

# **EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK**

**Harris County Housing Authority**

**May 2017**

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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Harris County Housing Authority (HCHA). We have written this Handbook in order to answer some of the questions you may have concerning the policies of HCHA. Please read it thoroughly and retain it for future reference. Should you have any questions regarding any policies, please ask the Human Resources Department or your supervisor for assistance. Note that in the event that there is a change in the stated policy, the updated version of the policy will be distributed in a timely manner. You are responsible for ensuring that you are using the most current version of the Handbook.

Employees of HCHA are at-will employees, and neither this Handbook nor any other communication (oral or written) should be considered an agreement, promise, or contract of employment. This Handbook is meant to serve as a guideline, and it may be necessary to refer to other sources, such as Plan Documents or legal statutes to gain additional information in certain cases.

We appreciate your adherence to our policies and look forward to a productive relationship with you.

### DEFINITIONS

- ◆ The term "employee" as used throughout this Handbook refers to all classifications of employees of Harris County Housing Authority.
- ◆ The term "employment" as used throughout this Handbook is in reference to your employment with Harris County Housing Authority.
- ◆ The terms "Authority" and "HCHA" as used throughout this Handbook refer to Harris County Housing Authority.
- ◆ The term "workplace" is defined as HCHA, any company-sponsored activity, or any other site for the performance of work for HCHA.

### EMPLOYMENT AT WILL

This Handbook is not a contract guaranteeing employment for any specific duration. Both you and HCHA have the right to terminate your employment at any time with or without cause, notice or reason. No supervisor, manager or representative of HCHA has the authority to enter into any agreement for employment for any specified period or to make any promises or commitments contrary to the foregoing. Any employment agreement entered into shall not be enforceable unless it is in writing and signed by both parties and the Board of Commissioners.

### EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY POLICY

Harris County Housing Authority provides equal employment opportunities to all employees and applicants without regard to actual or perceived race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, military status, or status as a Vietnam-era or special disabled veteran in accordance with applicable federal and state laws. In addition, Harris County Housing Authority complies with applicable state and local laws governing nondiscrimination in employment in every location in which HCHA operates. This policy applies to all terms and conditions of employment including, but not limited to, hiring, placement, promotion, termination, layoff, recall, transfer, leaves of absence, compensation, and training.

The Authority will endeavor to reasonably accommodate the bona fide religious beliefs of HCHA employees to the extent such accommodations do not represent an undue hardship on HCHA operations. Accommodations can be requested through the Human Resources Department or Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

Harris County Housing Authority distributes information regarding Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) through the Employee Handbook, new employee orientation materials, training materials, staff meetings, and various publications. EEO-related complaints may be made to the Human Resources Department. Standard complaint resolution procedure is outlined in the "EMPLOYEE CONDUCT" section of this Handbook.

The Authority will provide reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities. A reasonable accommodation is defined as a change in the work environment or in the performance of a job that allows that employee to perform the essential functions of their position more effectively without causing undue hardship to the employer.

If you require a reasonable accommodation, please inform the Human Resources Department or Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator immediately. HCHA will promptly respond and work with you to assess your request.

Employees who wish to file a complaint alleging discrimination must do so as soon as possible after becoming aware of the alleged violation. Complaints may be filed either orally or in writing to the ADA Coordinator or the Human Resources Department and must include a detailed description of the alleged violation.

Upon receiving a complaint, the ADA Coordinator will investigate the allegation and provide a written determination as to the validity of the complaint and a description of the resolution (if any). Complainants requesting a reconsideration of the ADA Coordinator's resolution may file a request for reconsideration within seven days of the ADA Coordinator's written decision. Requests should be sent to, and will be evaluated by, the Human Resource Department.

Complaints regarding disability discrimination may also be filed with the Texas Workforce Commission ("TWC") ([www.twc.state.tx.us](http://www.twc.state.tx.us)) or the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission ("EEOC") ([www.ada.gov](http://www.ada.gov)).

## **NON-DISCRIMINATION AND ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICY**

It is the policy of Harris County Housing Authority to maintain a working environment that encourages mutual respect, promotes courteous and congenial relationships between employees and is free from all forms of discrimination and harassment of any employee or applicant for employment by anyone, including supervisors, co-workers, vendors, or clients. Discrimination and harassment in any manner or form are expressly prohibited and will not be tolerated by Harris County Housing Authority. Accordingly, Harris County Housing Authority is committed to vigorously enforcing this policy against discrimination and harassment.

All reported or suspected occurrences of discrimination or harassment will be promptly and thoroughly investigated. Where discrimination or harassment is determined to have occurred, HCHA will

immediately take appropriate disciplinary action, including written warnings and possible suspension, transfer, and/or termination of employment. Furthermore, Harris County Housing Authority will not permit or condone any acts of retaliation against anyone who files discrimination or harassment complaints or cooperates in the investigation of the complaint. Key elements of HCHA's non-discrimination and anti-harassment policy include:

1. Discriminatory treatment based on race, ethnicity, national origin, age, religion, disability status, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, or the like is a violation of HCHA policy. This policy is intended to comply with prohibitions in anti-discrimination laws and to protect employees. Violators of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.
2. The term "harassment" includes but is not limited to unwelcome slurs, jokes, or references, whether verbal, graphic or physical in nature, relating to an individual's race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, national origin, or disability.
3. Sexual harassment consists of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature where:
  - a. With respect to employment, submission to such conduct is an explicit or implicit term of condition of employment;
  - b. With respect to clients, submission to such conduct is an explicit or implicit term or condition for receipt of services or benefits;
  - c. Employment decisions are based on an employee's submission to or rejection of such conduct;
  - d. Service or benefit decisions are based on a client or potential client's submission to or rejection of such conduct; or
  - e. Such conduct interferes with an individual's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment (including images or visual references that are sexual in nature).
4. The term "harassment" may also include the conduct of employees, supervisors, vendors and/or clients who engage in verbal or physical behavior that has the potential for humiliating, embarrassing or causing discomfort to an individual.

Sexual harassment of a client or potential client is a crime punishable by up to imprisonment for one year and a \$4,000.00 fine. For this and other reasons, romantic or sexual relationships between HCHA employees and actual or potential clients are strictly prohibited. Where discrimination or harassment of an actual or potential client is determined to have occurred, HCHA will immediately take appropriate disciplinary action, including written warnings and possible suspension, transfer, and/or termination of employment, and/or refer appropriate cases to law enforcement for prosecution. Furthermore, Harris County Housing Authority will not permit or condone any acts of retaliation against an actual or potential client who files administrative, civil, or criminal discrimination or harassment complaints, or cooperates in the investigation of the complaint.

Due to the possibility of misunderstandings or conflicts of interests (including allegations of illegal conduct) arising out of your friendships or other personal relationships with the people we serve, HCHA strongly discourages employees from maintaining outside friendships or relationships with actual or potential clients. HCHA reserves the right, in an appropriate instance, to discipline or even discharge an employee who starts or maintains an inappropriate friendship or other personal relationship with an

actual or potential client.

At all times, employees should act in a professional and businesslike manner, avoiding even the appearance of impropriety. Please remember that even an unfounded allegation of misconduct could have devastating and lasting consequences on your personal life, job, and finances. Even if you are **wrongfully and falsely** accused of having an inappropriate relationship with a client or potential client, you may:

- Be arrested
- Lose your job
- Be responsible for paying your own legal expenses (which may reach in tens of thousands of dollars). HCHA cannot, and will not, provide you with legal counsel or pay your legal expenses
- Face imprisonment for up to a year, as well as, a \$4,000.00 fine. HCHA cannot, and will not, pay criminal fines for convicted employees

Please consider the serious consequences of your actions before deciding to start or maintain a friendship or other outside relationship with a client or potential client.

Violations of this policy should be reported to your immediate supervisor, any other manager, or the Human Resources Department. For more detailed information on reporting discrimination or harassment, refer to the "EMPLOYEE CONDUCT" section in this Handbook.

Complaints regarding race, ethnicity, national origin, age, religion, disability, or gender discrimination may also be filed with the TWC and/or EEOC.

### **CONFIDENTIAL NATURE OF WORK**

Except as otherwise required by law, all Harris County Housing Authority records and information relating to HCHA or its clients and/or operations are confidential and employees must, therefore, treat all matters accordingly. No HCHA or HCHA-related information, including but not limited to documents, notes, files, records, oral information, computer files or similar materials, except in the ordinary course of performing duties on behalf of the Authority, may be removed from HCHA's premises without permission from Harris County Housing Authority. Additionally, the contents of HCHA's records or information otherwise obtained in regard to business may not be disclosed to anyone, except where required for a business purpose or by law. An employee must not disclose any confidential information, purposefully or inadvertently through casual conversation, to any unauthorized person inside or outside HCHA. If you are unsure about the confidential nature of specific information please ask your supervisor for clarification. Violations of this policy may result in appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination, for knowingly or unknowingly revealing information of a confidential nature when not warranted by business need or the law.

All employees have a responsibility to avoid unnecessary disclosure of internal information about HCHA, its clients, and its suppliers. Employees are also responsible for ensuring that they do not use their position with HCHA to obtain confidential information to which they would otherwise not be entitled. This responsibility is not intended to impede normal business communications and relationships, but rather to alert employees to their obligation to use discretion to safeguard internal company affairs. Employees with authorized access to confidential information are responsible for its security.

Employees of HCHA and its subsidiaries should avoid communicating with the media about HCHA or any of its activities. All media inquiries related to HCHA or its activities should be directed to the Director of Public Affairs or the CEO.

HCHA-related information, files, or work should not be removed from HCHA worksites or property, shared with external parties, duplicated, or otherwise treated in a manner that would put the information or HCHA at risk, including for auditing purposes. Requests for information should be routed to the Director of Public Affairs. Anyone wishing to write or publish information on behalf of the Authority must first obtain approval from the Director of Public Affairs and the CEO.

Harris County does maintain records that may be subject to open records regulations. Requests for information under the Public Information Act should be referred to the Director of Public Affairs. These requests will be reviewed promptly and fairly, and requestors will receive responses as required by law.

Inquiries seeking information concerning applicants for employment, current employees, or former employees should be referred to the Human Resources Department.

### **WORK PRODUCT OWNERSHIP**

Harris County Housing Authority retains legal ownership of the product of employees' work. No work product created while employed by HCHA may be claimed, construed, or presented as property of the individual, even after employment by HCHA has been terminated or the relevant project completed. This includes written and electronic documents, audio and video recordings, system code, and any concepts, ideas, or other intellectual property developed for HCHA, regardless of whether the intellectual property is actually used by HCHA. Although you may display and/or discuss a portion or the whole of certain work products as an example in certain situations, such as to provide an example of your work, information classified as confidential must remain so even after the end of employment, and that supplying certain other entities with particular types of information may constitute a conflict of interest. Always clarify that the work product is the sole and exclusive property of Harris County Housing Authority.

For this reason, property of HCHA should not be destroyed or deleted, including in the event that the employment relationships is severed. Information or files saved for HCHA purposes, including both physical files as well as information stored on a computer or other source, are considered company property and therefore should not be altered or destroyed without permission from the CEO, unless doing so in accordance with current policy. While this policy is not intended to obstruct normal business use of such documents or materials, it is intended to prevent the loss of data critical to doing business.

### **LEGAL COMPLIANCE**

Employees of HCHA are expected to abide by all applicable laws, including federal, state and local statutes. This includes specific stipulations in the Texas Government Code as they apply to local public officials and members or employees of government bodies. Employees are responsible for disclosing any potential conflicts of interest or challenges in compliance. Failure to comply with legal requirements can result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

## **ETHICS**

Employees of Harris County Housing Authority are expected to conduct themselves in an ethical manner, consistent with Authority mission, values and goals. All employees shall abide by Texas State law as well as local and federal law, and follow Harris County Housing Authority policies, procedures and regulations. Positions with HCHA and/or HCHA property and resources should not be used for personal gain, financial or otherwise, or to further personal, private, political, or other interests. Further, HCHA association should not be used to obtain special consideration, treatment, exemption or advantage. The Conflict of Interest policy should be followed in an effort to avoid any implication or risk of impropriety, and employees should take care to ensure transparency in their interactions and decisions. Employees should not accept gifts that could influence or be construed to influence operations or outcomes. HCHA works hard to conduct itself as an ethical organization that places great value in the interests of the community. Any appearance of inappropriate or unethical behavior is potentially damaging to HCHA's ability to accomplish its goals and should be avoided. If you have questions about a particular circumstance or issue, please ask your supervisor or the Human Resources Department.

