



# **LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS PERSONNEL POLICY AND EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK**





# Welcome

Welcome to Lamar County Board of Commissioners! We are delighted that you have chosen to join our organization and hope that you will enjoy a long and successful career with us. As you become familiar with our culture and mission, we hope you will take advantage of opportunities to enhance your career and further Lamar County Board of Commissioners goals.

You are joining an organization that has a reputation for outstanding leadership, innovation, and expertise. Our employees use their creativity and talent to invent new solutions, meet new demands, and offer the most effective services. With your active involvement, creativity, and support, the Lamar County Board of Commissioners will continue to achieve its goals. We sincerely hope you will take pride in being an important part of Lamar County Board of Commissioners success.

Please take time to review the policies contained in this handbook. If you have questions, feel free to ask your Department Head/Constitutional Officer or to contact the HR Office.

County Administrator: Sean Townsend

Commissioner, Chairman: Ryran Traylor

Commissioner, Vice-Chairman: Nancy Thrash

Commissioner, District 1: Jarrod Fletcher

Commissioner, District 2: Jason Lovett

Commissioner, District 3: Ashley Gilles

Commissioner, District 4: Nancy Thrash

Initial Effective Date:



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## **I. Employment at Will**

Employment at Lamar County Board of Commissioners is on an at-will basis unless otherwise stated in a written individual employment agreement signed by the County Administrator and the Lamar County Board of Commissioners Chairman.

This means that either the employee or the County may terminate the employment relationship at any time, for any reason, with or without notice.

Nothing in this Personnel Policy or Employee Handbook is intended to or creates an employment agreement, express or implied. Nothing contained in this, or any other document provided to the employee is intended to be, nor should it be, construed as a contract that employment or any benefit will be continued for any period of time. In addition, no County representative is authorized to modify this policy for any employee or to enter into any agreement, oral or written, that changes the at-will relationship.

Any salary figures provided to an employee in annual or monthly terms are stated for the sake of convenience or to facilitate comparisons and are not intended and do not create an employment contract for any specific period of time.

Nothing in this statement is intended to interfere with, restrain, or prevent concerted activity as protected by the National Labor Relations Act. Such activity includes employee communications regarding wages, hours, or other terms or conditions of employment. Lamar County Board of Commissioners employees have the right to engage in or refrain from such activities.



## **II. Equal Opportunity and Commitment to Diversity**

### **Equal Opportunity**

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners provides equal employment opportunities to all employees and applicants for employment without regard to race, color, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, age, disability, gender identity, results of genetic testing, or service in the military. Equal employment opportunity applies to all terms and conditions of employment, including hiring, placement, promotion, termination, layoff, recall, transfer, leave of absence, compensation, and training.

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners expressly prohibits any form of unlawful employee harassment or discrimination based on any of the characteristics mentioned above. Improper interference with the ability of other employees to perform their expected job duties is absolutely not tolerated.

Any employees with questions or concerns about equal employment opportunities in the workplace are encouraged to bring these issues to the attention of the HR/Payroll Director. The Lamar County Board of Commissioners will not allow any form of retaliation against individuals who raise issues of equal employment opportunity. If an employee feels he or she has been subjected to any such retaliation, he or she should bring it to the attention of the HR/Payroll Director.

Retaliation means adverse conduct taken because an individual reported an actual or perceived violation of this policy, opposed practices prohibited by this policy, or participated in the reporting and investigation process described below. "Adverse conduct" includes but is not limited to:

- (1) shunning and avoiding an individual who reports harassment, discrimination, or retaliation; or
- (2) express or implied threats or intimidation intended to prevent an individual from reporting harassment, discrimination, or retaliation; or
- (3) denying employment benefits because an applicant or employee reported harassment, discrimination or retaliation or participated in the reporting and investigation process.

Complaints of discrimination should be filed according to the procedures described in the Harassment and Complaint Procedure.

### **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Reasonable Accommodation**

To ensure equal employment opportunities to qualified individuals with a disability, Lamar County Board of Commissioners will make reasonable accommodations for the known disability of an otherwise qualified individual, unless undue hardship on the operation of the business would result. Employees who may require a reasonable accommodation should contact the HR/Payroll Director.



## Commitment to Diversity

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners is committed to creating and maintaining a workplace in which all employees have an opportunity to participate and contribute to the success of the business and are valued for their skills, experience, and unique perspectives. This commitment is embodied in County policy and the way we do business at Lamar County Board of Commissioners and is an important principle of sound business management.

## Harassment/Sexual Harassment Policy and Complaint Procedure

Sexual and other unlawful harassment is a violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII), as amended, as well as many state laws. Harassment based on a characteristic protected by law, such as race, color, ancestry, national origin, gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, religion, age, disability, veteran status, or other characteristic protected by state or federal law, is prohibited.

It is the Lamar County Board of Commissioners policy to provide a work environment free of sexual and other harassment. To that end, harassment of Lamar County Board of Commissioners employees by management, supervisors, coworkers, or nonemployees who are in the workplace is absolutely prohibited. Further, any retaliation against an individual who has complained about sexual or other harassment or retaliation against individuals for cooperating with an investigation of a harassment complaint is similarly unlawful and will not be tolerated. The Lamar County Board of Commissioners will take all steps necessary to prevent and eliminate unlawful harassment.

**Definition of Unlawful Harassment.** “Unlawful harassment” is conduct that has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment; has the purpose or effect of substantially and unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance; or otherwise adversely affects an individual’s employment opportunities because of the individual’s membership in a protected class.

Unlawful harassment includes, but is not limited to, epithets; slurs; jokes; pranks; innuendo; comments; cruel comments, belittling, and insults; written or graphic material; stereotyping; or other threatening, intentional isolation, ignoring, and excluding co-workers; hostile, or intimidating acts based on race, color, ancestry, national origin, gender, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, age, disability, veteran status, or other characteristic protected by state or federal law.

**Definition of Sexual Harassment.** While all forms of harassment are prohibited, special attention should be paid to sexual harassment. “Sexual harassment” is generally defined under both state and federal law as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature where:

- Submission to or rejection of such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of any individual’s employment or as a basis for employment decisions; or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.



Other sexually oriented conduct, whether intended or not, that is unwelcome and has the effect of creating a work environment that is hostile, offensive, intimidating, or humiliating to workers may also constitute sexual harassment.

While it is not possible to list all those additional circumstances that may constitute sexual harassment, the following are some examples of conduct that, if unwelcome, may constitute sexual harassment depending on the totality of the circumstances, including the severity of the conduct and its pervasiveness:

- Unwanted sexual advances, whether they involve physical touching or not;
- Sexual epithets, jokes, written or oral references to sexual conduct, gossip regarding one's sex life, comments about an individual's body, comments about an individual's sexual activity, deficiencies, or prowess;
- Displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures, or cartoons;
- Unwelcome leering, whistling, brushing up against the body, sexual gestures, or suggestive or insulting comments;
- Inquiries into one's sexual experiences; *and*
- Discussion of one's sexual activities.

All employees should take special note that, as stated above, retaliation against an individual who has complained about sexual harassment or unlawful harassment and retaliation against individuals for cooperating with an investigation of sexual harassment or unlawful harassment complaint is unlawful and will not be tolerated at the Lamar County Board of Commissioners

**Complaint Procedure.** Any employee who believes they have been subject to or witnessed illegal discrimination, including sexual or other forms of unlawful harassment, is requested, and encouraged to make a complaint. You may complain directly to your Department Head/Constitutional Officer, the HR/Payroll Director, or any other member of management with whom you feel comfortable bringing such a complaint. Similarly, if you observe acts of discrimination toward or harassment of another employee, you are requested and encouraged to report this to one of the individuals listed above.

No reprisal, retaliation, or other adverse action will be taken against an employee for making a complaint or report of discrimination or harassment or for assisting in the investigation of any such complaint or report. Any suspected retaliation or intimidation should be reported immediately to one of the persons identified above.

All complaints will be investigated promptly and, to the extent possible, with regard for confidentiality.

If the investigation confirms conduct contrary to this policy has occurred, Lamar County Board of Commissioners will take immediate, appropriate, corrective action, including discipline, up to and including immediate termination.



# III. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

## Conflicts of Interest

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners expects all employees to conduct themselves and County business in a manner that reflects the highest standards of ethical conduct, and in accordance with all federal, state, and local laws and regulations. This includes avoiding real and potential conflicts of interests.

Exactly what constitutes a conflict of interest, or an unethical business practice is both a moral and a legal question. The Lamar County Board of Commissioners recognizes and respects the individual employee's right to engage in activities outside of employment which are private in nature and do not in any way conflict with or reflect poorly on the County.

It is not possible to define all the circumstances and relationships that might create a conflict of interest. If a situation arises where there is a potential conflict of interest, the employee should discuss this with a manager for advice and guidance on how to proceed. The list below suggests some of the types of activity that indicate improper behavior, unacceptable personal integrity, or unacceptable ethics:

1. Simultaneous employment by another firm that is a competitor of or supplier to the Lamar County Board of Commissioners.
2. Carrying on company business with a firm in which the employee, or a close relative of the employee, has a substantial ownership or interest.
3. Holding a substantial interest in, or participating in the management of, a firm to which the company makes sales or from which it makes purchases.
4. Borrowing money from vendors or firms, other than recognized loan institutions, from which our County buys services, materials, equipment, or supplies.
5. Accepting substantial gifts or excessive entertainment from an outside organization or agency.
6. Speculating or dealing in materials, equipment, supplies, services, or property purchased by the company.
7. Participating in civic or professional organization activities in a manner that divulges confidential County information.
8. Misusing privileged information or revealing confidential data to outsiders.
9. Using one's position in the County or knowledge of its affairs for personal gains.
10. Engaging in practices or procedures that violate antitrust laws, commercial bribery laws, copyright laws, discrimination laws, campaign contribution laws, or other laws regulating the conduct of County business.



