comparative compensation studies and reviews of pertinent factors affecting compensation policies. As needed, the Personnel Administrator and the County Administrator shall recommend to the County Commissioners necessary amendments to the plan.

### Section 13-106. Entrance Into Service.

Generally, a newly appointed Employee will enter the service at the lowest step in the appropriate grade for his or her position. Upon the recommendation of the Department Head and Personnel Administrator, which will be based on such factors as the new Employee's training and equivalent job experience, the County Commissioners may provide for entry at a higher step, provided the new Employee has considerable appropriate training and experience and no current equally qualified Employee in the same classification makes less in compensation.

### Section 13-107. In-Grade Pay Increases.

- A. Only a Permanent Employee may receive an in-grade (*i.e.*, step) pay increase. An Employee on probation is not eligible to receive in-grade pay increases.
- B. An Employee shall have received an overall rating on the most recent annual performance evaluation of "meets expectations" or higher to be eligible for an in-grade pay increase.

### Section 13-108. Re-classification.

An Employee whose position was re-classified during the past twelve months and, because of the re-classification, received a ten percent (10%) pay increase, shall not be eligible for an in-grade increase until having served twelve (12) months in the current pay grade and step.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

### Section 13-109. Temporary Employees.

A Temporary Employee will be compensated at an hourly rate of pay equivalent to the computed hourly rate of pay provided in the Compensation Plan.

### Section 13-110. Contractual Employees.

A Contractual Employee will be compensated as provided in the written employment contract.

### Section 13-111. Adjustments to the Pay Rate.

- A. Transfer. When a Permanent Employee or a Probationary Employee is transferred to another position with a similar pay range for non-disciplinary reasons, the Employee shall continue to receive the same rate of pay.
- B. Promotion. When a Permanent Employee is promoted to a position with a higher pay range, such Employee shall be placed at a pay step in the range for the new position at a level determined by the Director of Human Resources on consultation with the Department Head of the employing Department, considering the qualifications, experience level, and preparedness of the Employee for the new position.
- C. Demotion. An Employee who is demoted for disciplinary reasons shall receive that rate of pay recommended by the Personnel Administrator with the Department Head and approved by the County Administrator or the County Commissioners.
- D. Reinstatement. When a former Employee who resigned in good standing pursuant to Section 12-102 is rehired within three (3) years after such resignation and placed in a position with the same pay range as that from which the Employee resigned upon recommendation from the department head.
- E. Reassignment. When an Permanent Employee is reassigned to a position with a lower pay range for non-disciplinary reasons due to reduction in force or re-organization, the Employee shall be placed at a pay step in the range for the new position at a level determined by the Director of Human Resources on consultation with the Department Head of the department and approved by the County Administrator or the County Commissioners.

### Section 13-112. Compensation During Temporary Assignments.

- A. Temporary Assignment. A Permanent Employee working for a period of 22 consecutive workdays in a position with a pay range higher than his or her own position shall be paid either at the lowest point of the higher pay grade or ten (10) percent more than the

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

Employee's current rate of pay, whichever is higher, for the period worked in the temporary assignment, retroactive to the first day of the temporary assignment. If an Employee is assigned a temporary position with a lower pay range, the Employee shall receive no reduction in pay.

1. Any temporary assignment to a merit position that may result in a temporary adjustment of pay shall require the approval of the County Administrator.
2. No temporary assignment shall exceed six (6) months. An Employee who is given a temporary assignment that lasts six (6) months shall be offered the position permanently, if Employer wishes to fill it. If the Employee does not want the position permanently, he/she shall be allowed to return to his/her current position.

B. Temporary Appointment. The Commissioners may appoint a Permanent Employee to "Acting" or "Interim" status to temporarily fill an At-Will position. No temporary appointment shall exceed twelve (12) months. The Commissioners shall determine the rate of pay for a temporary appointment, however such rate of pay shall be at least ten (10) percent more than the Employee's current rate of pay. If an Employee appointed on a temporary basis is not offered or declines permanent appointment, he/she shall be allowed to return to his/her current merit position.