## **POLITICAL ACTIVITY**

An employee shall not induce or attempt to induce any commissioner or employee to participate in a partisan election campaign, contribute to a candidate or political action committee, or engage in any other political activity relating to a particular party, candidate or issue. Employees should not discourage other employees from participating in lawful political activity. A commissioner or employee may encourage another to vote generally, but shall not accept any compensation for service in any political activity related to any federal, state, or local election for a candidate or issue.

## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT**

Harris County Housing Authority expects all employees to conduct business according to the highest ethical standards of conduct. You are expected to devote your best efforts to the interests of HCHA and to comply with all requirements found in the HCHA Ethics Policy. Business dealings that appear to create a conflict between the interests of HCHA and an employee are unacceptable. HCHA recognizes the right of employees to engage in activities outside of their employment that are of a private nature and unrelated to HCHA business. However, an employee must disclose any possible conflicts so that the Authority may assess and prevent potential conflicts of interest from arising. A potential or actual conflict of interest occurs whenever an employee is in a position to influence a decision that may result in a personal gain for the employee or an immediate family member (i.e., spouse or significant other, children, parents, siblings) as a result of the Authority's business dealings. Situations where conflict of interest may be an issue include, but are not limited to, outside employment, financial interest in other businesses, and acceptance of gifts. Please contact the Human Resources Department with any questions regarding a potential conflict of interest.

The purpose of this policy is to avoid impropriety or any implication of impropriety and maintain the positive reputation of HCHA. It is not intended to prohibit the acceptance of modest courtesies, openly given and accepted as part of the usual business amenities, including occasional business-related meals or promotional materials of nominal value. Some examples of situations that might involve violations of this policy include the following:

- Holding any interest in or accepting free or discounted goods from any organization that does, or is seeking to do, business with the Authority when the employee is in a position to directly or indirectly influence a related business decision
- Holding any interest in an organization that competes with the Authority
- Being employed or contracted by any organization that does or seeks to do business with the Authority or that competes with the Authority
- Personally profiting from any organization seeking to business with the Authority

An employee must promptly disclose in writing, on HCHA's Ethics Policy Disclosure Form, all known conflicts of interest, proscribed relationships, or apparent or potential violations of the laws, HUD's Annual Contribution Contract, or the HCHA Ethics Policy, to the Human Resources Department. An employee may obtain an Ethics Policy Disclosure Form from the Human Resources Department. When required to make a disclosure, an employee shall fill out an Ethics Policy Disclosure Form: (i) upon initial employment; (ii) annually, at the beginning of the fiscal year; or (iii) at any other time such a disclosure is warranted or requested. Approval for outside employment will not be given unless the relationship will not interfere with the employee's duties or will not damage HCHA's relationship with clients or the community. A violation of this policy, including failure to disclose a potential conflict of interest, may result in immediate and appropriate discipline, up to and including termination of employment.

### **INTEREST IN CONTRACTS**

An employee of HCHA shall not have private or personal financial interest in any contract with the Authority or in the sale to the Authority of any land, materials, supplies, or service. A private or personal financial interest is defined as an employee (or the employee's parent, child or spouse) who owns 10% (or more) of the voting stock or shares, or of the fair market value of the business entity, a subcontractor, partner, parent company, or a subsidiary.

### **NEPOTISM**

Individuals may not be appointed or voted into positions by immediate relatives based on Section 573.002 of the Texas Government Code. Exceptions may be made in situations where the individual is employed prior to the election or appointment of the public official to whom the individual is related or the individual has been employed for the stipulated number of days per Section 573.062 of the Texas Government Code. HCHA will not hire a relative of the CEO, allow employees to be supervised by a relative, or allow relatives to work in the same department. Where it will not result in a potential violation, employees may refer friends, relatives or other contacts to open positions. Relatives may include: parents, children, grandparents, great-grandparents/grandchildren, siblings, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, spouses and relatives of spouses. Candidates will be screened and selected for employment based on HCHA practices and employment decisions will be made based on professional qualifications and ability to successfully complete required tasks.

Harris County Housing Authority requires employees to disclose any personal or familial relationships with other employees or candidates, whether the relationship exists at hire or develops over the course of employment. These relationships should be reported to the Human Resources Department. HCHA's policy is to avoid conflicts of interest by ensuring that relatives are not working closely with or for each other. Should two employees marry, become related, or otherwise engage in a familial or intimate

relationship, they may not remain in a reporting relationship or in positions where one may impact the employment circumstances or conditions of the other.

The Authority retains the right to make decisions that are best for the organization and will act accordingly when addressing concerns related to these issues.

### **REPORTING ILLEGAL ACTIVITY**

If an employee has knowledge of, or a concern about, illegal, dishonest, or fraudulent activity, the employee should contact his or her immediate supervisor, the Human Resources Department, or any other HCHA manager. The employee must exercise sound judgment to avoid baseless allegations. HCHA will not retaliate, or otherwise take adverse employment action, against an employee because he or she, in good faith, reported a violation of the law. Any employee who believes he or she is being retaliated against should immediately report the retaliation to his or her immediate supervisor, the Human Resources Department, or any other HCHA manager. All reports of illegal or dishonest activities, or retaliation, will be promptly and thoroughly investigated. Employees with questions regarding this policy should contact the Human Resources Department or HCHA management.

## **WORKING AT HCHA**

### **INITIAL EMPLOYMENT PERIOD**

As a new employee, you will go through an initial period of adjustment to learn about Harris County Housing Authority and about your job. During this time you will have an opportunity to find out if you are suited to your new position. This initial period also allows your supervisor a reasonable period of time to evaluate your performance. This initial evaluation period is generally considered to be 90 days in length, but may be longer or shorter depending on the nature of the position and your qualifications and progress.

During this initial period, you will be provided with more intense training and guidance from your supervisor. Upon completion of the period, your supervisor may provide you with a performance review or discussion of your progress. Provided your job performance is at least satisfactory at the end of the initial employment period, you may continue as an at-will employee. If your supervisor concludes that you are not progressing or performing satisfactorily, your employment with the Authority may be terminated. Employment with HCHA is always at-will and may be terminated with or without cause or prior notice.

### **PERSONNEL FILES**

Harris County Housing Authority maintains a personnel file on each employee. It is HCHA policy to safeguard personal employee information and ensure its confidentiality. HCHA will only collect personal information relevant to business operations and government reporting and disclosure requirements. Such information includes but is not limited to employee names, addresses, telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, emergency contact information, Equal Employment Opportunity data, social security numbers, date of birth, employment eligibility data, and benefits plan enrollment information.

All information contained in your personnel file is the property of Harris County Housing Authority and is not available for review by anyone other than you as a current employee, your supervisor, the Human Resources Department, the Chief Executive Officer, the Finance Department, other managers or decision makers with business-related reasons to access employee files, or auditors and monitors in accordance with contractual requirements. You may examine your personnel file after contacting the Human Resources Department in advance to schedule an appointment; however, these documents must be reviewed in the presence of a representative of the Human Resources Department and may not be removed from HCHA premises or photocopied without the specific authorization of the Human Resources Department representative. Former employees may request the opportunity to view their personnel file with a minimum of two weeks' notice. All requests are subject to review and approval by management.

To ensure that your personnel file is current at all times, you are asked to notify the Human Resources Department of any changes in your name, telephone number, home address, marital status, number of dependents, beneficiary designations, scholastic achievements, the individuals to notify in case of an emergency, and so forth.

Harris County Housing Authority considers falsification of personnel records to be a serious offense and upon discovery, may lead to disciplinary action up to and including termination. The misuse of employee information is also considered to be a serious offense and should be reported to the Human Resources

Department immediately. Falsification or misuse of employee information may lead to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

In the event a third party requests access to information contained in your personnel file, inquiries should be directed to the Human Resources Department. Information given by phone will be limited to verification of employment dates, position title, and salary. In response to written requests, such as those made for the purpose of applying for a mortgage, information such as salary, dates of employment, and job position may be provided, if an authorization signed by the employee is provided. A minimum of two weeks is required to respond to such inquiries.

### **JOB PERFORMANCE EVALUATION**

To provide you with feedback regarding your performance and progress, as well as to maintain records of employee performance, you may be evaluated with respect to the job that you are performing for HCHA. As you demonstrate the ability to take on additional responsibilities, your talents are likely to be utilized in the manner deemed most suitable to your demonstrated ability and the needs of HCHA.

Formal performance reviews are conducted per your job description. Any employees who do not meet their job expectations during this period will be counseled and their performance will be monitored. Job performance issues may result in termination.

Evaluations are conducted by your supervisor or other relevant party and will be reviewed with you. Any areas of specific achievement or need for improvement may be noted and discussed with you thoroughly. Questions regarding performance evaluations should be directed to your immediate supervisor, as should requests for additional feedback.

### **ADVANCEMENT AND PROMOTION**

Harris County Housing Authority supports employees who intend to assume higher-level positions or lateral transfers for which they qualify. Vacancies within HCHA are often communicated to managers and employees in monthly meetings or via e-mail.

Generally, you must have held your position for at least six months before applying for a change in position; however, in appropriate circumstances exceptions may be made. In addition, you must have a good record of performance, attendance and punctuality. Each qualified employee requesting a transfer or applying for a promotion will be considered for the new position along with all other applicants when relevant. Each transfer or promotion is evaluated on an individual basis and compared to the position description. All final decisions regarding transfers and promotions will be made by department or program management, in conjunction with the Human Resources Department. The CEO may also make or approve final transfer decisions.

If you wish to apply for a transfer or promotion, you may discuss it first with your supervisor and the Human Resources Department so they may determine whether your skills fit the requirements of the desired job. You should also feel free to discuss your career aspirations with your supervisor at any time. If you fulfill the basic criteria for the position, the Human Resources Department may make arrangements to set up an interview. Internal applicants who do not follow the instructions to apply for a given vacancy will not be considered.

In certain situations, an opening may exist that requires specialized skills and/or talents that do not currently exist within the Authority. In such cases, HCHA may seek candidates from outside the present workforce.

### **LAYOFF DUE TO LACK OF WORK**

HCHA attempts to maintain a stable workforce; however, business conditions sometimes change to a point that there is not enough work to keep all employees on the payroll. Should such a situation occur, the workforce may be reduced by laying off the number of employees over those needed to perform the work available.

Layoffs will be determined by the ability of the affected employees to adequately perform the available work with minimal retraining. Length of service, performance and attendance or tardiness records may be considered where relative ability is equal. Severance packages may be offered when feasible.

### **OFFICE EQUIPMENT/TECHNOLOGY**

Harris County Housing Authority recognizes the importance of providing the appropriate tools to employees. Commonly provided tools include computers with updated software packages, copiers, fax machines, multi-line telephone systems, and the like. Individuals in certain positions may require additional equipment, which will be provided if deemed essential, including access to vehicles, tools, property or other resources.

Although HCHA continuously updates and maintains all equipment, you are also asked to actively participate in this maintenance. Should you need assistance with equipment or technology, please make the request to your supervisor.

Note that the use of office equipment provided by or related to Harris County Housing Authority is limited to the business of HCHA. **Actions that may result in harm to HCHA or a lack of productivity, such as the use of pirated or unauthorized software or downloading unrelated or inappropriate material may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. Personal use of office equipment should be minimal. Resources provided by Harris County Housing Authority should primarily be used for purposes directly related to the business of HCHA, and not for personal or political activities or purposes. Violation of this policy can result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.**

## COMPENSATION AND PERFORMANCE

### CLASSIFICATIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

For purposes of salary administration and eligibility for overtime payments and employment benefits, Harris County Housing Authority classifies its employees as follows:

- ◆ Full-time Regular Employees – Employees hired to work HCHA’s normal, full time, thirty hour or more workweek on a regular basis. Such employees may be “exempt” or “non-exempt” as defined below.
- ◆ Part-time Regular Employees – Employees hired to work fewer than thirty hours per week on a regular basis. Such employees may be “exempt” or “non-exempt” as defined below.
- ◆ Short-Term Employees – Employees engaged to work full- or part-time on HCHA’s payroll with the understanding that their employment will be terminated upon completion of a specific assignment. Such employees may be “exempt” or “non-exempt” as defined below. Note that employees hired from temporary employment agencies for specific assignments are employees of the respective agency and not of HCHA.
- ◆ Non-Exempt Employees – Employees who are required to be paid overtime at the federal or state prescribed wage rate, whichever is higher. Non-exempt employees must have supervisor authorization prior to working overtime.
- ◆ Exempt Employees – Employees who are not required to be paid overtime, in accordance with applicable federal wage and hour laws, for work performed beyond forty hours in a workweek. The exempt designation includes, but is not limited to, executives, administrators, instructors, professional employees, outside sales representatives, and certain computer programmers that meet the federal guidelines for exemption.