## Confidential Information

The protection of confidential business information and trade secrets is vital to the interests and success of the Lamar County Board of Commissioners. Confidential information is any, and all information disclosed to or known by you because of employment with the County that is not generally known to people outside the County about its business.

An employee who improperly uses or discloses trade secrets or confidential business information will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment and legal action, even if he or she does not actually benefit from the disclosed information.

All inquiries from the media must be referred to the **County Administrator**.

This provision is not intended to, and should not be interpreted to, prohibit employees from discussing wages and other terms and conditions of employment if they so choose.

## GCIC/CJIS Records

The purpose of this section is to establish guidelines in regards to misuse or violations concerning the GCIC CJIS Network, materials, records, and information obtained thereof.

This applies to all County employees, non-paid employees, and vendors/contractors with access to include physical and logical access, to GCIC materials, records, and information. All employees, non-paid employees, and vendors/contractors are required to follow the policies, rules, and procedures set forth by GCIC, GCIC Council Rules, CJIS Security Policy, and the laws of the State of Georgia.

Title 28, United States Code 534, authorized dissemination of Criminal History Record Information (CHRI) and provides that access to CHRI is subject to cancellation if dissemination is made outside of the authorized recipient. In addition, O.C.G.A. establishes criminal penalties for specific offenses involving requesting, obtaining, using and/or disseminating CHRI except as permitted by law.

Disciplinary action will be taken for general working error that involve violations which are determined to be accidental errors or errors made due to the need of Security Awareness Training. The severity of the error will be evaluated by the County Administrator or designee. Disciplinary Procedures are found in Section IIX.



## IV. Employment Relationship

### Employment Classification

In order to determine eligibility for benefits and overtime status and to ensure compliance with federal and state laws and regulations, the Lamar County Board of Commissioners classifies its employees as shown below. The Lamar County Board of Commissioners may review or change employee classifications at any time.

**Exempt.** Exempt employees are paid on a salaried basis and are not eligible to receive overtime pay.

**Nonexempt.** Nonexempt employees are paid on an hourly basis and are eligible to receive overtime pay for overtime hours worked. Compensation for overtime will be in accordance with the provisions of the federal and state law, as amended. Lamar County Board of Commissioners will allow compensatory time off in lieu of overtime.

**Regular, Full-Time.** Employees who are not in a temporary status and work a minimum of 40 hours weekly and maintain continuous employment status. Generally, these employees are eligible for the full-time benefits package and are subject to the terms, conditions, and limitations of each benefits program.

**Regular, Part-Time.** Employees who are not in a temporary status and who are regularly scheduled to work fewer than 30 hours weekly, but at least 20 hours weekly, and who maintain continuous employment status. Part-time employees are eligible for some of the benefits offered by the County and are subject to the terms, conditions, and limitations of each benefits program.

**Temporary, Full-Time.** Employees who are hired as interim replacements to temporarily supplement the workforce or to assist in the completion of a specific project and who are temporarily scheduled to work the County's full-time schedule for a limited duration. Employment beyond any initially stated period does not in any way imply a change in employment status.

**Temporary, Part-Time.** Employees who are hired as interim replacements to temporarily supplement the workforce or to assist in the completion of a specific project and who are temporarily scheduled to work fewer than 30 hours weekly for a limited duration. Employment beyond any initially stated period does not in any way imply a change in employment status.

### Position Allocations

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners and County Administrator have implemented a Master Classification Plan.

**New Positions.** When a new position is to be established, HR will complete a Personnel Request Form and approved by the Lamar County Board of Commissioners and the County Administrator, the Department Head/Constitutional Officer involved shall complete a position



description covering the duties and responsibilities of such new position. The County Administrator shall allocate the position to one of the classes in the classification plan, unless a suitable classification does not exist, in which the County Administrator shall recommend that the County Commission establish a new classification. Upon the recommendation and approval of such new classification by the Lamar County Board of Commissioners, the County Administrator shall allocate the new position to it.

**Allocation Appeals.** If an employee has reason to believe that his or her position has been improperly allocated, such employee may, with the knowledge of the Department Head/Constitutional Officer, request the Lamar County Board of Commissioners to review the allocation of such position. Any such request must be submitted in writing and contain a statement of justification.

**Departmental Reorganization.** Each time a Department/Office under the jurisdiction of a Department Head/Constitutional Officer is significantly reorganized, such Department Head/Constitutional Officer shall submit a Personnel Request Form for all affected positions to HR/Payroll Director who in turn will provide them to the County Administrator/Lamar County Board of Commissioners for approval.

**Changes in Duties of Position.** The County Administrator may require Departments/Offices or employees to submit position descriptions on a periodic basis to him or her when there is reason to believe that there has been a change in the duties and responsibilities of one or more positions.

**New and Abolished Positions.** Each time a new position is established or abolished; a Personnel Request Form will be completed by the HR/Payroll Office. A new position description shall be written and incorporated into the Master Classification Plan and an abolished position will be deleted from the Master Classification Plan.

## **Rate of Pay**

New employees shall typically be paid the minimum rate of pay for the classification to which they are assigned, subject to the following exceptions:

1. If an employee in a particular position does not meet the minimum qualifications stated in the job description or if certain classifications of work require a formalized training period that is of unusual duration, the needs of the County can best be met by placing an individual in a training capacity. Employment in a "trainee" position shall be at a salary range below the minimum rate established for the classification at a rate not more than two pay grades below the grade.
2. If an employee exceeds the minimum qualifications for the position, such employee may be started at a higher classification. Approval of the County Administrator/Commissioners is required in such instances.



**Rehire/Reinstatement.** If a former full-time employee who left employment with Lamar County in good standing and/or left through no fault of their own is rehired within one (1) year, that person will be eligible for service restoration provided the following are met:

**Service Restoration Rules for Eligible Employees.** If a former employee with less than one year's prior service is rehired, the employee will be considered a new employee and will not be eligible for prior service recognition for seniority or benefit plan participation purposes. If a former employee with more than one year's prior service is rehired, the employee's seniority will be bridged if the employee is rehired where the period of prior county service exceeded the duration of the period of absence. Service recognition will include prior service recognition for accrued leave plans. If an employee is hired within the same year and was paid out for their leave the employee will not be eligible for leave until the beginning of the next year. If longer than one year, then the employee gets their leave back as soon as they are rehired. If a former employee with more than one year's prior service is rehired where the duration of the period of absence exceeded the period of prior county service, the employee will be considered a new employee and will not be eligible for prior service recognition for seniority purposes.

**Promotion.** An employee will be considered promoted when: The employee is transferred to a position classified in a higher pay range; The employee's position is reclassified to a classification having a higher pay range, or the "trainee" meets the minimum requirements for the job for which he or she was hired. Promotions may occur within a department or between departments. At the time an employee is promoted to an approved position in a classification with a higher pay range, a salary increase may be granted upon approval and is signed by the County Administrator and Chairman.

**Demotion.** An employee will be considered demoted when: The employee is placed in a different classification having a lower pay range or the employee's position is reclassified to a classification having a lower pay range. When an employee receives a demotion of the type stated above, such employee's pay may remain unchanged or may be reduced at the discretion of the County Administrator/Commissioners.

**Increases in Salaries.** Increases in pay for County employees shall be governed by the following principles:

1. The pay plan consists of various pay grades. The County Administrator/Commissioners may add or delete pay grades as deemed necessary.
2. Each pay grade shall have a pay range with an entry rate and steps placed at 2.5 percent intervals.
3. After an employee reaches the maximum rate within a pay grade, such employee shall only be entitled to across-the-board salary adjustments and merit payments in bonus form.
4. In order for an employee to receive a pay increase or higher pay grade, the following are required:
  - recommendation by the Department Head/Constitutional Officer;



- increase has been properly budgeted; and
- approval by the County Administrator and three (3) more Lamar County Board of Commissioners.

6. Upon the adoption of the annual budget, the County Administrator/Commissioners shall determine what percentage increase, if any, will be allotted for increases to employee salaries.

8. Employees below the top step of their grade, whose work is exceptional, may be granted a special merit increase. A special two-step merit increase requires the written justification and recommendation of both the Department Head/Constitutional Officer and County Administrator and the approval of the Lamar County Board of Commissioners.

## **Applications and Examinations**

**Announcement of Vacant Positions.** Except as otherwise provided below, all vacancies shall be publicized by posting announcements on the official bulletin board in the County Administration Building and forwarded to all Department Heads/Constitutional Offices to place on their bulletin boards. The announcements shall specify the titles of vacant positions and qualification requirements. All vacancies shall be posted in-house for a period of three (3) working days. After the completion of the three (3) day in-house posting, the vacancy will be posted in the local newspaper and on the County' Official Website. Applications will be accepted in the Administrative Office by the HR/Payroll Director.

**Application Forms.** All applicants for positions with the Lamar County Board of Commissioners may apply with the HR/Payroll Director. All applicants shall provide proof of citizenship as required by federal law and E-Verify. Such forms shall require information concerning training, experience, and other pertinent information, and shall be signed by the applicant. No person shall be employed by the Lamar County Board of Commissioners unless and until such person has made application with HR/Payroll Director, interviewed, offered a job, completed physical, drug screen and background check.