### Section 13-113. Overtime Compensation.

#### A. Policy.

1. As a general rule, the County does not want Employees to work overtime. Department Heads should attempt to schedule work and Employee shifts so that overtime work is unnecessary.
  - a. An Employee shall not work overtime unless a Department Head or the Department Head's designee has expressly authorized and approved the overtime in advance of when Employee works the overtime.
  - b. Each Department Head shall track overtime worked and consider and recommend to the Personnel Administrator any changes in operating procedures or staffing that might help to eliminate the need for overtime without increasing the overall operating costs/budget of the department.
2. When it is necessary for Employees to work overtime, overtime compensation shall be paid as required under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- a. Salaried positions that are executive, administrative, professional, appropriate computer employee positions and positions otherwise exempt from the overtime pay requirements of the FLSA, as provided pursuant to the Wage and Hour regulations of the Department of Labor (*see* 29 Code of Federal Regulations Part 541), will not be afforded overtime compensation (*i.e.*, “FLSA Exempt” positions).
  - b. Employees who punch a time clock (or log in and out of work), are paid on an hourly basis, and qualify for overtime compensation, as provided by the FLSA and the Wage and Hour regulations of the Department of Labor, generally will receive overtime pay for hours worked over 40 hours per week or, in the case of certain classifications of employees, for time worked in excess of the minimums established by the applicable Department of Labor regulations (*i.e.*, “FLSA Non-Exempt” positions). Awarding compensatory time generally is a less preferred alternative to payment of overtime.
- B. At-Will Employees. At-Will Employees are salaried Employees and hold FLSA exempt positions that do not qualify for overtime pay. Overtime compensation shall not be paid to At-Will Employees and At-Will Employees are not eligible to earn compensatory time-off.
- C. FLSA Non-Exempt Employees. Employees who hold FLSA Non-Exempt positions shall be compensated at the rate of one and one-half times their normal hourly rate of pay for any hours worked in excess of the standard work week of 40 hours or, for law enforcement and corrections personnel, for hours worked in excess of 171 hours in a 28-day work cycle or 86 hours in a 14-day work cycle.
- D. Calculation of Hours Worked. Only authorized hours worked shall be counted as hours worked in a standard workweek or 28-day/14-day work cycle. Any other paid or unpaid leave taken during that period shall not be included in the calculation of hours worked.
- E. Compensatory Time-Off. Compensatory time may be provided, in lieu of overtime pay, to a FLSA Non-Exempt Employee who works overtime under the following conditions and circumstances:
1. Prior to working overtime, the Employee agrees to accept compensatory time-off in lieu of payment for working overtime. An FLSA Non-Exempt Employee who wishes to receive compensatory time instead of overtime pay shall make such election for an entire fiscal year (*i.e.*, July 1 of the year through June 30 of the following year). Thereafter, whenever such Employee has approval to work overtime, such Employee shall receive compensatory time-off in lieu of overtime pay as long as such Employee does not have accrued and unused compensatory time in excess of forty (40) hours. If an Employee has over forty (40) hours of

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

accrued and unused overtime, such Employee must be paid for all additional overtime in excess of forty (40) hours.

2. Prior to any overtime being worked, the Department Head has approved the award of compensatory time-off in lieu of overtime pay.
  3. One and one-half hours of compensatory time-off is awarded for each hour of overtime worked.
  4. Compensatory time-off shall be provided in lieu of overtime pay only in the event that Employee has less than 40 hours of accumulated and unused compensatory time-off and is not anticipated to accumulate more than 40 hours of compensatory time-off as a result of the overtime in question.
  5. Employee must obtain approval for use of compensatory time-off in the same manner as approval for use of annual leave (*see* Section 8-104E).
    - a. Absent extraordinary circumstances (*e.g.*, an Employee accumulating Compensatory time-off to extend paid time-off for child birth or adoption, or care of an elderly parent), an Employee must use compensatory time-off within 120 days after accumulating such leave.
    - b. The Department Head will allow an Employee to use accumulated compensatory time off within 120 days after it is accumulated, unless Employee fails to give adequate advance notice of a request for use of compensatory time-off and the department will be short staffed and unable to function properly when the leave is requested.
    - c. A Department Head shall notify the Personnel Administrator of the name of each Employee who has not used accumulated compensatory time-off within 120 days after earning it and the number of accumulated and unused hours. Thereafter, Employees shall be compensated for such time.
    - d. An Employee with accumulated compensatory time-off that believes he/she has been unreasonably denied use of such time-off shall promptly notify the Personnel Administrator.
- F. Administration of Compensatory Pay and Time-Off. Department Heads shall be responsible for administering the provisions of this policy within their respective departments and shall ensure that all overtime pay and compensatory time-off earned and used is promptly recorded in a ledger. Each Department Head is responsible for providing the Personnel and Benefits Coordinator with a monthly ledger showing the amount, if any, of compensatory time that each Non-FLSA Exempt Employee who has elected to receive