### WAGES AND SALARIES

Harris County Housing Authority runs payroll on a biweekly basis, resulting in a total of 26 pay periods per calendar year. Employees are paid every other Thursday. Should pay day fall on a bank holiday, employees will be paid the business day prior to the bank holiday. The actual work week starts at noon on Friday and ends on the following Friday at 11:59 am.

If you resign, final settlement of services or wages will be made no earlier than the next regular pay cycle. If you are terminated, you will be issued a check no later than the sixth calendar day after termination, in accordance with Texas law.

Wage rates and salaries vary according to the current market price for comparable services, your qualifications and previous work experiences, and a successful, stable work record. Rates for one particular job or classification cannot be compared as being relative to any other.

### TIMESHEETS

Each employee is responsible for keeping an accurate daily timesheet. The timesheet is used for payroll records which must be maintained accurately at all times. You must sign in and out each day, including any time taken for lunch or other breaks. Any oversights or mistakes should be reported to your supervisor. You should only perform work while clocked in, and if you are not performing work, you should be clocked out.

If you cannot be at work due to sickness, jury duty, or other excusable circumstance, or if you will be late in arriving at your appointed place, please call your immediate supervisor. In the event of a disabling sickness or accident while performing your duties, notify your supervisor immediately. Your supervisor will see that your time out is noted on your time sheet and that any relevant incident is properly reported.

Any type of leave (personal, vacation, jury, etc.) must be noted on your timesheet, and supported with a Request for Leave approved by your immediate supervisor and the Human Resources Department.

## **FLEXIBLE SCHEDULES**

Employees of HCHA may participate in a compressed work week upon management approval. Our compressed work week is commonly referred to as a 9/80 or flextime and consists of 9-hour work days Monday through Thursday and alternating Fridays: one earned day off and one 8-hour work day. Your supervisor will work with you to determine your actual work hours and which Friday you will earn off. Flextime participants may be asked to return to a regular 40-hour work week for business purposes or concerns regarding performance, conduct, or attendance. The assigned flextime schedule must be followed and days cannot be traded or rescheduled.

Should a paid holiday fall on an earned day off, the employee will be given another day off during that pay period, preferably the work day before or after the holiday. Employees taking time off on a flexible schedule will see their balance deducted based on the number of regularly scheduled hours for that day (9 hours for Monday through Thursday and 8 hours on Friday unless otherwise scheduled).

## **OVERTIME POLICY**

Overtime and additional work other than that which is regularly scheduled may be required as a condition of employment. Overtime will be paid to eligible, non-exempt employees in accordance with applicable federal and state law. The pay for overtime will be calculated at the federal or state prescribed wage rate, which is one-and-one-half times regular pay. At HCHA's discretion, eligible, non-exempt employees may receive compensatory time in lieu of overtime pay. For eligible employees, compensatory time will be issued at a rate of one-and-one-half times the hours worked over 40 per week. Exempt employees are not eligible to earn compensatory time and are required to work any additional hours needed beyond their regularly scheduled hours in order to complete their assignments and successfully fulfill their duties.

All overtime must be authorized by the CEO in writing prior to its occurrence. Employees who work overtime without CEO approval will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Managers may alter non-exempt employee schedules to ensure that employees do not accrue unapproved overtime.

## **WORKING OUTSIDE OF HCHA**

At times, employees may be required to perform work outside of HCHA offices or worksites. Work performed off-site by non-exempt employees must be authorized by an employee's immediate supervisor prior to its occurrence. Employees who perform any work-related duties (this policy includes even simple tasks such as checking e-mail or voicemail and is not limited to major, or essential, job

functions) outside of HCHA offices or worksites without prior approval will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Employees working off-site must complete an offsite work log that should accompany their timesheet.

## **WAGE DEDUCTIONS**

Harris County Housing Authority may deduct money from your pay from time to time for reasons that fall into the following categories:

1. Taxes as required by the Internal Revenue Service;
2. Your share of the premiums for HCHA's group insurance plans;
3. Any payments required by a federal or state entity, including taxes, student loans or child support as mandated by official government agencies;
4. Any contributions you make into a retirement or pension plan sponsored, controlled or managed by HCHA;
5. If you receive an overpayment of wages for any reason, repayment of such overpayments to HCHA;
6. The cost to HCHA of personal long distance calls you make on HCHA phones or on HCHA accounts, or personal faxes sent by you using HCHA equipment or accounts;
7. The cost of repairing or replacing any HCHA supplies, materials, equipment, money or other property that you may damage (other than normal wear and tear), lose, fail to return or take without appropriate authorization from HCHA during the your employment;
8. Any time taken that exceeds your bank of accrued, unused PTO or vacation time on an hour-for-hour basis regardless of the number of hours you have worked that day or week to the extent permitted by law;
9. Other monies or repayments you may owe to HCHA, for any reason.

Employees agree that HCHA may deduct money from their pay under the above circumstances, or in any other applicable situations.

## **DIRECT DEPOSIT**

Harris County Housing Authority's preferred method of payment is direct deposit. To benefit from this service, you will need to ensure that your direct deposit information is kept up to date. Your pay will be deposited directly into the bank account(s) of your choice, provided that the account information is correct. Note that upon requesting direct deposit, you may still receive at least one live check before direct deposit begins. Direct deposit may be cancelled by HCHA at any time, with or without notice. Should your direct deposit be cancelled, you will receive a live check.

To maximize the efficiency of direct deposit, call your bank to confirm your account number and routing number before submitting the information to HCHA. Incorrect account information can cause a delay in the funds being distributed to you through direct deposit. Always contact your bank to verify that funds were deposited to your account prior to using the funds. Harris County Housing Authority will not be responsible for overdrafts on your account. If funds were not deposited as expected, contact the Finance Department.

### **INDIVIDUAL PAYROLL RECORDS**

Regardless of whether you choose direct deposit or live checks, you should carefully examine your check or check stub to ensure that you understand how you were paid and to identify any discrepancies. Questions regarding your check or check stub can be directed to the Human Resources Department. Additionally, note that although you may be paid through direct deposit, bonuses or other pay types may be paid using a live check.

### **PERFORMANCE REVIEW**

Harris County Housing Authority completes a formal performance review on an annual basis, although managers are encouraged to hold regular meetings and coaching sessions with employees to discuss performance expectations, productivity, and other employment-related topics. While employment decisions, including promotions, increases and transfers are often tied to performance, a positive performance evaluation does not guarantee continued employment or any other type of benefit. Increases, bonuses and other benefits are offered based on business needs and available budget.

### **COMPENSATION REVIEW**

To attract and retain highly qualified individuals who contribute significantly to the goals of HCHA, compensation reviews for employees of Harris County Housing Authority will be conducted periodically. Compensation adjustments of this type are not automatic, but are based on market comparisons and availability of funds.

Compensation reviews will begin with a review of the individual's work, including assigned tasks as well as work that exceeds the requirements of the position, completed by a representative of the Human Resources Department in conjunction with management. Such reviews will be based on tasks, responsibilities and qualifications relevant to the position in question. Upon reviewing the position, a salary survey will be conducted by the Human Resources Department to determine the appropriate compensation rate for the position or individual in question. Salary surveys may include general market research as well as targeted inquiries with similar companies.

The results of salary surveys will be compared with the current salaries of HCHA staff to determine the need for further action or adjustments. Additional items, such as benefits, time off and bonuses may also be considered.

### **MARKET VALUE**

Based on a comparison of the employee's evaluation and the relevant position description, the employee's contribution to HCHA's success will be determined. Using the market value of the position as a reference point, a new compensation rate recommendation may be made. The employee will be

aware of any discussion regarding his or her performance, but generally not be immediately made aware of the proposed salary change. Proposed changes will be examined against the expected amount of available funds and approved based on the true comparison between the employee's contribution and market value. Employees affected by salary reviews will be notified of the change in a timely manner and should direct any concerns to their immediate supervisors.

## **MERIT INCREASES**

To recognize and reward performance that exceeds expectations, individuals may be awarded pay increases based on performance when budget allows. Managers and supervisors are encouraged to recognize differences in performance levels in conducting reviews.

Each employee's evaluation will be compared to the appropriate position description in order to determine the extent to which the employee achieved or exceeded the goals set based on the position description. Merit increases may be restricted by budgetary requirements, which will be determined on a case by case basis each year.

## **AWARD TIME**

At its discretion, HCHA may recognize outstanding employee performance by awarding vacation time beyond an employee's normal vacation accrual. These awards can only be made by the CEO subject to Board of Commissioner approval. Leave must be supported by a letter or certificate, be used within the designated time frame, and follow any other rules/guidelines described in the award.

## **INTERNAL TRANSFERS AND PROMOTIONS**

Employees are eligible for transfers and promotions upon meeting the following requirements:

- An active, regular or temporary employee
- Maintain at least a satisfactory performance rating
- Not have a conduct or performance-related probation on file for the past 6 months
- Meet the job qualifications based on the job description
- Provide notice of application for a transfer or promotion to immediate supervisor

HCHA advertises and hires based on the needs of the organization, and may also post jobs externally. Please direct any questions regarding open jobs to the Human Resources Department.

## **EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT**

HCHA employees may be reimbursed for reasonable approved expenses incurred in the course of business. These expenses must be approved by your supervisor and may include air travel, lodging, meals, cab fare, vehicle rental or mileage expenses, or other reasonable costs. Expenses should be submitted to your supervisor and include receipts. Reimbursements will be made for expenses that are necessary and reasonable and that comply with IRS rules and requirements. All expenses related to travel should be reported via an expense reimbursement form and accompanied by a receipt. Reimbursement requests need to be made within ten days of the expense or return from travel or by the end of the month, whichever is more practical. Any advance payments should also be reflected on the reimbursement form. If the travel advance resulted in overpayment, the employee should attach a

check in the overpaid amount payable to the Authority. Special circumstances will be addressed by the CEO on a case by case basis.

Falsification of documents, misuse of expense reimbursement policies, or fraud related to expenses may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

## **TRAVEL POLICY**

There are occasions when employees may need to travel for HCHA purposes. In these cases, the employee should work closely with his or her supervisor to plan for travel and submit a travel authorization form. Employees are responsible for collecting receipts for all relevant expenses. Requests for reimbursement can be made using the expense reimbursement form; this form should be submitted within 10 days of an employee's return or by the end of the month, whichever is more practical. In some cases, employees may receive advances for travel and should continue to collect and submit receipts for the travel period. In such cases, the employee is responsible for justifying expenses and returning any unused portion of the advance. Expense reimbursement rates and standards are based on GSA rates, and may change at any time.

Only eligible expenses will be reimbursed or approved. Eligible expenses are:

- Directly related to the business of the Authority
- Actual, reasonable and necessary under the circumstances
- Approved by the CEO for travel that does not require an overnight stay
- Approved by the Board of Commissioners for travel that involves an overnight stay

Additional considerations:

- Employees should analyze travel costs and select the most reasonable option based on cost and time
- Should an employee select a more expensive option, the reimbursement will be limited to the less expensive option unless the option was approved in advance and is based on business need
- When traveling by air, employees are expected to make use of available discount programs and direct route
- If an employee travels outside of the state by a method other than air, reimbursement will be limited to air fare at the economy class, ordinary expenses during the meeting days and one day's motel and meals before and after the meeting
- If an employee extends a trip to take advantage of discount fares, HCHA will reimburse the lower of the actual expense incurred or the amount that would have been incurred for the business portion only
- HCHA will only approve reimbursement for standard or economy fares for air travel
- Any additional travel that is not business related will not be eligible for reimbursement
- Fines for traffic or parking violations are the responsibility of the employee, as are expenses related to any motor vehicle accident in which the employee is involved
- Transportation to and from the airport is a reimbursable expense
- Personal trips for shopping or tourism are not reimbursable
- Federal (GSA) per diem limits will be used to assess reasonable lodging expenses
- HCHA may authorize a higher per diem rate when the best available rate for necessary business travel exceeds the GSA stated rate
- Conference registration fees are generally allowed and eligible for pre-registration fee payment

- A \$10 allowance per trip will be reimbursable for baggage handling fees if incurred
- Laundry, valet, and tips are considered personal expenses and are not reimbursable
- Travel outside the U.S. should be recorded in U.S. dollars, including a clearly stated conversion rate and calculation

Local travel mileage will be reimbursed at the rate established and allowed by the IRS and only when a pool car is not available for use. HCHA reserves the right to establish distance limits for common routes and travel points as well as the right to verify distance independently. Mileage cannot be reimbursed from the residence to the regularly assigned work site.