**Employment Requirements.** All positions with the Lamar County Board of Commissioners shall be open only to persons who meet such requirements as are listed on the job announcement/job description. Such requirements may include but are not limited to experience, education, and training.

**Receipt and Duration of Applications.** Applications from all persons desiring employment with the Lamar County Board of Commissioners may be accepted during regular business hours (8:00 am to 5:00 pm) in the Administrative Office by the HR/Personnel Director. Applicants must complete a new application for each announced position vacancy.

**Rejection of Applications.** The HR/Payroll Director may reject an application that indicates that the applicant is deficient in any or all of the requirements as specified in the job announcement/job description of the vacancy. An applicant may also be rejected for fraud or deception in the completion of the application, or if the employees past record of employment is determined to be unsatisfactory by the HR/Payroll Director. The applicable Department Head/Constitutional Officer will be notified of all rejections.



**Open Competitive Employment.** Positions to be filled by recruitment from outside the Lamar County Board of Commissioners shall be filled through a competitive process open to the public. This process may include, but not be limited to, ratings of training and experience, job-related tests, or any combination of these as determined by the Department Head/Constitutional Officer. Factors such as education, job-related qualifications, and experience may be considered in making employment decisions. The HR/Payroll Director will require the applicant to submit proof of education and military service or other necessary documentation.

**Testing.** Upon offer of open position, the applicant must sign documents authorizing the Lamar County Board of Commissioners to send the applicant for a criminal background check, drug test, physical and to obtain a seven (7) year MVR.

### **Probationary Period.**

The probationary period is designed to allow the employee and the Department Head/Constitutional Officer time to determine if the employee is capable of performing satisfactorily prior to being included in the classified service. The probationary period shall be three (3) months in duration.

### **Work Week and Hours of Work**

The standard workweek is from Monday 8:00 a.m. until Friday 5:00 p.m. and generally consists of 40 work hours. Office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., with a 1-hour lunch break. Individual work schedules may vary depending on the needs of each department.

### **Meal Breaks and Rest Periods**

Employees are allowed a 1-hour unpaid meal break each day. If a nonexempt employee is required to work through a meal break, he or she will be paid for the 1-hour period. Meal breaks will be scheduled by the Department Heads/Constitutional Officers. Federal law doesn't give employees the right to time off to eat lunch (or another meal) or the right to take short breaks during the work day. Employees who are working outside in the heat/cold (i.e., Public Works/Recreation) will be allowed one 15-minute rest period midway from start of work and lunch and one 15-minute rest period midway between lunch and the end of the day for employee safety. This time will not be used to extend lunch periods, come in late or leave early.

### **Time Records**

All Department Heads/Constitutional Officers are required to complete accurate biweekly time reports showing all time actually worked. These records are required by governmental regulations and are used to calculate regular, and overtime pay. At the end of each pay period, the Department Head /Constitutional Officer must sign the time sheet attesting to its correctness before forwarding it to the HR Office.



## Overtime/Compensatory Time

The [FLSA](#) allows state and local government employers to give their employees compensatory time instead of overtime pay, at a rate of **one-and-a-half hours for each hour of overtime**. Compensation for overtime will be in accordance with the provisions of the federal and state law, as amended. The Lamar County Board of Commissioners will allow compensatory time off in lieu of overtime. The FLSA's minimum wage and overtime pay requirements do not apply to certain "exempt" employees, whether in the public or private sector. Overtime/compensatory time is actual hours worked in excess of 40 in a single workweek (The Fire Department/Sheriff's Office may vary). All Overtime/compensatory time worked must be approved in advance by each Department Head/ Constitutional Officer unless it is in an emergency situation. It shall be the responsibility of the Department Head/Constitutional Officer to manage compensatory time. All earned and used compensatory time must be accurately recorded and reported to the HR Office each pay period. Compensatory time earned should be used within three (3) months and **must** be used prior to the end of the calendar year.

**Classification as Exempt or Non-Exempt** All employees will be classified as either "exempt" or "non-exempt" according to the Fair Labor Standards Act ("FLSA") and its governing regulations. These classifications are established by the County based upon the prevailing law and the actual duties and compensation earned by each employee. The County is not required to compensate employees who are exempt under the FLSA for overtime work. In contrast, the County is obligated to compensate employees who are deemed non-exempt under the FLSA for overtime work and does so according to the FLSA and the policies set forth herein. It is the expressed intent of Lamar County to strictly comply with the FLSA regarding overtime payment. The County will allow compensatory time off in lieu of overtime.

**Rate of Overtime/Compensatory Time.** Employees who perform overtime/compensatory work shall be allowed compensatory time off at the rate of one and one-half times their regular rate of pay.

## Deductions from Exempt Employees

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners does not make improper deductions from the salaries of exempt employees and complies with the salary basis requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Employees classified as exempt from the overtime pay requirements of the FLSA will be notified of this classification at the time of hire or change in position.

**Permitted deductions.** The FLSA limits the types of deductions that may be made from the pay of an exempt employee. Deductions that are permitted include:

- Deductions that are required by law, e.g., income taxes;
- Deductions for employee benefits when authorized by the employee;
- Absence from work for one or more full days for personal reasons other than sickness or disability;



- Absence from work for one or more full days due to sickness or disability if the deduction is made in accordance with a bona fide plan, policy, or practice of providing compensation for salary lost due to illness;
- Offset for amounts received as witness or jury fees, or for military pay; or
- Unpaid disciplinary suspensions of one or more full days imposed in good faith for workplace conduct rule infractions.

During the week an exempt employee begins work for the Lamar County Board of Commissioners or during the last week of employment, the employee will only be paid for actual hours worked. In addition, an employee may be paid only for hours worked during a period when the employee is using unpaid leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) or approved Leave Without Pay Request.

**Improper deductions.** If an employee classified as exempt believes that an improper deduction has been taken from their pay, the employee should immediately report the deduction to the HR/Payroll Director. The report will be promptly investigated and if it is found that an improper deduction has been made, the Lamar County Board of Commissioners will reimburse the employee for the improper deduction.

## **Direct Deposit**

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners pay periods for all employees is biweekly the following Wednesday after the end of a pay period. Department Heads/Constitutional Officers will be notified in advanced if a pay period will change due to a holiday. Paychecks will only be direct deposited into an employee's checking and/or savings account.

## **Access to Personnel Files**

Employee files are maintained by the HR Office and are considered confidential. Department Heads and Constitutional Officers may only have access to an employee's file on a need-to-know basis and with approval from the County Administrator. Personnel file access by current employees and former employees will only be granted upon written request to the County and will generally be permitted within 3 days of the request unless otherwise required under state law. Personnel files are to be reviewed in the HR Office. Employee files may not be taken outside the HR Office. Representatives of government or law enforcement agencies, in the course of their duties, may be allowed access to file information with approval from the County Administrator.

## **Employment of Relatives and Domestic Partners**

Relatives and domestic partners may be hired by the Lamar County Board of Commissioners if (1) the persons concerned will not work in a direct supervisory relationship, and (2) the employment will not pose difficulties for supervision, security, safety, or morale. For the purposes of this policy, "relatives" are defined as spouses, children, siblings, parents, grandparents, father-in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law, or daughter-in-law. A "domestic



partnership” is generally defined as a committed relationship between two individuals who are sharing a home or living arrangements.

Current employees who marry each other or become involved in a domestic partnership will be permitted to continue employment with the County provided they do not work in a direct supervisory relationship with each other or otherwise pose difficulties as mentioned above. If employees who marry or live together do work in a direct supervisory relationship with each other, the Lamar County Board of Commissioners will attempt to reassign one of the employees to another position for which they are qualified if such a position is available. If no such position is available, the employees will be permitted to determine which one of them will resign from the County.

## **Separation from Employment**

In all cases of voluntary resignation (one initiated by the employee); employees are asked to provide a written notice to their Department Heads/Constitutional Officers at least 10 working days in advance of the last day of work. The 10 days must be actual working days. Holidays, sick and vacation leave will not be counted toward the 10-day notice. Employees who provide the requested amount of notice will be considered to have resigned in good standing and generally will be eligible for rehire.

Department Heads/Constitutional Officers are responsible for collecting all County property and informing the HR Office if all equipment has been turned in. If applicable, information regarding benefits continuation through the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) will be sent to the employee’s home address by the insurance broker.

Should it become necessary because of business conditions to reduce the number of employees or work hours, this will be done at the discretion of the Lamar County Board of Commissioners.

### **Types of Separation from the Classified Service**

Separations and/or terminations from positions in the classified service shall be designated as one of the following:

1. Resignation.
2. Abandonment of job.
3. Lay-off or reduction in force.
4. Dismissal or discharge.
5. Retirement.
6. Death.

**Resignation.** An employee shall submit to the Department Head written notice of resignation at least ten (10) business days in advance of the date of resignation. Immediately upon receipt of such notice of resignation, the Department Head shall forward the same to the HR/Payroll Director. Failure to comply with this rule shall be entered on the service record of the employee.



**Abandonment of Job.** An employee who is absent from work for three (3) consecutive workdays without having received leave approval or without having called in to report the absence will be considered as voluntarily abandoned their job. This separation will not be in good standing and may affect opportunities for re-employment.