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

compensatory time-off in lieu of overtime pay has accrued and used. Such ledger shall be delivered to the Personnel and Benefits Coordinator by no later the fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) day of each month. Form is provided by the Office of Human Resources.

### Section 13-114. Cost of Living Increases.

- A. The County Commissioners may approve cost-of-living increases as part of the annual budget. Permanent Employees and Probationary Employees shall be eligible to receive cost-of-living increases.
- B. The County Commissioners shall, during annual budget formulation, consider whether a cost-of-living increase shall be provided to retirees receiving a monthly County pension benefit.

### Section 13-115. Travel Compensation.

- A. Employees required to travel in a privately owned car on approved County business shall be reimbursed for mileage at the prevailing rate set by the County Commissioners.
  - 1. An Employee will not use a privately owned vehicle for County business unless the vehicle is insured in accordance with the laws of Maryland and such Employee is an approved and insured driver of such vehicle.
  - 2. In the event of an accident, the private insurer shall be responsible for providing a defense and indemnification for any liability of Employee.
  - 3. Employee shall promptly notify the County's risk manager of any accident or mishap that occurs during Employee's use of such private vehicle and shall complete an incident report and provide whatever other information about the incident as is deemed necessary and appropriate. Failure to comply with this requirement will be grounds for immediate termination.
- B. Reimbursement for parking, bridges, and road tolls shall be provided to Employees traveling on official business if receipts for the expenses are received and provided to Employer within 60 days of occurrence.
- C. Employees may be reimbursed for the actual cost while traveling overnight for lodging and meals on County business during travel required by the Employer when supported by receipts. If Employee travels out of the County during a regular business day,

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

reimbursement for meals may be allowed when supported by receipts. The reimbursed amounts shall not exceed the limits established by the County Commissioners. If limits for reimbursed amounts have not been established by the County Commissioners, then the reimbursed amounts shall not exceed the typical and reasonable rates applicable in the area in which the travel occurred.

### Section 13-116. Compensation of On-Call Time for Non-Exempt FLSA Employees.

A. Introduction. In response to the operational needs of the County, A Non-Exempt (hourly) employee may be assigned to “on-call” status. On-Call status is different than an employee being subject to a call back (Section 113-17). An on-call employee must be:

1. Reachable by phone, pager, or similar Technology Equipment provided to Employee by the County at any times such Employee is required to be on-call; and
2. Capable of reporting to work within one hour of being called to duty.

B. Scheduling.

1. Because on-call status restricts an employee during nonworking hours, the County will make every effort to ensure that on-call assignments are rotated to the extent practicable.
2. Assignment to on-call status will be made in writing and is not subject to appeal or grievance.
3. To the extent practicable, on-call assignments shall be made in advance in the form of a “Duty Roster” or other formal schedule.

C. Restrictions.

As long as an On-Call Employee can be contacted and report to work within an hour, there is no restriction on what an On-Call Employee does when such Employee is not regularly scheduled to work and assigned to on-call status, provided that such On-Call Employee may not consume any substance that would impair him/her from performing his/her duties in the event he/she is called to work. If, for any reason, an On-Call Employee becomes unavailable to report to work while in On Call status, he/she shall notify his/her supervisor.

D. Dress and Equipment.

If the County provides an On-Call Employee with a uniform and/or portable Equipment that may be carried with such Employee, such Employee shall keep the uniform and equipment with him/her when On-Call and shall report to the Service area appropriately

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

attired and equipped. Otherwise, such Employee should dress appropriately when called into work (e.g., an on-call Employee who goes swimming should carry clothes to change into in the event such Employee is summoned to work).

