

**COUNTY OF ORANGE, VIRGINIA
PERSONNEL POLICIES MANUAL**

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

POLICY NO.: 2.4

EFFECTIVE: 10/01/96

REVISED: 05/11/10

OVERVIEW: In order to ensure orderly operations and provide the best possible work environment, Orange County expects employees to follow rules of conduct that will protect the interest and safety of all employees and the organization. This policy sets forth the expectations of professional conduct, identifies unacceptable behavior and identifies the disciplinary actions which may result in an employee's failure to maintain acceptable conduct.

SCOPE: This policy applies to all regular full and part time employees.

DEFINITIONS:

1. Disciplinary Action: Any action taken by management to address unacceptable behavior. Actions may range from informal counseling sessions to dismissal from County employment.

PROVISIONS:

A. Expectations of Professional Conduct:

1. Attendance and Punctuality: Employees are expected to report to work as scheduled, on time and to remain on the job until the scheduled work day is complete.

As necessary, employees should arrange planned absences, late arrivals or early departures in advance with the supervisor.

Unexpected absences, tardiness or early departure should be reported as promptly as possible.

Both planned and unexpected absences should be kept to a minimum. Excessive absenteeism, tardiness or leaving work early may result in disciplinary action.

2. Job Performance: It is expected that the employee will consistently strive to meet his/her performance expectations and satisfactorily perform assigned work; to follow the supervisor's instructions; and otherwise comply with established policies and procedures.

3. Appropriate Work Attire: All employees are expected to maintain a clean and neat appearance and to dress according to the requirements of their positions.
4. Appropriate Use of County Time and Equipment: Employees are expected to limit the use of County telephones, equipment, materials, supplies, vehicles and work time to the direct activities of the County business.
5. Gifts and Gratuities: A County employee will not solicit or accept any money, loan, gift or gratuity, favor or service from a contractor, firm, consultant, applicant, individual or other party as a result of the business or services provided or influence by the employee's position, duties or responsibilities.
6. Solicitation on County Property: Employees will refrain from selling, soliciting, or distributing literature concerning outside events, organizations or employment. Solicitation is prohibited at any time in the work place. This rule does not apply to community, civic, or nonprofit organizations in approved locations (e.g., employee lounge).
7. Political Activity: Employees will refrain from engaging in political activities during work hours or when officially representing the County.
8. Conflict of Interest: As provided in the Virginia State & Local Government Conflict of Interest Act, an employee shall not engage in any activities in which he/she uses the responsibilities and authorities of his/her County position to influence a decision that may result in a personal gain for that employee or a relative.
9. Confidentiality: Employees whose jobs involve access to confidential data are expected to limit referencing or discussing confidential information to persons authorized to have access to it. Employees are expected to honor the confidentiality of such information even after their employment with the County is terminated.
10. Courteous Treatment of Citizens: Employees are expected to treat citizens with respect and courtesy while on duty and while representing the County.

B. Unacceptable Behavior – Infractions of the Standards of Conduct:

It is not possible to list all the forms of behavior that are considered unacceptable in the work place. The following list provides examples of infractions which may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. This list is neither intended to be all inclusive or exclusive.

- Theft or inappropriate removal or possession of property.
- Possession, distribution, sale, use or driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs in the work place, while on duty or while operating County-owned vehicles or equipment.
- Being convicted of possession, distribution, sale, use or driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs outside of or in the workplace.
- Failing to notify County management if charged or convicted of a criminal drug or alcohol related violation within three (3) days of being charged or convicted.
- Fighting or threatening violence in the workplace.
- Negligence or improper conduct leading to damage of employer-owned or customer owned property.
- Violation of safety or health rules.
- Sexual or other unlawful harassment.
- Violation of County personnel policies or regulations
- Excessive absenteeism, unauthorized absence, or any absence without notice.
- Unsatisfactory job performance of the duties and responsibilities identified in an employee's position description.
- Inappropriate acceptance of gift, gratuity, service or favor from a consumer, applicant, contractor or other persons doing business with the County.
- Abusing job related influence on transactions involving purchases, contracts or leases for personal gain or the gain of a relative.

-Use of County equipment, facilities, materials, supplies, telephones, vehicles, time or other resources for personal business.

-Threatening, intimidating, harassing, coercing, interfering with, or otherwise interacting with citizens in a manner that violates County personnel policies while on duty or while representing the County.

C. Disciplinary Actions:

A manager or supervisor should address infractions to the standards of conduct as soon as he/she becomes aware of unacceptable behavior. There are several options available to management in address an employee's infraction. In determining the most appropriate disciplinary action, management will consider the nature and severity of the infraction: the circumstances surrounding the offense: disciplinary actions taken in similar circumstances (ensuring consistent and impartial treatment of employees); and the frequency of the offense (first v. repeated occurrences).

The types of disciplinary action are described below:

1. Informal, Verbal Reprimand: a discussion between the employee and the supervisor identifying the inappropriate behavior and the anticipated corrective action.
2. Formal Written Reprimand: a documented discussion between the employee and the supervisor for which a written record identifying the offense, the date and circumstances of the reprimand discussion, and the anticipated corrective action is prepared. Written reprimands are maintained in the employee's personnel file.
3. Suspension: imposing a separation from service on an employee.

Suspensions may be imposed as a means of disciplining the employee in situations where the infraction is not serious enough to warrant dismissal. Suspensions under these circumstances are limited to up to 30 days and are unpaid absences.

Suspensions may also be imposed as a means of removing the employee from the work place while an investigation into an alleged infraction is conducted. Suspensions pending an investigation are not limited to 30 days. They may be imposed until the investigation is complete. Whether the employee is found guilty of the alleged violation will determine whether the suspended time off is compensated.

During an unpaid suspension, an employee does not accrue vacation or sick leave and the employee is expected to maintain his/her contributions to benefits programs while suspended.

4. Disciplinary Demotion: the transfer of an employee to another position of a lower salary grade as a means of addressing a disciplinary problem. Salary may be reduced.
5. Compensatory Action: reduction of salary or withholding of salary increase.
6. Dismissal: an employee's termination from County service.

D. Written Notification:

Employees must receive notification of any suspension, disciplinary demotion, or dismissal. The written notification will identify the reason, effective date(s), compensatory ramifications and will state the employee's right to grieve the disciplinary action. Copies of all documentation related to the disciplinary action must be retained in the employee's personnel file.

E. Administrative Investigations:

Employees are expected to cooperate fully and to participate in the investigations of alleged infractions, to include investigations involving themselves. Failure to cooperate could result in disciplinary action.

F. Approval:

All disciplinary actions beyond that of a verbal reprimand must be approved by the County Administrator or other authorized manager prior to the action's implementation. Although approval from the County Administrator's office is not required, Constitutional Officers must notify the County Administrator of such disciplinary actions, and provide a copy of written documentation for the employee's personnel file.

G. Use of Grievance:

Employee may challenge disciplinary actions through the use of the Employee Grievance Procedure. See Manual Section 7.0