**Lay-off or Reduction in Force.** Any involuntary separation not related to an employee's conduct should constitute a lay-off or reduction in force.

**Reasons.** Georgia is an at will state and does not require a reason to terminate any employee. Any employee may be laid off because of shortage of funds or work, abolishment of the position, material changes in duties or organization, or related reasons beyond the employer's or the employee's control that do not reflect dissatisfaction with the service of the employee. The duties previously performed by any laid-off employee may be reassigned to other employees holding positions in appropriate classes.

1. **Notice to Department Head:** Whenever the lay-off of any employee becomes necessary, the Lamar County Board of Commissioners, through the County Administrator, shall notify the Department Head/Constitutional Officer as far in advance of the intended action as practicable of the necessity and the reasons of such lay-off. The Department Head shall thereupon furnish to the County Administrator the names and job titles of the employees to be laid off and the order in which such lay-off shall be affected.

1. **Order of Lay-off:** Should it become necessary to reduce the number of employees within a given classification in any department, such employees shall be laid off by reverse seniority order.

2. **Notice to Employees:** Regular employees to be laid off shall be notified in writing by the HR/Payroll Director fourteen (14) calendar days prior to the effective date of the lay-off, if practicable.

3. **Demotions:** Any regular employee scheduled to be laid off shall have the right to be demoted to a lower classification, provided that a vacancy exists, and such employee is qualified to fill the position in the lower classification and if the lay-off is not due to dissatisfaction with employee's performance.

All layoffs and reductions in force shall be first approved by the Lamar County Board of Commissioners/County Administrator.

**Retirement.** The retirement of an employee shall consist of the voluntary separation of an employee who has met the requirements of age and length of service under the laws governing any applicable pension fund of which such employee may be a member. All employees who retire with at least ten (10) years of service shall receive a plaque from the county. The county reserves the right to require eligible employees to retire at ages earlier than those stated above when it has been medically determined and approved by the Lamar County Board of Commissioners/County Administrator. Such factors may include but are not limited to the fact that age-related degenerative conditions(s) have rendered an employee incapable of safely and efficiently performing all duties of his/her assigned position.



**Death.** Separation shall be effective as of the date of the death of the employee. All compensation, including annual leave pay, due to such employee, as of the effective date of separation, shall be paid to the beneficiary of the employee, the surviving spouse of such employee, or to the estate of such employee, as may be determined by law or by the applicable executed documents in the personnel folder of such employee.

## **Disciplinary Procedure**

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners expects employees to comply with the standards of behavior and performance and to correct any noncompliance with these standards.

### **Conduct Subject to Disciplinary Action:**

1. Indictment for or conviction of a felony, or of a misdemeanor involving moral turpitude.
2. Absenteeism.
3. Absence without leave, or failure to report after the expiration of a leave of absence.
4. Tardiness.
5. Abuse of leave.
6. Insubordination or breach of proper discipline.
7. Inefficiency or incompetence after proper documentation and counseling.
8. Abuse or theft of County property.
9. Borrowing/Misappropriating County equipment.
10. Loss of a job requirement, such as the loss of a necessary license, which prevents the adequate performance of the essential functions of the position.
11. Making of false statements to Department Heads/Constitutional Officers, officials, the public, boards, commissions, or agencies.
12. Violating County ordinances, regulations, or departmental rules.
13. Discovery of a false statement in an application.
14. Consumption, sale, or possession of alcoholic beverages and/or illegal substances while at work or being under the influence or being otherwise affected on the job because of the prior use of such substance.
15. Accepting gratuities in conflict with state law or County ordinance.
16. Political activity in conflict with Section 19 of these Policies and Procedures.
17. Engaging in offensive conduct or using offensive language toward the public, supervisory personnel, or fellow employees.
18. Harassment on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, citizenship, age, or disability as provided in Section 17 of these Policies and Procedures.
19. Unsafe operation of equipment or destruction of material or property.
20. Ignoring safety rules or safety procedures.
21. Unexcused or excessive tardiness or absences after proper documentation and counseling.
22. Failure to follow the chain of command. (Exceptions are sexual harassment, discrimination, and other sensitive issues where the Department Head/Constitutional Officer has been alleged to be the aggressor.) Each employee shall follow the chain of command unless the complaint involves a member of that chain. If so, the employee shall report immediately to the next in command without fear of retribution.



23. If it is discovered at *any time* an employee falsified any part of his or her application.

Under normal circumstances, the Lamar County Board of Commissioners endorses a policy of progressive discipline in which it attempts to provide employees with notice of deficiencies and an opportunity to improve. It does, however, retain the right to administer discipline in any manner it sees fit. This policy does not modify the status of employees as employees-at-will or in any way restrict the Lamar County Board of Commissioners right to bypass the disciplinary procedures suggested.

The following steps are suggested in the discipline procedure. All steps should be documented in the employee's personnel file.

**Step 1:** Informal Discussion/Counseling. When a performance problem is first identified, the nature of the problem and the action necessary to correct it should be thoroughly discussed with the employee. The Department Head/Constitutional Officer and Human Resource Director should meet with the employee and (a) review the problem, (b) permit the employee to present his or her views on the problem, (c) advise the employee that the problem must be corrected, (d) inform the employee that failure to correct the problem will result in further disciplinary action which may include termination, and (e) issue a counseling notice to the employee.

**Step 2:** Reprimand. If satisfactory performance and corrective action are not achieved under Step I, the Department Head/Constitutional Officer, Human Resource Director, and the County Administrator should meet with the employee in private and proceed via (a) through (d) above and issue a reprimand notice to the employee.

**Step 3:** Suspension. Department Head/Constitutional Officers have the authority to temporarily remove employees from the workplace, without pay, if approved in advance by the County Administrator. An exempt employee generally may not be suspended without pay for less than a full day, and the suspension must be related to written workplace conduct rules applicable to all employees, e.g., such as a written policy prohibiting sexual harassment or workplace violence.

**Step 4:** Failure to improve. Failure to improve performance or behavior after the written warning or suspension can result in termination.

## **Serious Misconduct**

In cases involving serious misconduct, or any time the Department Head/Constitutional Officer determines it is necessary, such as a major breach of policy or violation of law, the procedures contained above may be disregarded. Typically, the Department Head/Constitutional Officer should contact the County Administrator and suspend the employee immediately (without pay)



and an investigation of the incidents leading up to the suspension should be conducted to determine if any further action, such as termination, should be taken.

## **Complaints and Appeals**

**Intent.** County employee complaints should receive prompt consideration and equitable resolution. At the same time, complaints must be handled in a manner that will require minimal intrusion into the functioning of Lamar County Board of Commissioners. These procedures governing the processing of complaints and providing a procedure for an appeal are established for the purpose of eliminating or correcting justifiable complaints of employees.

**Complaint and Appeal Procedures.** Any complaints or appeals are subject to the following process:

1. Prior to initiating a formal appeal, an employee shall discuss the complaint with their Department Head. Within three (3) working days of such discussion, if the employee is dissatisfied with the Department Head action or inaction, the employee must submit their written complaint to the County Administrator.
2. Within three (3) working days of the receipt of the written complaint, the County Administrator shall arrange an appointment with the employee and the Department Head to discuss the problem and attempt to reach a solution.

If a settlement is not reached, the matter shall, within three (3) working days, be submitted to the Lamar County Board of Commissioners for a hearing and review of the complaint at its next regularly scheduled meeting. The Lamar County Board of Commissioners will have three (3) working days following the hearing to reach a **final** decision.



## V. Workplace Safety

### Drug-Free and Alcohol-Free Workplace

It is the policy of Lamar County Board of Commissioners to maintain a drug- and alcohol-free work environment that is safe and productive for employees and others having business with the Lamar County Board of Commissioners.

The unlawful use, possession, purchase, sale, distribution, or being under the influence of any illegal drug and/or the misuse of legal drugs while on the Lamar County Board of Commissioners or client premises or while performing services for the Lamar County Board of Commissioners is strictly prohibited. The Lamar County Board of Commissioners also prohibits reporting to work or performing services under the influence of alcohol or consuming alcohol while on duty or during work hours. In addition, the Lamar County Board of Commissioners prohibits off-premises abuse of alcohol and controlled substances, as well as the possession, use, or sale of illegal drugs, when these activities adversely affect job performance, job safety, or the Lamar County Board of Commissioners reputation in the community.

To ensure compliance with this policy, substance abuse screening may be conducted in the following situations:

**Pre-employment:** As required by the County for all prospective employees who receive a conditional offer of employment.

**For Cause:** Upon reasonable suspicion that the employee is under the influence of alcohol or drugs that could affect or has adversely affected the employee's job performance.

**Random:** As authorized by the County Administrator or required by federal or state law.

Compliance with this policy is a condition of employment. Employees who test positive or who refuse to submit to substance abuse screening will be subject to termination. Notwithstanding any provision herein, this policy will be enforced at all times in accordance with applicable state and local law.

Any employee violating this policy is subject to discipline, up to and including termination, for the first offense.

### Smoke-/Vape- Free Workplace

Smoking/Vaping is not allowed in the Lamar County Board of Commissioners buildings or work areas at any time. "Smoking/Vaping" includes the use of any tobacco products (including chewing tobacco), electronic smoking devices, and e-cigarettes.

Smoking/Vaping is only permitted during break times in designated **outdoor** areas. Employees using these areas are expected to dispose of any smoking debris safely and properly.



Compliance with this policy is a condition of employment. Employees who refuse to follow this policy will be subject to termination. Notwithstanding any provision herein, this policy will be enforced at all times in accordance with applicable state and local law.