### E. Pay.

When an On-Call Employee is called to report to work, he/she shall be paid for time actually worked, travel to and from a remote worksite, and travel from portal-to-portal shall be included in hours worked for determining overtime hours. Portal-to-Portal time shall be calculated on the basis of the employee driving nonstop at the posted speed limit from the employee's residence to the workplace. Any shift differential, holiday pay or other special compensation normally paid during a specific period shall be included if an On-Call Employee is called to work during such period. When an On-Call Employee is called back to work, he/she shall receive a minimum of two (2) hours pay regardless of the hours worked or the travel time involved.

An employee may receive a temporary increase ("shift differential") in the normal hourly rate of pay during any period the employee serves in On-Call status. An Employee also may receive other forms of compensation to reflect the additional responsibilities of serving an On-Call status, however, any such compensation is within the discretion of the County and subject to approval in the annual budget.

### Section 13-117. Call Back.

A. Introduction. In response to the operational needs of the County, an employee may be called back to work at any time. It is the County's goal to minimize call backs and overtime pay to the extent practicable. Employees may be called back to work for situations which require a response on short notice and for which the call back work will serve to:

1. Safeguard public health, safety and welfare;
2. Avoid significant service disruption;
3. Provide or support Emergency Services or to protect public property; OR
4. Meet other emergency needs as determined by the County Commissioners or designated members of the County Management team.

B. Call Back. A call back occurs when an employee is requested to return to work on the employee's regular day off or following the completion of the employee's normal work shift. Completion of the employee's normal work shift means that the employee has

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

physically left the work property and/or premises before being called back under this policy.

1. The following department heads are authorized to conduct call backs:
    - a. County Administrator (All departments)
    - b. Director of Emergency Services (All departments)
    - c. Public Works Director (Public Works)
    - d. Warden (Corrections)
    - e. Sheriff (Sheriff's Office)
  2. Call Back authority may be delegated to an Assistant Department Head/Director upon written approval of the County Administrator.
- C. Call Back Pay. Non-Exempt (Hourly) Employees shall be eligible for call back pay. Time actually worked, travel to a remote worksite, and travel from portal-to-portal shall be included in hours worked for determining overtime hours. Portal-to-portal time shall be calculated on the basis of the employee driving nonstop at the posted speed limit from the Employee's residence to the workplace. Any shift differential, Holiday Pay, or other special compensation normally paid during a specific period shall be included if a call back occurs during such period. When a non-exempt (hourly) employee is called back to work, he/she shall receive a minimum of two (2) hours pay regardless of the hours worked or the travel time involved.
- D. Early Call In. Calling employees in early to work is not considered a "call back." If a supervisor calls in an Employee with less than two hours' notice to the Employee, the Department Head may authorize call back pay for the first two hours of the shift the employee works.
- E. Continuation of Work. Retaining an employee beyond the end of regularly scheduled hours shall not be considered a "call back."
- F. Shift start/end times. Department Heads may adjust the starting and ending times of work shifts based on the operational needs of the County, the Department, and/or other relevant conditions, such as weather. For example, during a period of extreme heat, a Department Head may implement an earlier starting and ending time for Employees working outside. If a severe winter storm is anticipated in the evening, A Department Head may implement a starting time later in the morning to maximize the availability of employees and to minimize overtime expenses.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

1. Department Heads shall make a good faith effort to provide advance notice to employees of any shift changes to the extent possible. In Departments where alternate shift patterns may be imposed due to foreseeable events or operational cycles (I.E. snow removal) the Department Head shall prepare a staffing plan and provide such plan to all affected employees.
2. A change of shift start/end times shall not be considered a “call-back” or “early call in.” Any determination of eligibility for overtime compensation shall be based on hours worked.

**Chapter 14**  
**Continuity of Operations**

Section 14-101. Continuity of Operations Plans.

- A. The County may activate Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) in response to a significant event impacting parts or all of County operations, public health, safety, or welfare. Weather-related emergencies may also initiate the COOP when County operations are significantly impacted.
  