Parking, tolls and other reasonable direct business travel expenses will be reimbursed when submitted with receipts and submitted in a timely manner and deemed necessary and reasonable. An exemption from the toll receipt requirement is available for EZ Tag users, but only the discounted EZ Tag toll will be reimbursed.

Meals may be reimbursed or allowed based on GSA per diem amounts and when HCHA business prevents the employee from returning to his or her home or work station in the same day. On this basis, meals are not reimbursed for day travel when no overnight stay is required. Traveling employees should consider this when submitting the travel authorization form. Meals and incidentals do not need to be supported with receipts, and meal per diem amounts are expected to cover meals, tips, porters, and incidental expenses. Employees will not be reimbursed for expenses in excess of the per diem.

Entertainment is potentially a reimbursable expense provided that it is appropriate and related to the conduct of Authority business, approved by the CEO, the audience or involved parties are clearly identifiable, and documentation is provided to support the expense. Required documentation includes an original receipt and a statement explaining the purpose and audience of the event.

In certain circumstances, banquet attendance may be reimbursable, including when the cost exceeds stated per diem costs. When seminars, conferences or other expenses include a meal, the proportionate cost of the meal should be subtracted from the per diem meal allowance.

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

## **EMPLOYEE CONDUCT**

### **GUIDELINES FOR APPROPRIATE CONDUCT**

As a Harris County Housing Authority team member, you are expected to accept certain responsibilities, follow acceptable business principles in matters of conduct, and exhibit a high degree of integrity at all times. This not only involves sincere respect for the rights and feelings of others, but also demands that you refrain from any behavior that might be harmful to you, your co-workers, HCHA, or that might be viewed unfavorably by current or potential clients or by the public at large. Your conduct reflects on HCHA. You are, consequently, encouraged to observe the highest standards of professionalism at all times.

### **OFFICE HOURS, ABSENTEEISM AND TARDINESS**

In the interest of maintaining a productive work environment, Harris County Housing Authority expects employees to be reliable and punctual in reporting for scheduled work. Absenteeism and tardiness result in a burden on other employees and on HCHA's overall operations. In the event that you are unable to be at work on time or are unable to work as scheduled, you must notify your supervisor as soon as possible via telephone in advance of the tardiness or absence. Should your supervisor be unavailable, leave him or her a voicemail and e-mail, and contact the Human Resources Department. If the manager left specific instructions regarding an alternate contact, that person should be contacted immediately. An employee who fails to report to work and properly communicate with his or her supervisor for three consecutive work days will be considered to have abandoned his or her job and his or her employment will be terminated accordingly. Contacting a coworker is insufficient and considered a violation of this policy. A record of absenteeism and tardiness is kept by your supervisor and is part of your personnel record. To the extent permitted by law, patterns of absenteeism and tardiness may lessen your chances for advancement and may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

Our core office hours are from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. A one-hour lunch period will be arranged by your supervisor. Established schedules should not be altered without management approval.

Lunch and formal rest breaks for all office employees shall be assigned by their direct supervisors. To facilitate the smooth flow of business and to adequately cover duties, lunch and formal rest breaks will usually be staggered and may change to meet the needs of HCHA and its clients. Employees may also take brief, unscheduled respites from work to tend to non-work matters such as using of the restroom or getting something to drink.

HCHA expects all employees to assume diligent responsibility for their attendance and punctuality. Continued dependability, quality and pride of service are factors over which each individual employee has a great deal of influence. If you are absent and cannot perform your duties on time, or if you produce substandard work, the entire organization is negatively affected.

If you are absent for more than three consecutive workdays for medical reasons, a release statement from a physician may be required before you will be permitted to return to work. In such instances, Harris County Housing Authority reserves the right to require that you submit to an examination by a

physician designated by HCHA. This is to protect your health as well as that of your coworkers and clients.

Unexcused or excessive absenteeism or tardiness is grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. If you are absent for three days and fail to properly report your absences, this will be considered a voluntary resignation of your position and your employment will be terminated for abandonment of your job.

### **STAFF DEVELOPMENT DAYS**

Staff development days are designated to allow for staff meetings and necessary training. Attendance during staff development days is required unless prior arrangements have been made with your supervisor. Dress codes and other company policies are still in force at this time.

### **DRESS CODE GUIDELINES**

All employees are required to report for work in clean and neat clothing and footwear. Personnel should maintain good grooming and personal hygiene. Employees are expected to maintain a business casual standard unless your position requires a uniform or other type of dress. On Fridays, employees may wear jeans, provided they are not frayed and do not have holes.

If you report for work improperly dressed, your supervisor may counsel you and/or instruct you to return home to change clothes. Improper attire includes, but is not limited to, tennis shoes, T-shirts, flip flops, tank tops, athletic wear and miniskirts. You will not be compensated during your time away from work for this purpose. Repeated violations may be cause for disciplinary action and may be reflected on performance reviews.

Your cooperation is requested in adhering to the established business appropriate standards as presented. Should you have any questions about these guidelines, please discuss the issue with your supervisor or the Human Resources Department.

### **PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS**

Harris County Housing Authority firmly believes that an environment where employees maintain clear boundaries between personal and business interactions is most effective for conducting business. Although this policy is not intended to prevent the development of friendships or romantic relationships between coworkers, it does establish boundaries as to how such relationships should be approached during working hours and within the working environment. Individuals in supervisory roles are strictly prohibited from pursuing a romantic relationship with any employee under their supervision. Personal relationships should not be disruptive to HCHA operations and should adhere to the Nepotism Policy. Any violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

**Sexual harassment of a client or potential client is a crime punishable by up to imprisonment for one year and a \$4,000.00 fine.** For this and other reasons, romantic or sexual relationships between HCHA employees and actual or potential clients are strictly prohibited. Where discrimination or harassment of an actual or potential client is determined to have occurred, HCHA will immediately take appropriate disciplinary action, including written warnings and possible suspension, transfer, and/or termination of employment, and/or refer appropriate cases to law enforcement for prosecution. Furthermore, Harris

County Housing Authority will not permit or condone any actions of retaliation against an actual or potential client who files administrative, civil, or criminal discrimination or harassment complaints, or cooperates in the investigation of the complaint.

Due to the possibility of misunderstandings or conflicts of interests (including allegations of illegal conduct) arising out of your friendships or other personal relationships with the people we serve, HCHA strongly discourages employees from maintaining outside friendships or relationships with actual or potential clients. HCHA reserves the right, in an appropriate instance, to discipline or even discharge an employee who starts or maintains an inappropriate friendship or other personal relationship with an actual or potential client.

At all times, employees should act in a professional and businesslike manner, avoiding even the appearance of impropriety. Please remember that even an unfounded allegation of misconduct could have devastating and lasting consequences on your personal life, job, and finances. Even if you are **wrongfully and falsely** accused of having an inappropriate relationship with a client or potential client, you may:

- Be arrested
- Lose your job
- Be responsible for paying your own legal expenses (which may reach in tens of thousands of dollars). HCHA cannot, and will not, provide you with legal counsel or pay your legal expenses
- Face imprisonment for up to a year, as well as, a \$4,000.00 fine. HCHA cannot, and will not, pay criminal fines for convicted employees

Please consider the serious consequences of your actions before deciding to start or maintain a friendship or other outside relationship with a client or potential client.

Friendship, business, and romantic relationships between HCHA employees and vendors or potential vendors are governed by the Legal, Compliance, Ethics, Conflict of Interest and Outside Employment, Interest in Contracts, and Political Activity sections of this Handbook.

## **PHOTOGRAPHS AND RECORDINGS**

Due to the potential for issues such as invasion of privacy, harassment, and loss of productivity, unauthorized photographs or recordings of HCHA proceedings, work material, or staff is prohibited.

## **COMPANY PROPERTY**

Harris County Housing Authority property, equipment, and supplies are for business purposes and not for employees' personal use. The use of HCHA postage, photocopying, and/or faxing equipment for personal use is generally prohibited; however, minor printing or photocopying for personal use may occur as long as employees reimburse the Authority for any supplies used.

HCHA reserves the right, on reasonable suspicion that HCHA policy is being violated, to conduct searches or inspections of employees and their offices, desks, personal effects, boxes, purses, baggage, and any other property located on HCHA premises or work sites. Entry onto HCHA premises or work sites

constitutes consent to searches or inspections based upon a reasonable suspicion that HCHA policies are being violated.

## **USE OF COMMUNICATION / COMPUTER SYSTEMS AND PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES**

It is the intent of Harris County Housing Authority to provide the communication systems necessary for conducting business. HCHA's communication and computers systems are intended for business purposes and may be used only to conduct Authority business during work hours. Employees are expected to adhere to policies regarding the proper use of all communication systems including but not limited to the telephone, personal electronic devices, e-mail, voicemail and paging.

The communication systems are owned and operated by HCHA and are to be used for the business of HCHA. Employees should have no expectation of privacy of any correspondence, messages or information in the systems. HCHA may access the voicemail, e-mail, messaging, and other systems and obtain information from within the systems without notice to users. **Furthermore, HCHA may monitor system usage, including internet usage, at any time without notice.**

Employees should keep personal calls as well as other personal business to an absolute minimum. If you need to regularly leave your work station to conduct personal business, you must first obtain permission from your immediate supervisor. This will allow him or her to make modifications to the work schedule if necessary and will keep your supervisor aware of your activities during the day.

All telephone, HCHA issued electronic devices, e-mail, voice mail and paging and messaging systems are property of Harris County Housing Authority. HCHA reserves the right to access and disclose any and all communications and messages sent for any purpose. All such communications and messages, regardless of content or the intent of the sender, are official government records, and are subject to the same internal and external regulation, security and scrutiny as any other HCHA correspondence, including the provisions of the Texas Public Information Act. Employees must comply with HCHA requests to make HCHA-issued communication, computer, and electronic devices available for any reason, including upgrades, replacement, or inspection.

Employees are responsible for the security of HCHA-issued communication, computer, and electronic devices, and the information stored on them. Always keep HCHA-issued electronics on your person when traveling; never leave them unattended in your car or hotel room. If your HCHA-issued device is lost or stolen, notify your supervisor and IT Department immediately.

When using a cell phone, remember that your conversations are not necessarily private. Those around you can hear your end of the conversation. To protect the confidentiality of HCHA information (and avoid annoying others), please make cell phone calls in a private place.

HCHA's communication systems will not be used to solicit or to address employees regarding commercial, religious, or political causes. The system may not be used in ways that are disruptive or offensive to others.

Use of HCHA property or time to download or stream music, visit social networking websites for personal reasons, or do anything that is not directly work-related is also strictly prohibited. These activities not only take away from productive time at work, but tend to use a great deal of bandwidth, causing a slower internet connection and disrupting the work of others. Improper use of software or

media is strictly prohibited. Copying of copyrighted software or media violates the law and is strictly prohibited.

Transmission of sexually explicit images, messages, cartoons, ethnic slurs, racial epithets, or anything that may be construed as harassment or disparagement of others based on race, ethnicity, national origin, age, religion, disability status, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, political beliefs, or the like, is specifically prohibited.

Employees should not attempt to gain access to another employee's telephone, personal electronic device, e-mail, voice mail, text messages, or paging messages. However, HCHA reserves the right to access an employee's messages at any time, without notice to the employee. Employees must provide management with access to HCHA systems, including any and all identification codes, passwords, and/or access codes. Upon termination of employment, whether voluntary or involuntary, HCHA reserves the right to disclose or retain any personal files, data, electronic messages or information that was stored on the employee's computer or any other communication system provided by or related to HCHA.