Any employee violating this policy is subject to discipline, up to and including termination, for the first offense.

## **Workplace Violence Prevention**

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners are committed to providing a safe, violence-free workplace for our employees. Due to this commitment, we discourage employees from engaging in any physical confrontation with a violent or potentially violent individual or from behaving in a threatening or violent manner. Threats, threatening language, or any other acts of aggression or violence made toward or by any employee will not be tolerated. A threat may include any verbal or physical harassment or abuse, attempts to intimidate others, menacing gestures, stalking, or any other hostile, aggressive, and/or destructive actions taken for the purposes of intimidation. This policy covers any violent or potentially violent behavior that occurs in the workplace or at company-sponsored functions.

All of the Lamar County Board of Commissioners employees bear the responsibility of keeping our work environment free from violence or potential violence. Any employee who witnesses or is the recipient of violent behavior should promptly inform their Department Head/Constitutional Officer or the HR/Payroll Office. All threats will be promptly investigated. No employee will be subject to retaliation, intimidation, or discipline as a result of reporting a threat in good faith under this guideline.

Any individual engaging in violence against the Lamar County Board of Commissioners, its employees, or its property will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. All acts will be investigated, and the appropriate action will be taken. Any such act or threatening behavior may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners prohibits the possession of weapons on its property at all times, including our parking lots or company vehicles. Additionally, while on duty, employees may not carry a weapon of any type. Weapons include, but are not limited to, handguns, rifles, automatic weapons, and knives that can be used as weapons (excluding pocketknives, utility knives, and other instruments that are used to open packages, cut string, and for other miscellaneous tasks), martial arts paraphernalia, stun guns, and tear gas. Any employee violating this policy is subject to discipline up to and including dismissal for the first offense.

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners reserves the right to inspect all belongings of employees on its premises, including packages, briefcases, purses and handbags, gym bags, and personal vehicles on company property. In addition, the Lamar County Board of Commissioners may inspect the contents of lockers, storage areas, file cabinets, desks, and workstations at any time and may remove all property and other items that are in violation of the Lamar County Board of Commissioners rules and policies.



## **Commitment to Safety**

Protecting the safety of our employees and visitors is the most important aspect of running the Lamar County Board of Commissioners work facilities.

All employees have the opportunity and responsibility to contribute to a safe work environment by using common sense rules and safe practices and by notifying Department Heads/Constitutional Officers when any health or safety issues are present. All employees are encouraged to partner with Department Heads/Constitutional Officers to ensure maximum safety for all.

In the event of an emergency, notify the appropriate emergency personnel by dialing 911 to activate the medical emergency services.

## **Emergency Closings**

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners will always make every attempt to be open for business. In situations in which some employees are concerned about their safety, the County Administrator may advise Department Heads/Constitutional Officers to notify their employees that the office is not officially closed, but anyone may choose to leave the office if they feel uncomfortable but must take vacation time for the hours missed.

At times, emergencies such as severe weather, fires, power failures, or tornadoes can disrupt County operations. In extreme cases, the circumstances may require the closing of work facilities.

When the decision to close is made after the workday has begun, employees will receive official notification from their Department Head/Constitutional Officer. In these situations, time off from scheduled work will be paid. When the decision to close is made before the workday has begun, time off from scheduled work will be unpaid unless administrative leave is assigned by the County Administrator. Employees in essential operations may be asked to work on a day when operations are officially closed. In these circumstances, employees who work will receive regular pay.



## VI. Use of County Property and Vehicle

Use of property owned or leased by the County is intended for official county business only. Property including supplies, tools, materials, and equipment are not for personal use and should not be removed from County premises except in the conduct of official county business.

**Vehicle Fleet Safety.** The purpose of the Vehicle Fleet Safety policies and procedures is to ensure that each employee who operates a vehicle on county business maintains acceptable standards of proficiency and safety.

Responsibility:

- HR Office will perform a Motor Vehicle Record check on all post offer applicants. The HR Office will further ensure that all potential employees meet the minimum driver qualifications as listed below when the open position requires driving a County vehicle and review semi-annual MVR record (Annual checks will be performed on employees driving County vehicles on a sporadic basis.)
- Department Head/Constitutional Officer will ensure all drivers have a valid Georgia drivers' license before placing the employee in a position requiring operation of a County vehicle. Department Heads/Constitutional Officers will also make sure the employee is familiar with the County vehicle before allowing them to leave County property.
- Authorized Drivers will be determined by the Department Head/Constitutional Officer. Employee must be given permission to drive either a County or a personal vehicle on County business. Employee must obey all motor vehicle laws, maintain the vehicle properly at all times, and otherwise follow the procedures listed in these guidelines.

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners is dedicated to eliminating conditions that adversely affect the well-being of employees and otherwise threaten financial stability through accidental losses.

Employees shall operate all vehicle used for County business in a safe and economical manner. In order to accomplish this, the following practices will be followed:

**Driver's License.** All drivers must have a valid Georgia driver's license for the class of the vehicle operated and must be able to drive the vehicle. License acquisition and renewal is a personal expense. Commercial Drivers' Licenses (CDL or CDL/HAZMAT) is handled according to the departmental procedure.

**Driver Qualifications.** All drivers of County vehicles must meet the following criteria with the exception of Public Safety employees who have completed a course in emergency vehicle operations: Must be at least 18 years of age; they are an authorized driver for the County; must meet licensing requirements; will not qualify to drive a County vehicle, or be hired or transferred into a position requiring driving a County vehicle if the driver/applicant has had any



of the following within the prior 36 months; been convicted of a felony; been convicted of sale, handling or use of drugs; been convicted of an alcohol or drug-related offense while driving; had drivers' license suspended or revoked for a moving violation; been convicted of three or more speeding violations or one or more other serious violations; or been involved in two or more chargeable accidents. Exceptions to the above qualifications, excluding Public Safety employee/applicants, require advance approval, in writing by the Lamar County Board of Commissioners or his/her designee.

**Maintenance of Vehicle.** Authorized drivers are required to properly maintain their County vehicle at all times. Vehicles should not be operated with any defect that would inhibit safe operation during current and foreseeable weather and light conditions. Preventive maintenance, such as regular oil changes, lubrication, tire pressure and fluid checks determine to a large extent whether employees will have a reliable safe vehicle to drive and support County work activities. Employees should have preventive maintenance completed on their assigned county vehicle as required.

**Prescription and non-prescription drug use.** Employees are responsible for informing their treating physician(s) regarding required job duties to ensure that the physician approves the use of prescription medicine while at work. The employee reporting to work must inform their supervisor of any therapeutic drug use with related driving restrictions. Over the counter drugs must not be used when the label states "do not operate machinery," or similar language. Employees must report prescription and non-prescription drug use to their supervisor when side effects may interfere with driving duties.

- All drivers and passengers in all County vehicles shall wear seat belts while the vehicle is in operation for non-emergency situations (All emergency personnel exempt).
- The County is not responsible for loss or theft of personal items left in County vehicles.
- Authorized employees for official County business shall use county vehicles, unless a county vehicle is not available. The Lamar County Board of Commissioners may authorize Department Heads/Constitutional Officers, or other personnel, because of their position, duties, or the emergency nature of work, to take County owned vehicles to their residences following normal duty hours. No unauthorized passengers or drivers will be allowed to either operate or ride in the vehicle. Transporting family members in County vehicles shall be allowed only when the family member is accompanying an employee to a business meeting or official functions. Vehicles assigned, are not to be used in such a manner as to bring discredit upon the County.

**Roadside Work.** Any employee working on the roadside must be conscious of dangers of oncoming traffic hazards and observe safety rules. The normal cautions used in Certified Safety Flagging class are to be followed. (Flaggers are to be certified.) All heavy trucks must be equipped with adequate and working warning lights. When less than five minutes is expected for roadside work, at a minimum, an escort truck with flashing amber lights must be provided behind the work area at a sufficient distance to protect the workers with appropriate signage. All workers are to wear florescent safety vest, especially when working near traffic. Adequate



signage and cones are to be used. Every effort should be made to locate a working truck out of the lane of traffic.



## **VII. Workplace Guidelines**

### **Attendance**

All employees are expected to arrive on time, ready to work, every day they are scheduled to work.

If unable to arrive at work on time, or if an employee will be absent for an entire day, the employee must contact the Department Head/Constitutional Officer as soon as possible. Voice mail and e-mail messages are not acceptable except in certain emergency circumstances. Excessive absenteeism or tardiness will result in discipline up to and including termination. Failure to show up or call in for a scheduled shift without prior approval may result in termination. If an employee fails to report to work or call in to inform the Department Head/Constitutional Officer of the absence for 3 consecutive days or more, the employee will be considered to have voluntarily resigned employment.

### **Job Performance**

Communication between employees and Department Heads/Constitutional Officers is very important. Discussions regarding job performance are ongoing and often informal. Employees should initiate conversations with their Department Head/Constitutional Officer if they feel additional ongoing feedback is needed.

Generally, formal performance reviews are conducted annually. These reviews include a written performance appraisal and discussion between the employee and the Department Head/Constitutional Officer about job performance and expectations for the coming year.

### **Outside Employment**

Employees are permitted to work a second job as long as it does not interfere with their job performance with Lamar County Board of Commissioners. Employees with a second job are expected to work their assigned schedules. A second job will not be considered an excuse for poor job performance, absenteeism, tardiness, leaving early, refusal to travel, or refusal to work overtime or different hours. Refer to Conflict of Interest on page 9 for more information on outside employment.