- B. Each Department shall be responsible for developing a COOP that is responsive to all hazards and ensures that regardless of the event, essential functions will continue to operate, and services will continue to be provided to the public to the best extent possible. Plans will anticipate the full range of potential emergencies, from those that cause the temporary interruption of a single function, to the shutdown of the entire department requiring the suspension of all non-essential functions and/or the relocation of essential functions and or personnel to an alternative site for an extended period of time.
  
- C. Continuity of Operations Plans may provide for the temporary suspension or modification of certain provisions of the Personnel Rules and Regulations in order to meet the needs of a department of the County. Such provisions may include but are not limited to changes to work assignments and job duties, leave policies, and work rules. COOP may also permit more flexible work options, such as staggered work shifts and the ability to work remotely. Changes made pursuant to this authority are not subject to Chapter 6 procedures.
  
- D. The County Administrator is authorized to issue directives to establish and implement personnel procedures that may be necessary to carry out operations under a COOP. Employees that do not adhere to directives and procedures issued by the County Administrator may be subject to discipline, up to and including termination.
  
- E. After the return to Steady State, the County Commissioners shall review the impacts that operating under a COOP had on employee leave and compensation and may determine to award additional leave or compensation.
  
- F. Employee classifications for the purpose of COOP are divided into three groups: operations, support and temporary operations. A roster of all operations employees shall be maintained by every department and a copy shall be provided to the Director of Emergency Services. The designation of an employee as “operations” and/or “temporary operations” may not be grieved or appealed. Employees will be notified of their specific classification for the purposes of COOP.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

1. Operations (emergency essential/mission critical) employees are not eligible for liberal leave and are required to report for work unless they are specifically excused by their supervisors. Operations employees failing to report to work as scheduled may be subject to disciplinary action.
  2. Support employees are eligible for liberal leave and may telework if available.
  3. Temporarily designated operations (emergency essential/mission critical) employees are normally support employees who are called in to work based on the needs of County government and will be provided with a two-hour minimum notice to report.
    - a. Not eligible for liberal leave and are required to report for work unless they are specially excused by their supervisors. Employees' failing to report to work as scheduled may be subject to disciplinary action.
    - b. The designation of an employee as operations may be made by the employee's Department Head, the Director of Emergency Services or the County Administrator.
- G. Liberal Leave Policy. Support employees may telework if eligible or they may be absent for a portion of a workday or the entire workday and are charged paid leave (i.e. annual, or personal) as appropriate, for the period of the absence. Employees must notify their supervisors if they intend to take liberal leave.
1. Support employees who do not report to work while the liberal leave policy is in effect will not be penalized for unapproved absence. Support employees arriving late while the liberal leave policy is in effect will not be penalized for tardiness, but will be charged paid leave as appropriate, for the period between the regular starting time and their arrival.
  2. If liberal leave is announced during the workday, support employees will be permitted to leave the work site, at their discretion after notifying their supervisors. Employees will be charged paid leave as appropriate, for the period between their departure and the end of their regular workday.
  3. Employees may not use sick leave for a liberal leave absence unless the absence meets the criteria for sick leave in the County's Personnel Rules and Regulations.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- H. Administrative closure of County offices: During the time an administrative closure is in effect, support employees are not obligated to report to work; however operations employees will be expected to report. On days when the County has a delayed opening, all support employees must adhere to the established delayed opening time. Employees will not be charged leave for absences during the administrative closure of County offices regardless of whether it is full days, delayed opening or early closures.

### Section 14-102. Levels of Operation.

Continuity of Operations Plans will provide operational response designed to address the following three levels. Levels of Operation are determined by the County Administrator in consultation with the Director of Emergency Services and the Director of Human Resources. If the event is public health related, the Health Officer may also be consulted. The County Administrator shall make direct notification to each County Commissioner regarding any change in Level of Operations within two hours of the change.

Delayed opening/early closures, closures and liberal leave designation may occur at any level of operation defined within the COOP, based on various hazards identified by the Director of Emergency Services and/or County Administrator.

#### A. Steady State

Steady State describes normal operations, which is governed by standard provisions of the Personnel Rules and Regulations.