HCHA may provide certain employees with cellular phones or other electronic devices for business purposes. These devices should be used to carry out job duties related to HCHA. Employees should have no expectation of privacy when using such devices, even when communication is personal in nature.

Some employees may be authorized to use their personal electronic devices for business purposes. Employees to whom HCHA has issued cellular phones or other electronic devices should work with the IT department to configure their devices. Should an employee leave HCHA for any reason, the device should be taken to the IT department to remove all HCHA property on the last day of employment

Connecting personal devices to HCHA systems without prior authorization is prohibited. This includes connecting personal iPads, phones, tablets or laptops to any secure wireless internet service provided by HCHA. Employees may connect personal devices to designated "guest" wireless services if available. Personal devices used on HCHA systems or for HCHA business are subject to the same monitoring policy and Public Information Act requirements as HCHA-issued devices and employees should have no expectation of privacy.

Non-exempt employees whom HCHA has issued electronic devices must remember that working overtime without permission violates the Authority's Overtime Policy and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Additionally, the requirement for obtaining advance authorization to work overtime generally applies to the use of electronic devices (including, but not limited to, using HCHA-issued cellular phones or other electronic devices to make business calls, check e-mail, send or receive text messages, or perform any other type of work). Supervisors and exempt employees should avoid after-hours communications with non-exempt employees who have been issued personal electronic devices except in case of emergency or where overtime has previously been approved.

Any violation of these guidelines may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

Harris County Housing Authority respects the right of any employee to maintain a blog or web page or to participate in social networking. However, to protect the interests of the Authority, employees are asked to do so in a manner that avoids any implication of impropriety with HCHA. Further, employees are asked to refrain from speaking about HCHA business or on behalf of HCHA.

Employees may not blog, post to websites, or use social networking sites for non-business purposes during work hours or using HCHA equipment or property, including the wireless services. It is best practice to engage in such activities using your own time and resources. Any conduct that is prohibited by law is impermissible, regardless of when or how it was posted. This includes material that is discriminatory, obscene, defamatory, libelous, or threatening.

HCHA encourages all employees to be aware of the speed and manner in which information shared via the internet is received and potentially misunderstood by readers. Specific questions about this policy should be directed to the Human Resources Department. Failure to adhere to this policy may result in discipline, up to and including termination.

## **WORKPLACE SAFETY**

Safety is everyone's responsibility. Every supervisor and employee is expected to devote the time and effort necessary to ensure the safety of employees and visitors at all times. Responsibilities of the employee include but are not limited to the following:

- ◆ Obeying the safety rules
- ◆ Following safe job procedures and not taking short cuts
- ◆ Keeping work areas clean and free from slipping or tripping hazards
- ◆ Using prescribed personal protective equipment where appropriate
- ◆ Immediately reporting all equipment malfunctions to a supervisor
- ◆ Using care when lifting and carrying objects
- ◆ Observing restricted areas and all warning signs
- ◆ Knowing emergency procedures and exit routes
- ◆ Reporting unsafe conditions to the Human Resources Department
- ◆ Reporting every accident and injury to his or her supervisor within 24 hours
- ◆ Following the care prescribed by the attending physician when treated for an injury or illness
- ◆ Attending all employee safety meetings
- ◆ Participating in accident investigations, serving on a safety committee or other loss prevention or control activities as needed

If you are injured on the job, Harris County Housing Authority provides coverage and protection in accordance with Worker's Compensation laws. In the event that you sustain an injury while at work, it must be reported immediately (within 24 hours) to your supervisor, who in turn will immediately notify the Human Resource Department about the incident. Employees must let their supervisor know: (1) how they hurt themselves, (2) what they were doing at the time, (3) who they were working with at the time, (4) when and where the injury happened, and (5) any other relevant information to aid the investigation of the incident. Failure to report accidents is a serious matter as it may preclude your coverage under Worker's Compensation Insurance.

Additional guidance regarding workplace safety is found in the HCHA Safety Standard Operating Procedures. Failure to observe these procedures may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of your employment.

## **DRIVING POLICY**

To be allowed to operate a motor vehicle on company time and/or for company business, and to be eligible for mileage reimbursement, employees of HCHA must have a valid Texas driver's license. Driving records must be submitted to the Human Resources Department upon request, while other documents must be submitted upon renewal. Employees with incomplete information will not be allowed to drive on company time or on company business. Current insurance cards should be kept in the vehicle at all times. HCHA does not maintain an insurance policy that covers personal vehicles.

HCHA maintains a fleet of vehicles for Authority business. HCHA vehicles may only be used for Authority business or activities that fulfill the HCHA mission. Only employees who have a valid Texas driver's license, are at least 21 years of age, have an acceptable driving record, and who agree to HCHA vehicle policies will be approved to use HCHA vehicles. Employees who use HCHA vehicles should take extra care to drive safely and courteously as professional representatives of the Authority. Any damage or accidents should be reported immediately to a supervisor, as should any traffic citations or other infractions while in possession of an Authority vehicle. Requests to use an Authority vehicle can be made to your immediate supervisor and the Finance Department. Supervisors are responsible for assisting HCHA in ensuring that motor vehicles are operated safely and responsibly. All company vehicles must be returned to HCHA's central offices after each trip and may not be taken home over night.

Employees should always use a company vehicle when one is available before using their personal vehicle. In the event that a company vehicle is not available, employees may drive their own vehicles and receive mileage reimbursement; however, before doing so, the employee must provide proof of insurance coverage to the Finance Department. Limits of liability shall be in accordance with state and/or Authority requirements.

Vehicles may be rented for short-term periods under the name of the Harris County Housing Authority. Employees renting vehicles must comply with the HCHA Procurement Policy and must have approval from their supervisor. Rented vehicles should be inspected by the employee prior to leaving the rental agency and any damage should be reported. Charges for pre-existing damage because an employee failed to inspect a rental vehicle will be the responsibility of the employee. Comprehensive and collision liability coverage offered by the rental agency should be waived, as the Authority carries full insurance coverage, including for rented vehicles used for HCHA purposes. Any accidents or damage should be

reported to the rental agency and your supervisor. An HCHA insurance card can be requested from the Finance Department.

Your driving record and habits are reviewed on a regular basis for your safety and that of those around you. Should your driving record reflect an unacceptable risk, you may be reassigned to a position that does not require you to operate a vehicle. If no acceptable assignment is available, your employment may be terminated. In some cases, you may be asked to attend a driver safety course or provide additional information to HCHA in order to ensure your safety and that of those around you.

When you drive on company time or on company business, you must notify your supervisor and the Human Resources Department if any information regarding your driving has changed, including your driver's license, insurance coverage, or information contained in your driving record. Any traffic incidents that occur on company time or while doing company business must be reported immediately, including traffic tickets and collisions. Violations and incidents that occur outside of company time should also be disclosed to the Human Resource Department to maintain up-to-date records of your driving.

Employees are required to avoid the use of cell phones or other electronics while driving, including taking or making calls, texting, searching, responding to e-mail, or otherwise engaging in distracted driving. This is the case even when traffic is slow or stopped. If you need to use your phone in any way, you should move to a safe location off the road and stop your vehicle before using your phone. If you must take a call while driving, you should operate within the confines of the law and use hands free services. Under no circumstances should you put yourself or others at risk to fulfill a business need.

Should you be charged with a traffic violation during business hours or while conducting HCHA business, you are solely responsible for all liabilities that result.

In accordance with Texas law, HCHA prohibits employees from carrying weapons in vehicles owned or leased by HCHA even if the employee is authorized to carry an open or concealed weapon.

Failure to adhere to the driving policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

## **DRIVER SAFETY**

The safety and well-being of our employees is of critical importance HCHA. We each have a responsibility not only to protect ourselves when on the road, but also to do our part to protect those around us. Employees that are required to drive for company business at any time are expected to consistently follow the guidelines below.

- ◆ You are responsible for the condition and safety of your vehicle - maintain your vehicle and inspect it regularly
- ◆ Follow all current traffic laws, ordinances and regulations; fines resulting from infractions are your responsibility
- ◆ Be sure to have all documents with you in the vehicle, including your driver's license and a current insurance card

- ◆ You must wear seat belts at all time while in a moving vehicle being used for company business, whether you are the driver or a passenger
- ◆ The use of cell phones without a hands-free device while behind the wheel of a moving vehicle being used for company business is strictly prohibited
- ◆ Engaging in other distracting activities including, but not limited to, eating, putting on makeup, reading or changing radio stations or music, is also strongly discouraged while driving, even when in slow-moving traffic
- ◆ The use of alcohol, drugs or other substances, including certain over-the-counter cold, allergy, or other medications that in any way impair driving ability, is prohibited
- ◆ Do not drive when you are impaired, including when you are too tired to drive safely
- ◆ You must follow all driving laws and safety rules such as adherence to posted speed limits and directional signs, use of turn signals and avoidance of confrontational or aggressive behavior while driving
- ◆ You should never allow anyone to ride in any part of the vehicle not specifically intended for passenger use and/or any seat that does not include a working seat belt
- ◆ You must promptly report any accidents that occur during company time to local law enforcement as well as to your supervisor
- ◆ You are expected to report any moving or parking violations received while driving on company business and/or in company vehicles
- ◆ Smoking is not permitted in HCHA vehicles
- ◆ Transportation of hazardous materials without prior approval is prohibited
- ◆ If you witness or are involved in an accident, you are required by law to stop
- ◆ Report any incident to your manager and the Finance Department within 24 hours
- ◆ Accidents, including single vehicle accidents, should be reported to the proper police jurisdiction immediately
- ◆ Accidents in HCHA vehicles or rentals found to be related to reckless driving or due to impairment of the employee driver are the personal responsibility of the driver and may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination

## **DRUG FREE WORKPLACE POLICY**

It is the policy of Harris County Housing Authority to maintain a drug-free workplace. The term "drug" includes alcoholic beverages and prescription drugs, as well as illegal inhalants, illegal drugs and any substance that alters or compromises an individual's ability to perform his or her job. Activities prohibited by this policy may be considered grounds for discipline, including but not limited to suspension or immediate termination of employment. Prohibited activities under this policy include the use of drugs, as defined above, in the workplace, including distribution, possession, or use of a drug or controlled substance as defined in schedules I through V of the Controlled Substances Act, 21 U.S.C. Sec. 812, 21 C.F.R. Sec 1308, and the state and local law of the jurisdiction where the workplace is located, including, but not limited to, marijuana, opiates (e.g., heroin, morphine), cocaine, phencyclidine (PCP),

and amphetamines. The use of prescription drugs, when taken as directed by a licensed physician, shall not be considered a violation of this policy.

As a condition of employment, all HCHA employees must comply with this policy and consent to a drug/alcohol test if one is deemed necessary based on reasonable suspicion. Failure to consent to such testing may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. Any HCHA employee who has been convicted under any criminal drug statute for a violation must report that conviction to HCHA no later than five days after the conviction. Within thirty days after receiving notice of the conviction described in this policy, HCHA shall determine the appropriate course of action, possibly including disciplinary action and/or satisfactory participation in a drug abuse assistance or rehabilitation program.

Information regarding the availability of treatment programs, such as assistance provided by Harris County Housing Authority's health care plan coverage or HCHA's Employee Assistance Program and the requirements for participation in drug and alcohol abuse education programs, may be requested by contacting the Human Resource Department of Harris County Housing Authority.

### **SMOKING POLICY**

To maintain a safe and comfortable working environment and to ensure compliance with applicable laws, smoking in HCHA offices and facilities is strictly regulated. You should familiarize yourself with those areas throughout HCHA premises where smoking is either permitted or prohibited. Because HCHA may be subject to criminal and civil penalties for violations of applicable smoking laws, we must insist on strict adherence to this policy. Employees smoking in any non-smoking area may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Please contact the Human Resources Department if you have any questions regarding the smoking policy. In the event that you would like to file a complaint due to a violation of this policy, contact your supervisor or the Human Resources Department. For information on Smoking Cessation programs available, contact the Human Resources Department.

### **VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE**

It is the intent of Harris County Housing Authority to provide a safe workplace for employees and to provide a comfortable and secure atmosphere for clients and others with whom we do business. Harris County Housing Authority has a no tolerance policy for violent acts or threats of violence.