If outside work activity causes or contributes to job-related problems, it must be discontinued, or the employee may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

### **Dress and Grooming**

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners provides a casual yet professional work environment for its employees. Even though the dress code is casual, it is important to project a professional image to our citizens, visitors, and coworkers. All employees are expected to dress in a manner consistent with good hygiene, safety, and good taste. Please use common sense. (The following clothing items are not appropriate at any time: halters, tank tops, mini dresses,



spaghetti strap tops, leggings, jean/khakis with holes, overalls, low front or back, sheer clothing, clothing that is too tight or too short, flip flops, and slippers of any kind, crocks of any kind, or clothing/hats that have inappropriate words, pictures, scenes, etc., that would be disruptive to the work environment.

Any questions or complaints regarding the appropriateness of attire should be directed to the HR/Payroll Director. Decisions regarding attire will be made by the HR/Payroll Director and not by individual Department Heads/Constitutional Officers.

## **Social Media Acceptable Use**

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners encourages employees to share information with co-workers and with those outside the County for the purposes of gathering information, generating new ideas, and learning from the work of others. Social media provides inexpensive, informal, and timely ways to participate in an exchange of ideas and information. However, information posted on a website is available to the public and, therefore, the Lamar County Board of Commissioners has established the following guidelines for employee participation in social media.

**Note:** As used in this policy, “social media” refers to blogs, forums, and social networking sites, such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram, and SnapChat, among others.

**Off-duty use of social media.** Employees may maintain personal websites or weblogs on their own time using their own facilities. Employees must ensure that social media activity does not interfere with their work. In general, the Lamar County Board of Commissioners considers social media activities to be personal endeavors, and employees may use them to express their thoughts or promote their ideas.

**On-duty use of social media.** Employees may engage in social media activity during work time provided it is directly related to their work, approved by their Department Head/Constitutional Officer, and does not identify or reference Lamar County Board of Commissioners clients, customers, or vendors without express permission. The Lamar County Board of Commissioners may monitor an employee’s use of company computers and the Internet, including employee blogging and social networking activity.

**Respect.** Demonstrate respect for the dignity of the Lamar County Board of Commissioners, its customers, its vendors, and its employees. A social media site is a public place, and employees should avoid inappropriate comments. For example, employees should not divulge Lamar County Board of Commissioners confidential information such as trade secrets, client lists, or information restricted from disclosure by law on social media sites. Similarly, employees should not engage in harassing or discriminatory behavior that targets other employees or individuals because of their protected class status or make defamatory comments. Even if a message is posted anonymously, it may be possible to trace it back to the sender.

**Post disclaimers.** If an employee identifies himself or herself as a Lamar County Board of Commissioners employee or discusses matters related to the Lamar County Board of



Commissioners on a social media site, the site must include a disclaimer on the front page stating that it does not express the views of the Lamar County Board of Commissioners and that the employee is expressing only his or her personal views. For example: “The views expressed on this website/Weblog are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of my employer.” Place the disclaimer in a prominent position and repeat it for each posting expressing an opinion related to the Lamar County Board of Commissioners. Employees must keep in mind that if they post information on a social media site that is in violation of Lamar County Board of Commissioners policy and/or federal, state, or local law, the disclaimer will not shield them from disciplinary action.

**Confidentiality.** Do not identify or reference Lamar County Board of Commissioners clients, customers, or vendors without express permission. Employees may write about their jobs in general but may not disclose any confidential or proprietary information. For examples of confidential information, please refer to the confidentiality policy. When in doubt, ask before publishing.

**Legal.** Employees are expected to comply with all applicable laws, including but not limited to, Federal Trade Commission (FTC) guidelines, copyright, trademark, and harassment laws.

**Company restrictions.** Because the Lamar County Board of Commissioners is publicly held, it may require that employees temporarily confine social media commentary to topics unrelated to the County or that employees temporarily suspend such activity to ensure compliance with the SEC’s regulations or other laws. The County may also require employees to delete references to it on a website or Web log and to stop identifying themselves as an employee of the County.

**Discipline.** Violations of this policy may result in discipline up to and including immediate termination of employment.

*Note:* Nothing in this policy is meant to, nor should it be interpreted to, in any way limit your rights under any applicable federal, state, or local laws, including your rights under the National Labor Relations Act to engage in protected concerted activities with other employees to improve or discuss terms and conditions of employment, such as wages, working conditions, and benefits.

## **Bulletin Boards**

All required governmental postings are posted on the boards located in each building. These boards may also contain general announcements.

## **Solicitation**

Employees should be able to work in an environment that is free from unnecessary annoyances and interference with their work. In order to protect our employees and visitors, solicitation by employees is strictly prohibited while either the employee being solicited or the employee doing the soliciting is on “working time.” “Working time” is defined as time during which an



employee is not at a meal, on break, or on the premises immediately before or after his or her shift.

Employees are also prohibited from distributing written materials, handbills, or any other type of literature on working time and, at all times, in “working areas,” which includes all office areas. “Working areas” do not include break rooms, parking lots, or common areas shared by employees during nonworking time.

Nonemployees may not trespass or solicit or distribute materials anywhere on Lamar County Board of Commissioners property at any time.

## **Computers, Internet, Email, and Other Resources**

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners provides a wide variety of communication tools and resources to employees for use in running day-to-day business activities. Whether it is the telephone, voice mail, fax, scanner, Internet, intranet, e-mail, text messaging, or any other company-provided technology, use should be reserved for business-related matters during working hours. All communication using these tools should be handled in a professional and respectful manner.

Employees should not have any expectation of privacy in their use of County computer, phone, or other communication tools. All communications made using County-provided equipment or services including email and internet activity, are subject to inspection by the Lamar County Board of Commissioners. Employees should keep in mind that even if they delete an email, voicemail or other communication, a copy may be archived on the County’s systems.

Employee use of County-provided communication systems, including personal e-mail and internet use, which are not job-related have the potential to drain, rather than enhance, productivity and system performance. You should also be aware that information transmitted through e-mail and the internet is not completely secure or may contain viruses or malware, and information you transmit and receive could damage the County’s systems. To protect against potential problems, delete any e-mail messages prior to opening that are received from unknown senders and advertisers. It also is against County policy to turn off antivirus protection software or make unauthorized changes to system configurations installed on Lamar County Board of Commissioners computers. Violations of this policy may result in termination for a first offense.

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners encourages employees to use e-mail only to communicate with fellow employees, suppliers, customers, or potential customers regarding County business. Internal and external e-mails are considered business records and may be subject to federal and state recordkeeping requirements as well as to discovery in the event of litigation. Be aware of this possibility when sending e-mails within and outside the County.

All use of County-provided communications systems, including e-mail and internet use, should conform to our Lamar County Board of Commissioners guidelines/policies, including but not limited to the Equal Opportunity, Harassment, Confidential Information, and Conflicts of Interest. For example, employees should not engage in harassing or discriminatory behavior



that targets other employees or individuals because of their protected class status or make defamatory comments. Similarly, employees should not divulge confidential information such as lists, or information restricted from disclosure by law on social media sites.

Because e-mail, telephone and voice mail, and internet communication equipment are provided for Lamar County Board of Commissioners business purposes and are critical to the County's success, your communications may be accessed without further notice by Information Technology per County Administrator, Department Head, or Constitutional Officers to ensure compliance with this guideline.

The electronic communication systems are not secure and may allow inadvertent disclosure, accidental transmission to third parties, etc. Sensitive information should not be sent via unsecured electronic means.

Office telephones are for business purposes. While the Lamar County Board of Commissioners recognizes that some personal calls are necessary, these should be kept as brief as possible and to a minimum. Personal use of the County's cell phones, long-distance account, or toll-free numbers is strictly prohibited. Abuse of these privileges is subject to corrective action up to and including termination.

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners reserves the right to monitor customer calls to ensure employees abide by guidelines and provide appropriate levels of customer service. Employees working in customer service will be subject to telephone monitoring and e-mail. Should the subject matter of any telephone conversation become personal while monitoring is taking place, monitoring of the call will immediately be discontinued.

Nothing in this policy is designed to interfere with, restrain, or prevent employee communications regarding wages, hours, or other terms and conditions of employment as protected under the National Labor Relations Act. Employees have the right to engage in or refrain from such activities.

## **Verification of Employment**

Prospective employers, financial institutions and residential property managers routinely contact employers, for information on a former or current employee's work history and salary.

All such requests of this type should be referred to and handled by the HR/Payroll Director. Responses to written requests for verification of employment will be completed only when the request is accompanied by a former or current employee's signed authorization to release such information. The HR/Payroll Director may contact the employee to verify authorization.

A written verification of employment form that has been completed by the HR/Payroll Director will be returned directly to the requesting party.



## **VIII. Holidays, Paid Time Off, and Leaves of Absence**

### **Holidays**

It is the policy of Lamar County that all Full-time Employees shall be eligible for the following twelve holidays each year: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King's Birthday, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day. Any other holidays shall be upon specific authorization of the Board of Commissioners. When a holiday falls on Saturday, it shall be observed by the County on the preceding Friday, and if it falls on Sunday, it shall be observed by the County on the following Monday.