#### B. Level I – Limited Impact

This level is marked by minimal disruption to daily operations. There may be local or State Declarations of Emergency, declared Public Health emergency, or a change in the Emergency Operations Center activation level but the event is not impacting daily County functions, services, or work locations in an unscheduled way.

##### 1. Employee Attendance

- a. Employees are expected to report to work as usual unless ill, on approved leave, or as otherwise directed by the department head or other authorized County official.
- b. Specific employees may be declared as emergency essential/mission-critical when necessary to avoid or mitigate serious damage to public health, safety, or welfare.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- c. Failure to report to work or to perform assigned duties as required may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination from employment.
- d. The department head or other authorized County official may alter an employee's supervisor, work schedule, work location, or duties in order to meet the needs of the department, provide service to the residents of Caroline County, or to mitigate the event that is creating a hazard.
- e. An employee who reports to work exhibiting symptoms of an illness should be encouraged to return home on the employee's own leave. The County Administrator may consider administrative leave, when necessary and appropriate.

### 2. Employee Absence

- a. An employee who is absent due to the employee's own illness, or to care for a sick member of the employee's family as defined in §8-105.E., may use accrued sick and safe, vacation, or personal leave.
- b. An employee who stays home because the employee's child's school or daycare provider is closed may use accrued vacation or personal leave.
- c. An employee who must be absent for the foregoing reasons and who does not have accrued leave or has run out of accrued leave during the period of absence will be placed on leave without pay for the part of the absence uncovered by paid leave.
- d. Employees are required to provide medical certification upon their return to work for any absence of two (2) or more consecutive days of sick and safe leave.

### C. Level II – Partial Impact

This level is marked by significant disruption to at least one but not all County functions or services. One or more County departments may require alternative work locations or assignments. There may be local or State Declarations of Emergency, declared Public Health emergency, or a change in the Emergency Operations Center activation level.

#### 1. Employee Attendance

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- a. Employees are expected to report to work as usual unless ill, on approved leave, or as otherwise directed by the department head or other authorized County official.
  - b. Specific employees may be declared as emergency essential/mission-critical when necessary to avoid or mitigate serious damage to public health, safety, or welfare.
  - c. Failure to report to work or to perform assigned duties as required may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination from employment.
  - d. The department head or other authorized County official may alter an employee's supervisor, work schedule, work location, or duties in order to meet the needs of the department, provide service to the residents of Caroline County, or to mitigate the event that is creating a hazard.
  - e. Eligible employees may be allowed to telework, provided that work-tracking is satisfactory to the department head under whose supervision the employee is working.
  - f. An employee who reports to work exhibiting symptoms of an illness should be encouraged to return home on the employee's own leave. The County Administrator may consider administrative leave, when necessary and appropriate.
2. Employee Absence
- a. An employee who is absent due to the employee's own illness, or to care for a sick member of the employee's family as defined in §8-105.E., may use accrued sick and safe, vacation, or personal leave.
  - b. An employee who stays home because the employee's child's school or daycare provider is closed may use accrued vacation or personal leave.
  - c. An employee who must be absent from work due to the employee's own illness, or to care for a sick member of the employee's family as defined in §8-105.E., and who does not have accrued leave or has run out of accrued leave during the period of absence may be placed on leave without pay for the part of the absence covered by paid leave. In lieu of leave without pay, an employee who has exhausted all other forms of paid leave may request advanced sick leave.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- d. If an employee is absent for illness directly related to a public health event, the employee may return to work after the period set by the Director of Emergency Services, in consultation with the Health Officer and County Human Resources Director. The employee may be allowed to return without providing medical documentation. The period will be set based on the specific public health criteria present during the activation of a COOP Plan.

### D. Level III – Full Impact

This level is marked by a disruption in most or all County functions and services. Most or all County departments may require alternative work locations or assignments. There will be local or state Declarations of Emergency, declared Public Health emergency, or a change in the Emergency Operations Center activation level.