Harris County Housing Authority expects all employees to conduct themselves in a non-threatening, non-abusive manner at all times. No direct, conditional or indirect threat of harm to any employee or HCHA property will be considered acceptable behavior. This includes any verbal or physical harassment or abuse, any attempt at intimidating or instilling fear in others, menacing gestures, flashing of weapons, stalking, or any other hostile, aggressive, injurious, or destructive action undertaken for the purpose of domination or intimidation. Acts of violence or intimidation of others will not be tolerated. Any employee who commits, or threatens to commit, a violent act against any person while on HCHA premises or company time may be subject to immediate discharge. If an employee, while engaged in HCHA business off the premises, commits or threatens to commit a violent act, that employee may be subject to immediate discharge if the threat or violent act could adversely affect HCHA or its reputation in the community.

Employees of HCHA share the responsibility for the identification and alleviation of threatening or violent behaviors. If you are subjected to or threatened with violence, or are aware of another individual

who has been subjected to or threatened with violence, immediately report this information to your supervisor, the Human Resources Department or a member of management. If you as an individual feel threatened and need protection, do not hesitate to report the situation to a supervisor or the on-duty security guard. Employees should also notify the Human Resources Department if they are aware of any restraining orders that are in effect, or of the existence of any other non-work-related situation with the potential to erupt into workplace violence, even when considered a personal matter. Any threat reported to a supervisor should be immediately brought to the attention of the Human Resources Department.

All reports of violence will be carefully investigated by the Human Resources Department, and employee confidentiality will be maintained to the fullest extent possible. However, under certain circumstances, HCHA may need to disclose the reporting employee's identity. HCHA will not tolerate retaliation in any form against an employee who makes a report of workplace violence.

## **WEAPONS**

It is the intent of Harris County Housing Authority to provide a safe and secure workplace for employees, clients, visitors, and others with whom we do business. Unless they have been granted written permission from the CEO, HCHA employees may not possess weapons, including licensed or unlicensed firearms (regardless of whether the employee has a concealed or open carry weapons permit or license), on HCHA property. HCHA property includes but is not limited to all buildings, vehicles, and equipment owned or leased by HCHA to the extent allowable by law. The CEO may allow up to two employees to carry concealed handguns on HCHA property provided that the CEO provides this permission in writing and that the authorized employee provides written documentation showing that he/she maintains an active concealed handgun insurance policy. All documentation concerning concealed carry within the housing authority must be submitted to the HR Department.

The unauthorized possession of weapons on HCHA property may be cause for discipline up to and including immediate termination of employment. In enforcing these guidelines, HCHA reserves the right to request inspections of any employee and his or her personal effects while on HCHA premises. Any employee who refuses to allow inspection will be subject to the same disciplinary action as being found in possession of firearms. Compliance with this policy is a term and condition of continued employment with Harris County Housing Authority.

In the interest of maintaining a safe workplace, all employees within HCHA share the responsibility of identifying violators of these guidelines. In the event that you witness or suspect another individual of violating these guidelines you should immediately report this information to your on-site supervisor. Note that this policy does not apply to law enforcement officers licensed by the state or credentialed by the federal government.

## **SOLICITATIONS AND DISTRIBUTION OF LITERATURE**

It is the intent of Harris County Housing Authority to maintain a proper business environment and prevent interference with work and inconvenience to others from solicitations and/or distribution of literature.

Group meetings for solicitation purposes, distributing literature, and circulating petitions during work hours or in work areas at any time are prohibited unless approved by the CEO. The following guidelines will apply throughout HCHA:

- ◆ Employees will not engage in any solicitation of other employees for any purpose that would represent a conflict of interest. However, employees may promote fundraisers for schools, non-profits or other similar causes provided that no company resources are used and it is not done on company time.
- ◆ HCHA's facilities may not be used as a meeting place that involves solicitation and/or distribution of literature.
- ◆ To maintain good customer relations and preserve a professional work environment, employees may not wear any insignia, badge, or button on their person, nor display any insignia, badge, or button on their desk or in their work area, excluding professional designation awards, which could detract from a professional image in representation of the population at large.
- ◆ Certain types of information may be posted on HCHA's bulletin board or in the company newsletter. The Human Resources Department will approve and post such information.
- ◆ Trespassing with the intention of soliciting or distributing literature by anyone outside HCHA is prohibited.

## **INSPECTIONS**

Harris County Housing Authority reserves the right to require employees on the Authority's property or conducting HCHA business to agree to the inspection of their person, personal property, and work areas. Employees are expected to cooperate with searches or inspections. Employees who refuse to cooperate may be assumed guilty of a policy violation and disciplined accordingly, up to and including termination.

## **COMPLAINT RESOLUTION PROCEDURE**

Misunderstandings or conflicts can arise in any organization. To ensure effective working relations, it is important that such matters be resolved before serious problems develop. Many incidents can be resolved naturally through direct dialogue; however, should a situation persist that you believe is damaging to your employment with HCHA, you should follow HCHA policy to bring your complaint to management's attention.

Upon the identification of a complaint, discussion of the problem with your immediate supervisor is encouraged. If, however, you do not believe a discussion with your supervisor is appropriate, you may take further action. If your complaint is not resolved after discussion with your supervisor or if you feel discussion with your supervisor is inappropriate, you are encouraged to request a meeting with a representative of the Human Resources Department. In an effort to resolve the problem, the representative will consider the facts and may conduct an investigation. You will be notified of the outcome of the investigation in a timely manner.

Harris County Housing Authority will not tolerate any form of retaliation against employees acting in accordance with this procedure. The complaint resolution procedure should not be construed, however,

as preventing, limiting, or delaying HCHA from taking disciplinary action against any individual, up to and including termination, in circumstances (such as those involving problems of overall performance, conduct, attitude, or demeanor) where HCHA deems disciplinary action appropriate.

## **PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING HARASSMENT/DISCRIMINATION**

Harris County Housing Authority provides its employees with a method for reporting incidents of discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment, violence, or threats. If you believe you are the victim of any type of discrimination, harassment, violence or threats, you should immediately report such actions to your supervisor, to any manager, or to the Human Resources Department. If your immediate supervisor is involved in the alleged harassment, it is unnecessary to make a report to that individual. You are encouraged to report the issue immediately, in writing or via e-mail. It is not necessary to file a formal complaint or grievance; an e-mail to the manager or Human Resources Department is sufficient to begin an investigation. Harris County Housing Authority takes all complaints seriously and handles complaints as promptly, thoroughly and confidentially as possible. HCHA will inform you of your rights to assistance and how to preserve and protect those rights.

### *Confidentiality*

All reports of harassment will be treated as serious. However, absolute confidentiality is not promised nor can it be assured. Harris County Housing Authority will conduct an investigation of any complaint, which will require limited disclosure of pertinent information to certain parties, including the accused. HCHA will not allow the goal of confidentiality to be a deterrent to an effective investigation, and it may be necessary to reveal certain information to various state or federal agencies or courts.

### *Investigative Procedure*

Once a complaint is received, Harris County Housing Authority will begin a prompt and thorough investigation. The investigation may include interviews with involved employees, including the accused party, and any employees who are aware of facts or incidents alleged to have occurred.

You should also be aware that as an employer, Harris County Housing Authority has a duty to prevent and correct discrimination or harassment even when the employee reporting the incident asks that no action be taken and that the complaint be kept confidential.

Once the investigation is complete, a determination will be made regarding the validity of the allegations. If it is determined that discrimination or harassment has occurred, prompt, remedial action will be taken. This may include the following:

1. Restore any lost terms, conditions or benefits of employment to the employee issuing the complaint.
2. Discipline the guilty party. This discipline may include written disciplinary warnings, transfer, demotion, suspension, and/or termination.

If the harassment is from a vendor or client, Harris County Housing Authority will take appropriate action to address the conduct to the extent possible.

### *Retaliation*

Harris County Housing Authority will not tolerate retaliation against any employee for making an allegation of harassment or for participating in such an investigation. Retaliation in any form is prohibited. Any employee who violates this policy is subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

### *Duties of Employees and Supervisors*

All employees of Harris County Housing Authority, both management and non-management, are responsible for ensuring that a workplace free of discrimination and harassment is maintained. Any employee may file a complaint regarding incidents experienced personally or incidents observed in the workplace. HCHA strives to maintain a lawful, pleasant work environment where all employees are able to effectively perform their work without interference of any type and requests the assistance of all employees in this effort.

All Harris County Housing Authority supervisors and managers are expected to adhere to HCHA's anti-discrimination and harassment policy. In addition, all managers and supervisors are responsible for doing all they can to prevent and discourage discrimination and harassment from occurring. If a complaint is raised, supervisors and managers are to act promptly to notify the Harris County Housing Authority Human Resources Department of the complaint so that we may proceed with an investigation.

If a supervisor or manager fails to follow this policy they will be disciplined according to stated HCHA policy.

### **DISCIPLINARY ACTION**

Should your performance, work habits, overall attitude, conduct, or demeanor become unsatisfactory based on violations either of the above or of any other HCHA policies, rules, or regulations, you will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Before or during imposition of any discipline, employees will be given an opportunity to relate their version of the incident or problem at issue and provide any explanation or justification they consider relevant.

Where appropriate, a policy of progressive employee discipline will be followed by supervisors. A record of any disciplinary action will be placed in the individual's file through the use of an Employee Warning Notice or through another form of recording the incident, such as an e-mail or memo. Key elements of this policy include:

1. **ORAL REPRIMAND.** The first step in the Harris County Housing Authority progressive discipline policy is the oral reprimand. This is an oral warning to an employee that his or her conduct is unacceptable, and that repeated or continued failure to conform his or her conduct or performance to HCHA standards will result in more severe disciplinary action. With an oral reprimand, an employee will be counseled by his or her supervisor and informed of what improvements are necessary and expected to correct any performance deficiencies. A record of the notice of the oral reprimand may be made and retained in the employee's personnel file.

2. **WRITTEN REPRIMAND.** The second step is a written reprimand. This reprimand will describe the unacceptable conduct or performance of the employee and specify needed changes or improvements. The contents of the written reprimand must be reviewed and approved by the Human Resources Department before the reprimand is shared with the employee. A copy of the written reprimand will be retained in the employee's personnel file.
3. **SUSPENSION.** Suspension of the employee's employment may, at the sole discretion of HCHA, be used as a third step. The length of the suspension will vary based upon such factors as the severity of the offense, the employee's performance, and the employee's disciplinary record. An employee may be suspended for repeated instances of minor misconduct, failure to conform his conduct or performance to the standards of his position, or for a single serious offense. A record of the suspension will be retained in the employee's personnel file. Suspension may be with or without pay, at the discretion of Harris County Housing Authority management.
4. **TERMINATION.** The final step in the disciplinary procedure is the termination of the employee's employment. If an employee fails to reform his conduct or performance to the standards required by HCHA, HCHA may, in its sole discretion, terminate the employee's employment.

Notwithstanding the stated progressive disciplinary procedure policy, HCHA reserves the right to administer discipline in such a manner as it deems appropriate to the circumstances, and may, at its sole discretion, eliminate any or all of the steps in the progressive discipline procedure. In other words, more serious violations will result in more significant action, including direct suspension or termination.

## TIME OFF

Harris County Housing Authority recognizes that employees may periodically need to be absent from work for a variety of reasons. With this in mind, HCHA has developed a set of policies regarding vacation and leave. Employees are encouraged to schedule sufficient time off for relaxation to promote good physical and mental health. To minimize any inconvenience or delay in scheduling, absences should be scheduled in advance with supervisory approval. Unscheduled absences are strongly discouraged unless warranted by an emergency.

Any time you need to be absent on a scheduled work day, you must request your supervisor's and the Human Resources Department's approval. Failure to do so may result in a delay in granting the requested time off, a delay in your return to work, or disciplinary action. This policy also applies to holiday and weekend schedules. When you are aware of a scheduled absence, such as a doctor's appointment or a vacation, you should request the time two weeks in advance. When your absence is due to unforeseen circumstances, you should notify your supervisor and the Human Resources Department as soon as possible and ensure that your timesheet reflects your time taken.