All Full-time Employees shall be paid a total of eight hours for each holiday, regardless of the hours in the employee's shift, provided they are scheduled to work on the holiday. Part-time, temporary, and seasonal employees or employees on approved Leave Without Pay, Suspension Without Pay, Military Leave, and/or FMLA Leave are not entitled to holiday pay. Holiday pay cannot be added in the computation of overtime pay.

In order to qualify for holiday pay, employees are required to work their scheduled workdays before and after a holiday unless the employee is off on scheduled and pre-approved PTO. If unscheduled PTO is taken on the day before or the day after a holiday the employee will not qualify for holiday pay. Holidays which occur during pre-approved PTO shall not be charged against PTO.

Employees who need time off to observe religious practices or holidays not already scheduled by the Lamar County Board of Commissioners should speak with their Department Head/Constitutional Officer. Depending upon business needs, the employee may be able to work on a day that is normally observed as a holiday and then take time off for another religious day. The County will seek to accommodate individuals' religious observances.

### **Paid Time Off**

**Purpose.** Paid Time Off (PTO) leave accrual is a benefit which allows eligible employees accrued time off from normally scheduled work without loss of income or benefit eligibility. PTO can be used for planned time off or related medical care of the employee or an immediate family member. For purposes of this policy.

**Eligibility.** All Full-time Employees and who are scheduled to work 40 or more hours per week shall be entitled to accrue PTO.

**Hours of Work.** The established work week and hours of work shall, insofar as practicable, be uniform within occupational groups and shall be determined in accordance with the needs of the County and the reasonable needs of the public who may be required to do business with various County departments. The Department Head, with the approval of the County



Administrator, shall establish the work schedule of 40 hours a week or 80 hours a pay period for fulltime time employees and establish hours for part-time and temporary employees based on the Department budget (The Fire Department/Sheriff's Office does not fall within this schedule). Offices are to remain open during lunch hours unless permission is obtained from the County Administrator. Departments/Offices should staff accordingly.

**Attendance.** The employee is responsible for his/her attendance and is required to work the schedule assigned by the applicable Department Head/ Constitutional Officer. Each Department Head/Constitutional Officer is responsible for maintaining a copy of the attendance records for their department/office.

**Call In Procedure.** When an unexpected illness or crisis arises and an employee is unable to report to work or is going to be late, the employee is required to call in immediately or at least 30 minutes after the employee's scheduled start time. The employee should report to their Department Head/Constitutional Officer. "Call-in is required every day of absence unless otherwise approved by the Department Head/Constitutional Officer.

**Emergency Closings.** At times, emergencies such as severe weather, fires, power failures, or tornadoes, can disrupt County operations. In extreme cases, these circumstances may require the closure of work facilities. When the decision to close is made AFTER the workday has begun, employees will receive official notification from their Department Head/Constitutional Officer. In these situations, time off from scheduled work will be paid. When the decision to close BEFORE the workday has begun, time off from scheduled work will be unpaid unless administrative leave is assigned by the County Administrator. Employees in essential operations may be asked or required to work on a day when operations are officially closed. In these circumstances, employees who work will receive regular pay during work regular hours or overtime/compensatory time for time over regular work hours.

**Annual Period.** The "Annual Period" for purposes of determining rights under the County shall commence on January 1<sup>st</sup> and conclude on December 31<sup>st</sup>.

**Maximum Work Hours.** The following table sets forth the maximum work hours for purposes of computing overtime/compensatory time. In accordance with the table, employees are not entitled to overtime/compensatory time until the maximum work hours in the applicable work period have been exceeded.

<u>Maximum Work Hours</u>	
Fire Department	53 hours per week
Sheriff's Office	
911 Employees	40 hours per week
SRO	40 hours per week
Jail	84 hours per 2 weeks



Drug/Investigations	80 hour per 2 weeks
Administrative	40 hours per week
Patrol	84 hours per 2 weeks

All County Departments: 40 hours per week

**Time-Swapping Record Keeping.** The County does not allow time-swapping. Shift-swapping is the practice of trading work shifts. Falsifying payroll records to show an individual is present when he is actually not present is grounds for termination.

**Reasonable Work Schedules.** The Department Head/Constitutional Officer shall utilize reasonable work schedules and shift assignments that allow personnel to work no more than forty (40) hours (The Fire Department/Sheriff's Office does not fall within this schedule).

**Accrual of Paid Time Off.** Full-time Employees shall accrue Paid Time Off upon completion of each bi-weekly pay period. The PTO accrual rate is shown below. Leave is accrued as follows:

80 Hour Pay Period	Accrual Rate Per Pay Period (Hours)	Hours Accrued Per Year	Days Accrued Per Year		
				Accrual Limit	Roll-Over Cap
One year, but less than five years	7.00	182	22.75	320	320
Five years, but less than ten years	9.00	234	29.25	320	340
Ten years, but less than 20	10.00	260	32.50	320	360
20 +	11.00	286	35.75	320	380

Fire Department/Sheriff's Office 53/86 Hour Pay Period	Accrual Rate Per Pay Period Hours	Hours Accrued Per Year	Days Accrued Per Year		
				Accrual Limit	Roll-Over Cap
One year, but less than five years	8.00	208	26.00	350	350
Five years, but less than ten years	10.00	260	32.50	350	370
Ten years, but less than 20	11.00	286	35.75	350	390
20 +	12.00	312	39.00	350	410

PTO accrual begins on the date of employment and is available for use after the probationary period (3 months) has been completed.



PTO accruals for fulltime employees may not exceed 320 hours, and 350 hours for fulltime employees of the Fire Department and Sheriff's Office. See the above chart for Roll-Over Caps. If the maximum amount of accrual limit has been reached, an employee may request payment for 40 hours of accrued PTO per year after the employee has reached 10 years. These requests may only be made **during the last month** of each calendar year.

**Guidelines for PTO.** Employees may use time from their PTO bank in thirty minutes increments. PTO is added to the employee's PTO bank after the last day of the pay-period. This accrual may not be used for the previous pay period. PTO taken will be subtracted from the employee's accrued time bank each pay period. Eligibility to accrue PTO is contingent on the employee either working or utilizing accrued PTO for the entire bi-weekly pay period. PTO is not earned in pay periods during which unpaid leave, short-term or long-term disability leave, or worker's compensation leave is taken.

**Approval of Paid Time Off.** All requests for PTO must be requested within 5 days of needed time off and pre-approved by the Department Heads/ Constitutional Officers unless PTO is used for a legitimate, unexpected illness/emergency and bereavement. In the case of Department Heads, PTO must be pre-approved by the County Administrator unless PTO is used for a legitimate, unexpected illness/emergency and bereavement. The employee shall report needed time off, for any reason, prior to their scheduled work time. If not possible, they must report the tardiness/absence, or the tardiness/absence will be unexcused and unpaid. Absences from duty without previous approval that occur frequently or are habitual will be addressed per the disciplinary process.

**PTO Exceptions.** Employees who miss more than three unscheduled consecutive days will be required to present a doctor's note/excuse to their Department Head/Constitutional Officer when returning to work. Unscheduled absences, due to illness of four hours or more, that result in consecutive days absent from work, are considered one absence incident in relation to potential disciplinary action.

PTO taken in excess of accrued PTO may result in progressive disciplinary action up to and including employment termination. This time will be unpaid. The only possible exception to this policy must be granted by the County Administrator.

PTO accrued prior to the start of a requested and approved unpaid leave of absence must be used to cover hours missed before the start of the unpaid leave period.

Under the County's Family Medical and Leave Act (FMLA) policy, all accrued PTO time must be taken before start of the unpaid FMLA.

**Under no circumstances will an employee be allowed to request payment for unearned or advance Leave.**



## **Compensation for Paid Time Off Upon Separation**

At the time of termination, resignation, retirement, or death while employed with Lamar County the unused accrued PTO (up to the hours accrued per year) **will be** paid to the employee's direct deposit account or his/her estate, provided all uniforms and equipment issued by the County has been returned and no outstanding liabilities or debts remain.

## **Donation of PTO**

An employee may receive PTO donated by fellow employees in cases where extended illness or injury exceeds the maximum allowable accumulation. The employee requesting donated leave must have exhausted all PTO accrued time and not be on short term or long-term disability. The employee donating time can only donate up to forty (40) hours of their accrued PTO once a year per employee. An employee can receive a maximum of four (4) weeks of donated PTO time per year. The donation form can be picked up and turned back in at the Human Resources Office.

## **Family and Medical Leave**

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners complies with the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), which requires employers to grant unpaid leaves of absence to qualified workers for certain medical and family-related reasons. The Lamar County Board of Commissioners also abides by any state and local leave laws. The more generous of the laws will apply to the employee if the employee is eligible under both federal and state laws.

Please note there are many requirements, qualifications, and exceptions under these laws, and each employee's situation is different. Contact the HR Office to discuss options for leave.

FMLA requires private employers with 50 or more employees and all public agencies, including state, local, and federal employers, and local education agencies (schools), to provide eligible employees up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave in any 12-month period for certain family and medical reasons. The 12-month period is measured forward from the date an employee first takes leave, except for leaves to care for a covered servicemember with a serious illness or injury. For those leaves, the leave entitlement is 26 weeks in a single 12-month period, measured forward from the date an employee first takes that type of leave.

**Basic Leave Entitlement.** The FMLA requires covered employers to provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave to eligible employees for the following reasons: (1) for incapacity due to pregnancy, prenatal medical care, or child birth; (2) to care for the employee's child after birth or placement for adoption or foster care; (3) to care for the employee's spouse, son or daughter, or parent who has a serious health condition; or (4) for a serious health condition that makes the employee unable to work.