#### 1. Employee Attendance

- a. All employees who have been declared emergency essential/mission-critical are required to report for work unless on sick leave or other form of approved leave.
- b. Specific employees may be declared as emergency essential/mission-critical when necessary to avoid or mitigate serious damage to public health, safety, or welfare.
- c. An hourly employee working under a department designated at Level III shall receive a pay differential equal to 25% of the employee's base pay.
- d. Failure of an emergency essential/mission-critical employee to report to work or to perform assigned duties as required may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination from employment.
- e. The department head or other authorized County official may alter an employee's supervisor, work schedule, work location, or duties in order to meet the needs of the department, provide service to the residents of Caroline County, or to mitigate the event that is creating a hazard.
- f. Emergency essential/mission-critical employees may be allowed or required to telework, provided that work-tracking is satisfactory to the department head under whose supervision the employee is working.
- g. During a public health event, if authorized by the County Administrator or other authorized County official, emergency essential/mission-critical

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

employees may be screened for illness prior to their entry to the workplace. Employees who meet certain criteria established by the Director of Emergency Services, in consultation with the Health Officer and based upon guidance issued by the Maryland Department of Health or Centers for Disease Control, will be sent home. In such situations, the employee should be encouraged to utilize the employee's own leave. The County Administrator may consider administrative leave, when necessary and appropriate.

### 2. Employee Absence

- a. All employees not declared emergency essential/mission-critical will be placed on paid administrative leave and will be required to stay home during the time that their department is at Level III.
- b. An emergency essential/mission-critical employee who is absent due to the employee's own illness, or to care for a sick member of the employee's family as defined in §8-105.E., may use accrued sick and safe, vacation, personal.
- c. If an employee is absent for illness directly related to a public health event, the employee may return to work after the period set by the Director of Emergency Services, in consultation with the Health Officer and County Human Resources Director. The employee may be allowed to return without providing medical documentation. The period will be set based on the specific public health criteria present during the activation of a COOP Plan.

### Section 14-103. Employee Notification System.

The County's Emergency Notification System will be used to notify employees by text messages and phone calls when the County's operations schedule is being modified. This will include Early Closures/Delayed Openings, Liberal Leave and Administrative Closures. The system may also be used to notify employees of potential hazards as determined by the County Administrator and/or Director of Emergency Services in consultation with the Director of Human Resources.

- A. The Office of Human Resources will input all new employees into the Emergency Notification System upon hire, including personal phone numbers.
- B. Employees must promptly notify the Office of Human Resources of any changes in their contact information, including changes to personal cell phone numbers.

## Caroline County Personnel Rules and Regulations

- C. Employees may choose to opt-out of notification system.
  - 1. If an employee chooses to opt-out or does not provide updated information to the Office of Human Resources, they are individually responsible for seeking information concerning changes in operation schedule.
  - 2. The County will process opt-out requests within 96 hours of receipt.
  
- D. Announcement of morning operation schedule modifications will be sent out to employees by 5:30 am.

Announcements may also be found on the County's Facebook and Twitter pages and may be available on local radio and television stations.

APPENDIX - NOTICE FOLLOWING A POSITIVE DRUGS AND ALCOHOL TEST

You are receiving this notice because you have tested positive for alcohol and/or drugs from the test that you recently undertook. We are obligated to provide you information, under Section 17-214(c) of the Health General Article of the Maryland Code, about your rights to an independent testing of the same sample for verification of the positive result.

You shall receive with this notice:

1. A copy of the laboratory test indicating the test results; and
2. A copy of County's Substance Abuse Policy.

Should you decide to seek an independent test, you must have the same sample tested at a lab that is licensed either in Maryland or in another state. You are obligated to pay the cost of this independent test. Please make arrangements with the Personnel Administrator.

If the results from an independent test is positive, or you choose not to challenge the results of this test, the following disciplinary actions shall be taken:

1. If you are applying for employment, you will no longer be considered for the position for which you had applied.
2. If you are an Employee, you will be required to attend an approved alcohol or substance abuse program that does not interfere with your work responsibilities if this result is your first positive result.
3. If you are an Employee, you will be terminated if this result is a second positive result.

The County, in its sole discretion may vary from the foregoing disciplinary actions. If your disciplinary measure is a variation, a separate written notice will accompany this notice.

If you have any questions, or care to offer any further information or insight in to this situation, please direct all inquiries to the Office of Human Resources at 109 Market Street, Room123, Courthouse, Denton, Maryland 21629 or call 410/479-4105.

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