### HOLIDAYS

Regular, full-time employees are eligible for paid holidays during each calendar year. A paid holiday does not count as a day worked in calculating overtime for the week for non-exempt employees. Holiday pay will be based on an employee's regular work schedule. If a holiday falls on a weekend, HCHA may choose to honor the holiday on either the previous Friday or following Monday.

Below is a list of the approved paid holidays for Harris County Housing Authority

New Year's Eve	Labor Day
New Year's Day	Thanksgiving Day
Martin Luther King Day	Day after Thanksgiving
Good Friday	Christmas Eve
Memorial Day	Christmas Day
Independence Day	*Floating Holiday (1 day)

The holiday list may change without notice. The floating holiday must be taken before December 10th. Paid holidays may also vary based on your department and position. Non-exempt employees required to work on a holiday will receive their regular rate of pay for the hours worked plus a holiday premium equivalent to a regularly scheduled day of work.

### VACATION

Employees are encouraged to take time off to rest and relax through the use of vacation time. Regular, full-time employees accrue vacation as follows:

Tenure	Number of Hours	Equivalent Days per Year (Based on an 8 hour day)
90 days – 4 years	80	10 Days
5 – 9 years	120	15 Days

10 – 14 years	160	20 Days
15 + years	200	25 Days

Accrued time for vacations will be computed annually in hours on the anniversary of your employment, with the exception of the first year of employment, where you will be awarded your vacation time (80 hours) upon completion of nine months of active employment. Employees who have earned more than 80 hours of vacation are requested to split their time so that no more than two weeks are used at any one time. Vacation requests must be approved by your supervisor prior to the proposed vacation time and must be requested in increments of one hour. When vacation time is used for a full day, you are required to request the number of hours of your regularly scheduled work day unless an exception has been approved by your supervisor. For example, if you work an 8-hour day, you would request 8 hours of vacation for that day. Vacation time is accrued from year to year, but you may not accrue any more than 240 hours of vacation time.

If you leave HCHA, you will be paid for unused vacation computed at the rate of pay earned upon separation, provided you give two weeks written notice for a voluntary termination and are not being involuntarily terminated.

So that we may schedule work and plan for business requirements, employees should give as much notice as possible in scheduling vacation time. If there are conflicting dates, preference will be given to the employee who has submitted the request first. Should two requests be received simultaneously, approval will be given based on seniority. If your vacation should be canceled due to the needs of HCHA and you are unable to reschedule the vacation within the year, HCHA reserves the option to pay you in lieu of taking those vacation days that are canceled or to allow rescheduling of that vacation at a more mutually convenient time. Reimbursement will not include any costs other than vacation time itself. Costs of travel plans, documents and the like are not reimbursable under this policy.

Vacation time is not used in calculating overtime hours.

**VACATION BUY BACK**

In the event that the Authority determines that it has sufficient cash reserves, employees who have surplus vacation days may be given a limited period to cash in surplus vacation days at their current hourly rate of pay. Details and restrictions of such an option will be communicated at the time the option is offered.

**PERSONAL TIME OFF**

Harris County Housing Authority recognizes that an inability to work because of illness, injury or other personal reasons may cause economic hardship. For this reason, HCHA provides paid personal time off (PTO) to full-time, regular employees. Eligible employees will accrue personal time at a rate of 2 hours per pay period.

Accrual of PTO will begin on the first full pay period of employment with HCHA. PTO is paid at the employee’s straight time rate, and is not part of any overtime calculation. PTO can be requested from the Human Resources Department with approval from your supervisor. When PTO is used for a full day,

you are required to request payment of PTO hours according to your regularly scheduled workday unless an exception has been approved by your supervisor. For example, if you work a six-hour day, you would request six hours of PTO for that day.

All employees who are actively at work or on paid leave - such as vacation leave, holiday leave, or personal time off - will continue to accrue paid leave benefits provided by HCHA. Employees who are on unpaid leave, including worker's compensation, will not be entitled to continue accruing paid leave benefits.

You may not borrow against your PTO bank; therefore, no advance leave will be granted. Unused PTO may be carried over from one calendar year to the next and will be limited to a total of 720 hours. PTO will not be paid out upon separation from HCHA.

Whenever possible, PTO must be scheduled at least two weeks in advance to avoid scheduling conflicts or understaffing. You are required to use available PTO when taking time off from work with the exception of a company-required absence due to low workload or absences occasioned by HCHA.

PTO is subject to approval from the Human Resources Department and your supervisor depending on department staffing needs and established departmental procedures. Unscheduled absences will be monitored. An employee will be counseled when the frequency of unscheduled absences adversely affect the operations of the department. Your supervisor or the Human Resources Department may request that you provide a statement from your health care provider at any time concerning the justification for an unscheduled absence when it relates to a health issue. You are also required to provide a physician's release for health-related absences that extend beyond two days.

#### **TIME OFF FOR EXEMPT EMPLOYEES**

Employees classified as exempt are not required to use paid leave benefits to cover partial-day absences from work. However, if an exempt employee does not perform any work-related duties on a regularly scheduled work day, he or she must use personal, vacation or compensatory time if it is available. All leave must be approved by the employee's supervisor and with a formal, written request approved by the Human Resources Department. If an employee is regularly absent from work without approval from the Human Resources Department and their supervisor, he or she will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

#### **COMPENSATORY TIME**

Non-exempt employees may accrue a maximum of 240 hours of compensatory time. Any compensatory time earned above 240 will be paid out at the employee's current hourly rate of pay. Employees who have earned more than 80 hours of compensation time are requested to split their time so that no more than two weeks are used at any one time. Compensatory time requests must be approved by the Human Resources Department with a written recommendation from your supervisor prior to the proposed time off and must be requested in increments of one hour. HCHA will grant requests to utilize compensatory time as long as its use does not unduly disrupt the authority's operations. When compensatory time is used for a full day, employees are required to request the number of hours of their regularly scheduled work day unless an exception has been approved by a supervisor.

Upon termination, HCHA will pay non-exempt employees for any outstanding compensatory time balance at the higher of (1) their final, regular rate of pay or (2) the employee's average regular rate of pay during the last three years of employment. Exempt employees are not eligible to have compensatory time paid out upon separation. At its discretion, HCHA may compel employees to use part of their compensatory time balance in lieu of other types of paid leave.

Compensatory time is not used in calculating overtime hours.

## **UNPAID TIME OFF**

Employees must exhaust all accrued vacation or PTO balances before going on unpaid leave.

If an employee has no available accrued time and is ineligible for any other leave of absence, HCHA may, at its discretion, approve leave without pay. Employees should request leave without pay in writing from their supervisor and the Human Resources Department at least two weeks in advance of the leave, or as soon as reasonably possible. If the request is related to a medical need, medical certification may be required.

Employees may also request a leave of absence for a specified period of time. A leave of absence should be requested from the employee's supervisor in writing. The request will be considered and either approved or denied by the Human Resources Department and/ or the CEO based on business needs. If the employee's request is approved, they should notify their supervisor and the Human Resources Department at least one week in advance of their return date, so that HCHA can attempt to restore the employee to their original position or a comparable one. However, reinstatement cannot be guaranteed. HCHA follows federal and state laws concerning leaves of absence, including the possibility of benefits continuation through Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) and short or long-term disability where applicable.

Any questions regarding this policy can be directed to the Human Resources Department.

## **BREAKS**

While it is important to stay on task during work hours, employees may also periodically take short breaks to relax and regroup. Breaks are considered paid time and should be brief (*e.g.*, no longer than 15 minutes for formal breaks), unless specific breaks are required by law or as an accommodation under the ADA.

Your supervisor will schedule two formal 15-minute breaks (one in the morning and one in the afternoon, with the rest of your day devoted to HCHA business). You may also take brief, unscheduled respites from work to tend to non-work matters such as using the restroom or getting something to drink. You do not need to indicate formal breaks or brief respites on your timesheets, but you shall not add time to your timesheet if you did not take a break on a particular day. Employees shall not use formal break time or respites to arrive late, extend the lunch break, or leave work early. Your supervisor may prohibit you from taking a formal break at any given time or on any given day if required by workload.

## **BEREAVEMENT LEAVE**

In the unfortunate event that a death occurs in your family, if you are a full-time regular or part-time regular employee, you will be allowed to take up to three days of paid time off as bereavement leave. Pay for these days will be calculated based on the employee's regular work schedule. Family as defined under this policy includes a spouse, domestic partner, child, parent, sibling, spouse's parent or other in-law, a child's spouse, grandchild, or grandparent. Request for bereavement leave should be made to the Human Resources Department with a written recommendation from your immediate supervisor. A copy of the obituary or a letter from the funeral home must be submitted to the Human Resources Department.

Bereavement leave is expected to be taken within a reasonable time of the death or funeral. In the event you take more than one day, the time must be taken on consecutive days unless otherwise approved by management. If you need more than three days, you may be able to use PTO or vacation time at your supervisor's discretion with approval from the Human Resources Department.

## **MILITARY LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Leaves of absence without pay for military or reserve duty are granted to full-time regular and part-time regular employees who are members of the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, National Guard, Reserves or Public Health Service. If you are called to active military duty or the Reserve or National Guard training, or if you volunteer for the same, you should submit copies of your military orders to the on-site supervisor and the Human Resources Department as soon as possible. You will be granted a military leave of absence without pay for the period of military service, in accordance with applicable federal and state laws. If you are a reservist or a member of the National Guard, you are granted time off without pay for required military training. Employees on military leave may substitute their accrued paid time off for unpaid leave. Your eligibility for reinstatement after your military duty or training is completed will be determined in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.

Under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA) an employee who is out on a military leave of absence will retain his or her health insurance coverage for the first 31 days of uniformed service. Employees out on military leaves of absence that extend beyond the allotted 31 days will be eligible for COBRA benefits for up to 24 months. In the event that you become eligible for coverage through COBRA, notification will be sent to the most current address listed in your employee file or to the forwarding address that you provide.

## **JURY DUTY**

All employees are allowed unpaid time off if summoned to appear in court as a witness. If the employee has vacation or PTO available, it will be used to cover the absence. The employee is also permitted to retain the allowance received from the court for such service. To qualify for jury duty or witness duty leave, you must notify your supervisor and submit a copy of the summons to serve to the Human Resources Department as soon as it is received. In addition, proof of service must be submitted to the Human Resources Department when your period of jury or witness duty is completed.

You are required to return to work for the remainder of the day if you are not serving a full day of jury duty. When summoned to jury duty, please contact your supervisor as soon as possible to determine whether you may need to reschedule your jury duty within the requirements of the law.

## **INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY**

Harris County Housing Authority may be closed for business in the event of inclement weather such as flooding, severe thunderstorms, hurricanes, ice or snow storms, or other natural disasters. These disasters must be local or regional and designated by the Houston Independent School District (HISD) as announced on local radio and/or television stations, or by other applicable local government authorities in the employees' geographic area, or at HCHA's discretion. It is your responsibility to contact your immediate supervisor for direction.

Should inclement weather occur once have reported to work, your supervisor will communicate with you regarding the issue. In some cases, such as a tornado or an immediate threat, you may be asked to shelter in place or report to a location designated by the office emergency plan. In other cases, such as an ice storm approaching, you may be asked to leave the office in a timely manner.

Employees will be paid for their normally scheduled time should the office be closed for an entire or partial day due to inclement weather or a declared emergency. Employees who do not report to work when the office is open will not be paid, although a supervisor can approve the use of paid leave benefits to cover the absence.

Please note that inclement weather leave is not a blanket benefit, but rather applies only to employees directly affected. You should always verify whether your situation is covered with your supervisor prior to your scheduled start time. You are responsible for your safety, however, and need to make decisions about reporting to work based on your personal situation and commute. HCHA cannot be held liable for any injuries or damage resulting from your decision. Abuse of the inclement weather policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

## **VOTING LEAVE**

It is the policy of Harris County Housing Authority to permit employees to be absent from work to vote in local, state or national elections. Employees who cannot reach their polling place outside work hours will be permitted paid time off to vote. In the event that you should require such accommodations, discuss your situation with your supervisor to allow your supervisor ample time to adjust your schedule. The time off to vote may not exceed two hours. Evidence of voter registration and voting may be required.

## **OTHER LEAVES OF ABSENCE**

Employees of Harris County Housing Authority are not covered by the Family and Medical Leave Act ("FMLA"). The Act states that "the term 'eligible employee' does not include any employee of an employer who is employed at a worksite at which such employer employs less than 50 employees if the total number of employees employed by that employer within 75 miles of that worksite is less than 50." Because Harris County Housing Authority has less than 50 employees and the total number of employees within 75 miles of any Harris County Housing Authority worksite is also less than 50, Harris County Housing Authority employees are not entitled to leave or other benefits under the FMLA.

Instead, in order to provide employees in need with time off to attend to extraordinary affairs, Harris County Housing Authority may grant employees extended leaves of absence under certain

circumstances. Except as stated below, employees will not receive compensation during a leave of absence.

Leaves as designated herein may not exceed twelve weeks. Employees on leave will be required to use all accrued personal and vacation days while on leave. The following types of leave will be considered:

1. Personal Leave of Absence: You may be granted a leave of absence to attend to personal matters in cases in which HCHA determines that an extended period of time away from the job is in your best interest as well as that of HCHA.
2. Educational Leave of Absence: In the event that you would like to continue your education in preparation for added responsibilities with HCHA, you may be granted an educational leave of absence.
3. Public Service Leave of Absence: If you choose to accept temporary employment in federal, state, or local government or with an organization devoted to community service, you may be granted a leave of absence.

Requests for leave of absence or any extension of leave should be submitted in writing to your supervisor thirty days prior to commencement of the leave period, or as soon as is practicable. Your supervisor will forward the request to the Human Resources Department recommending approval or denial. The final decision concerning the request will be made by the Human Resources Department. All employees on approved leave are expected to report any change of status in their need for leave or their intention to return to work to the Human Resources Department.

Employees who are on an approved leave of absence may not perform work for any other employer during that leave, except when the leave is for military or public service.

HCHA will provide health insurance and other benefits to employees on approved leave as described above. Benefits that accrue according to length of service, such as personal time, do not accrue during periods of unpaid leave.

Employees returning from leave due to their own serious health condition must provide certification of their ability to perform the functions of their job. Employees returning from a military leave must also comply with all of the reinstatement requirements specified by federal law. If the same job or one of equivalent status and pay is not available as a result of a reduction in force, the employee will be treated in the same manner as though he or she were not on leave at the time of the reduction in force, except in the case of military leaves of absence, in compliance with USERRA.

If an employee fails to return to work at the conclusion of an approved leave of absence, including any extension of the leave, and fails to report to work within three business days of the scheduled return date, the employee will be considered to have voluntarily terminated employment.

## **EMPLOYEE BENEFITS**

Harris County Housing Authority has established a variety of employee benefit programs designed to assist you and your eligible dependents in protecting and improving your health and well-being, meeting the financial burdens that can result from illness and disability, and planning for retirement. This portion of the Employee Handbook contains a very general description of the benefits to which you may be entitled as an employee of HCHA. This general explanation is not intended to provide you with all the details of these benefits. Therefore, this Handbook does not change or otherwise interpret the terms of the current official plan documents. Your rights can be determined only by referring to the full text of the official plan documents, which are available for your examination from the Human Resources Department. To the extent that any of the information contained in this Handbook is inconsistent with the official plan documents, the provisions of the official documents will govern in all cases.

Nothing contained in the benefit plans described herein shall be held or construed to create a promise of employment or future benefits, or a binding contract between HCHA and its employees, retirees or their dependents, for benefits or for any other purpose.

Harris County Housing Authority reserves the right, in its sole and absolute discretion, to amend, modify or terminate, in whole or in part, any or all of the provisions of the benefit plans described herein, including any health benefits that may be extended to retirees and their dependents. Furthermore, HCHA reserves the exclusive right, power and authority, in its sole and absolute discretion, to administer, apply and interpret the benefit plans described herein, and to decide all matters arising in connection with the operation or administration of such plans.

Generally, full-time employees will be eligible for medical benefits on the first of the month following a 60-day waiting period. Prior to your eligibility date, you will receive enrollment information regarding all of HCHA's benefits. This information may be provided by mail, e-mail or through a benefits meeting. Once benefits and medical coverage are selected, many choices are locked in for the remainder of the HCHA plan year, which runs from March 1 to February 28, unless a qualifying event occurs, in which case a limited number of changes can be made. Employees will be given the opportunity to modify their coverage during open enrollment sessions held before the beginning of each plan year.

For more complete information regarding any HCHA benefit program, please refer to the Summary Plan Descriptions.

### **WORKERS' COMPENSATION COVERAGE**

Unless you have elected otherwise, all employees of Harris County Housing Authority are covered by workers' compensation insurance, which compensates an employee for lost time, medical expenses, and loss of life or dismemberment from a qualifying injury arising out of or in the course of work. Absences related to on-the-job injuries should still be requested through your supervisor.

Employees must report all accidents or injuries immediately (within 24 hours) to their supervisors so that the necessary paperwork may be completed. If an injury report is not filed within 30 days of the date the incident occurred, you may lose your right to benefits. Aside from filing a report with your supervisor, you are responsible for filing a claim with the Texas Department of Insurance. The most recent version of the TWCC-41 form, as well as additional information regarding your rights, can be

found at <http://www.tdi.state.tx.us/wc/indexwc.html>. Note that any claim made using anything other than the most recent version may be denied by TDI.

## **RETIREMENT PLAN**

HCHA requires all regular employees to participate in its retirement plan through Texas County and District Retirement System (TCDRS). Starting with their first paycheck, all regular employees will have a payroll deduction of seven percent of gross pay each pay period for TCDRS. HCHA matches employee contributions at a rate of two to one, and funds are vested after eight years of service.

HCHA also offers eligible full-time employees the opportunity to participate in a voluntary, tax-deferred retirement savings program. Employees become eligible for this program after being employed by HCHA for at least six months. Any questions about this program or other retirement benefits should be directed to the Human Resources Department.

## **EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP)**

Harris County Housing Authority will provide confidential and voluntary assistance to all employees and their family members who may be faced with dynamic challenges of financial concerns, legal issues, alcohol or drug problems, marital problems, illness of a family member, emotional worries, child care problems, and the like. The Employee Assistance Program also offers information on a variety of other topics, including purchasing a house, making investments, communication, holidays, and other general areas. Employees can access the benefit by calling 1-866-849-8229.

Participation in HCHA's EAP does not jeopardize job security or promotional opportunities. In fact, the EAP is a cost-effective resource for employees facing life's challenges, and employees are thus encouraged to use the services that it offers. However, participation does not excuse the employee from following HCHA policies and procedures or meeting required standards for satisfactory job performance except where specific accommodations are required by law. All contact between an employee and the EAP is strictly confidential and not reported to HCHA.

## LEAVING THE AUTHORITY

### RESIGNATION

If after full consideration you decide to end your employment with HCHA, it is requested that you provide a written two-week advance notice. HCHA will only compensate you for unused vacation when you work through the notice period, and you are not terminated for gross misconduct or cause. Otherwise, unused vacation will be forfeited. If management wishes for you to leave prior to the end of your two-week notice, you may be paid for the remainder of that period. If you do not provide advance notice or fail to actually work the remaining two weeks, you will be ineligible for rehire and will not receive accrued benefits. All HCHA property should be returned, including keys, security cards, parking passes, electronic devices, computers, and any other HCHA property assigned to you during the course of your employment. To the extent allowed by law, the cost any missing or damaged property will be recovered via payroll deduction.

### DISMISSALS

Every Harris County Housing Authority employee has the status of "employee-at-will," meaning that no one has a contractual right, express or implied, to remain in HCHA's employment. The Authority may terminate your employment, or you may terminate your employment, without cause, and with or without notice, at any time for any reason.

#### *Immediate Dismissal/Misconduct*

Any employee whose conduct, actions or performance violates or conflicts with HCHA's policies may be terminated immediately and without warning. Please refer to the Disciplinary Action section of the Handbook for more detail regarding the employee conduct policies of HCHA as well as the steps that HCHA may take in the event of misconduct. The following are some examples of grounds for immediate dismissal of an employee:

- ◆ Obtaining employment on the basis of false or misleading information
- ◆ Breach of trust or dishonesty
- ◆ Conviction of a felony
- ◆ Willful violation of an established policy or rule
- ◆ Falsification of HCHA records
- ◆ Gross negligence
- ◆ Insubordination
- ◆ Violation of the Anti-Harassment and/or Equal Employment Opportunity Policies
- ◆ Timesheet violations
- ◆ Deliberate misuse of company property, including the distribution or promotion of inappropriate information during business hours or using company property at any time
- ◆ Undue and unauthorized absence from duty during regularly scheduled work hours
- ◆ Deliberate non-performance of work
- ◆ Larceny or unauthorized possession of, or the use of, property belonging to any co-worker, visitor, or client of Harris County Housing Authority
- ◆ Possession of weapons on the premises
- ◆ Unauthorized possession, use or copying of any records that are the property of HCHA

- ◆ Unauthorized posting or removal of notices from bulletin boards
- ◆ Excessive absenteeism or lateness
- ◆ Marring, defacing or other willful destruction of any supplies, equipment or property of HCHA
- ◆ Failure to call or directly contact your supervisor when you will be late or absent from work
- ◆ Fighting or serious breach of acceptable behavior
- ◆ Violation of the Alcohol or Drug Policy
- ◆ Theft
- ◆ Violation of HCHA's Conflict of Interest Policy and/or Confidentiality Policy
- ◆ Gambling, conducting games of chance or possession of such devices on the premises or during work hours
- ◆ Leaving the work premises without authorization during work hours
- ◆ Sleeping during the assigned work day, including during breaks

This list is intended to be representative of the types of activities that may result in disciplinary action. It is not exhaustive, and does not change the employment-at-will relationship between the employee and HCHA.

#### **JOB ABANDONMENT**

An employee who fails to report to work and fails to notify his or her supervisor in a timely manner for three consecutive workdays will be considered to have abandoned his or her job. See the section on OFFICE HOURS, ABSENTEEISM AND TARDINESS for exact reporting requirements. The employee is deemed to have quit and will be terminated at the end of his or her normal workday on the third day. Within five days of the termination, an appeal may be made in writing to the immediate supervisor. If it is determined that there were extenuating circumstances for the absence and failure to notify, the employee may be reinstated.

#### **BENEFITS**

Your benefits, including insurance and assistance, will generally end on the last day of the month in which your last day of employment falls, with the exception of Workers' Compensation, the retirement plan, and other benefits that end on the last day of employment based on the Summary Plan Description. An employee, unless dismissed for gross misconduct, has the option to continue Medical/Dental Benefits in accordance with the COBRA regulations. Under COBRA, you are entitled to continue participating in HCHA's group health plan for a prescribed period of time, usually 18 months. In certain circumstances, such as an employee's divorce or death, the length of coverage period may be longer for qualified dependents. Shortly after your last day, you will receive a notice of your eligibility for COBRA, explaining the cost of continued coverage as well as your options for continued coverage.

If a former employee chooses to continue group benefits under COBRA, he or she must pay the total applicable premium plus an administrative fee. Coverage will cease if the former employee fails to make premium payments as scheduled, becomes covered by another group plan that does not exclude pre-existing conditions or becomes eligible for Medicare. For information on actual plan costs, contact the Human Resources Department.

## **FINAL PAYCHECK**

Your final paycheck will be processed during the next normal pay period following the separation unless applicable laws require earlier processing. If there are unpaid obligations to HCHA, the final paycheck will reflect the appropriate deductions when allowed by law. Final checks may be live and should be picked up at the corporate office.

## **SEPARATION AGREEMENTS**

Under certain circumstances, including involuntary separations, layoffs or retirement, HCHA may opt to offer individuals a separation agreement, which may include additional pay and benefits coverage to which an individual would not otherwise have been entitled. In such situations, an agreement may be offered to the individual for the purpose of maintaining confidentiality and protecting proprietary information regarding the operations and activities of HCHA and establish other relevant terms. The value of the agreement, including additional pay and or benefits, will be determined based on the situation as well as the individual's tenure with HCHA and negotiated on an individual basis. Such agreements can only be approved by the CEO.

## **REFERENCE CHECKS/DISCLOSURE OF EMPLOYEE INFORMATION**

All requests for information on current or former employees must be referred to the Human Resources Department. Information given by phone will be limited to verification of employment dates, position title, and salary. In response to written requests, such as those for the purpose of obtaining a mortgage or a vehicle loan, information such as salary, dates of employment, and position may be provided, if an authorization signed by the employee is provided.