**Military Family Leave Entitlements.** Eligible employees with a spouse, son, daughter, or parent on active duty or called to active-duty status in the National Guard or Reserves in support of a contingency operation may use their 12-week leave entitlement to address certain qualifying exigencies. Qualifying exigencies may include addressing issues that arise from (1) short notice of deployment (limited to up to seven days of leave); (2) attending certain military events and related activity; (3) arranging childcare and school activities; (4) addressing certain financial and legal arrangements; (5) attending certain counseling sessions; (6) spending time with covered military family members on short-term temporary rest and recuperation leave (limited to up to five days of leave); (7) attending post-deployment reintegration briefings; (8) arranging care for or providing care to a parent who is incapable of self-care; and (9) any additional activities agreed upon by the employer and employee that arise out of the military member's active duty or call to active duty.

The FMLA also includes a special leave entitlement that permits eligible employees to take up to 26 weeks of leave to care for a covered servicemember during a single 12-month period. A covered servicemember is a current member of the Armed Forces, including a member of the National Guard or Reserves, who has a serious injury or illness incurred in the line of duty on active duty that may render the servicemember medically unfit to perform his or her duties and for which the servicemember is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy; or is in outpatient status; or is on the temporary disability retired list.

Use of FMLA leave cannot result in the loss of any employment benefit that accrued prior to the start of an employee's leave.

**Employee Eligibility.** The FMLA defines eligible employees as employees who: (1) have worked for the Lamar County Board of Commissioners for at least 12 months; (2) have worked for the Company for at least 1,250 hours in the previous 12 months; and (3) work at or report to a worksite which has 50 or more employees or is within 75 miles of company worksites that taken together have a total of 50 or more employees.

**Definition of Serious Health Condition.** A serious health condition is an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves either an overnight stay in a medical care facility or continuing treatment by a health care provider for a condition that either prevents the employee from performing the functions of the employee's job or prevents the qualified family member from participating in school, work, or other daily activities.

Subject to certain conditions, the continuing treatment requirement may be met by a period of incapacity of more than three consecutive calendar days combined with at least two visits to a health care provider or one visit and a regimen of continuing treatment, or incapacity due to pregnancy, or incapacity due to a chronic condition. Other conditions may meet the definition of continuing treatment.

**Use of Leave.** An employee does not need to use this leave entitlement in one block. Leave can be taken intermittently or on a reduced work schedule when medically necessary. Employees



must make reasonable efforts to schedule leave for planned medical treatment so as not to unduly disrupt the employer's operations. Leave due to qualifying exigencies also may be taken on an intermittent or reduced work schedule basis.

**Substitution of Paid Leave for Unpaid Leave.** Employees may choose or employers may require the use of accrued sick leave while taking FMLA leave. Accordingly, the Lamar County Board of Commissioners requires employees to use any accrued PTO during an unpaid FMLA leave taken because of the employee's own serious health condition or the serious health condition of a family member or to care for a seriously ill or injured family member in the military. In addition, the employee must use any accrued PTO during FMLA leave taken to care for a newborn or newly placed child or for a qualifying exigency arising out of a family member's active duty or call to active-duty status in support of a contingency operation. In order to use paid leave for FMLA leave, employees must comply with the Lamar County Board of Commissioners normal paid leave procedures found in its PTO policies.

**Employee Responsibilities.** Employees must provide 30 days advance notice of the need to take FMLA leave when the need is foreseeable. When 30 days' notice is not possible, the employee must provide notice as soon as practicable and must comply with the Lamar County Board of Commissioners normal call-in procedures. The Lamar County Board of Commissioners may delay leave to employees who do not provide proper advance notice of the foreseeable need for leave, absent unusual circumstances preventing the notice.

Employees must provide sufficient information for the Lamar County Board of Commissioners to determine if the leave may qualify for FMLA protection and the anticipated timing and duration of the leave. Sufficient information may include that the employee is unable to perform job functions, the family member is unable to perform daily activities, the need for hospitalization or continuing treatment by a health care provider, or circumstances supporting the need for military family leave. Employees also must inform the Lamar County Board of Commissioners if the requested leave is for a reason for which FMLA leave was previously taken or certified. Employees also are required to provide a certification and periodic recertification supporting the need for leave. The Lamar County Board of Commissioners also may require a second, and if necessary, a third opinion (at the Lamar County Board of Commissioners expense) and, when the leave is a result of the employee's own serious health condition, a fitness for duty report to return to work. The Lamar County Board of Commissioners also may delay or deny approval of leave for lack of proper medical certification.

**Lamar County Board of Commissioners Responsibilities.** The Lamar County Board of Commissioners will inform employees requesting leave whether they are eligible under the FMLA. If they are, the notice will specify any additional information required as well as the employees' rights and responsibilities. If employees are not eligible, the Lamar County Board of Commissioners will provide a reason for the ineligibility.



The Lamar County Board of Commissioners will inform employees if leave will be designated as FMLA-protected and the amount of leave counted against the employee's FMLA leave entitlement. If the Lamar County Board of Commissioners determines that the leave is not FMLA-protected, the Lamar County Board of Commissioners will notify the employee.

Employees may not perform work for self-employment or for any other employer during an approved leave of absence, except when the leave is for military or public service or when the Lamar County Board of Commissioners has approved the employment under its Outside Employment policy and the employee's reason for FMLA leave does not preclude the outside employment.

**Unlawful Acts by Employers.** The FMLA makes it unlawful for any employer (1) to interfere with, restrain, or deny the exercise of any right provided under the FMLA; or (2) to discharge or discriminate against any person for opposing any practice made unlawful by the FMLA or for involvement in any proceeding under or relating to the FMLA.

**Enforcement.** An employee may file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Labor or may bring a private lawsuit against an employer.

The FMLA does not affect any federal or state law prohibiting discrimination or supersede any state or local law or collective bargaining agreement which provides greater family or medical leave rights.

## **Military Leave**

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners supports the military obligations of all employees and grants 15 days military training leave, at adjusted pay, per year for uniformed service in accordance with applicable federal and state laws. Employee must turn in Active Duty Orders for all active-duty assignments. Adjusted pay means that the County will make up the difference between military pay and regular County base pay.

Any employee who needs extended time off for uniformed service should immediately notify the HR Office and their Department Head/Constitutional Officer, who will provide details regarding the leave. Employee must turn in Active Duty Orders for all active-duty assignments. If an employee is unable to provide notice before leaving for uniformed service, a family member should notify the Department Head/Constitutional Officer as soon as possible and bring a copy of their Active Duty Orders.

Upon return from military leave, employees will be granted the same seniority, pay, and benefits as if they had worked continuously. Failure to report for work within the prescribed time after completion of military service will be considered a voluntary termination.

All employees who enter military service may accumulate a total absence of 5 years and still retain employment rights.



## **Bereavement Leave**

Employees may take up to 4 days (32 hours) of paid bereavement leave upon the death of a member of their immediate family. "Immediate family members" are defined as an employee's spouse, domestic partner, parents, stepparents, siblings, children, stepchildren, grandparent, father-in-law, mother-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, or grandchild.

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners requires verification of the need for the leave. The employee's Department Head/Constitutional Officer and HR Office will consider this time off on a case-by-case basis.

Payment for bereavement leave is computed at the regular hourly rate to a maximum of 8 hours for 1 day. Time off granted in accordance with this policy shall not be credited as time worked for the purpose of computing overtime.

## **Jury Duty/Court Appearance**

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners supports employees in their civic duty to serve on a jury. Employees must present any summons to jury duty to their Department Head/Constitutional Officer as soon as possible after receiving the notice to allow advance planning for an employee's absence.

The employee will receive Leave with Pay for such duty. If an employee is released from jury duty after 4 hours or less of service, the employee **must** report to work for the remainder of that workday.

Time for appearance in court for personal business will be the individual employee's responsibility. Normally, PTO days will be used for this purpose.

## **Time Off for Voting**

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners recognizes that voting is a right and privilege of being a citizen of the United States and encourages employees to exercise their right to vote. In almost all cases, employees will have sufficient time outside working hours to vote. If for any reason an employee thinks this will not be the case, the employee should contact their Department Head/Constitutional Officer to discuss scheduling accommodations.



## **IX. Employee Benefits**

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners recognizes the value of benefits to employees and their families. The County supports employees/elected officials by offering a comprehensive and competitive benefits program. For more information regarding benefit programs, please refer to the Lamar County Board of Commissioners Benefit Enrollment Guide, contact the HR/Payroll Office to receive a copy.

### **Medical Insurance**

Only full-time employees/elected officials shall be eligible to receive any employee benefits provided by the County. Full-time employees/elected officials are eligible for insurance on the first day after completion of one full month. The cost of this coverage (basic) for the employee/elected official is paid for in full by the Lamar County Board of Commissioners. The difference in cost for the buy-up plan is funded solely by the employee/elected official. The cost for family members is funded solely by the employee/elected official.

### **Dental and Vision Insurance**

Only full-time employees/elected officials shall be eligible to receive any employee benefits provided by the County. Full-time employees/elected officials are eligible for insurance on the first day after completion of one full month. The cost of this coverage for the employee is paid for in full by the Lamar County Board of Commissioners. The cost for family members is funded solely by the employee/elected official.

### **Brella**

Only full-time employees/elected officials shall be eligible to receive any employee benefits provided by the County. Full-time employees/elected officials are eligible for insurance on the first day after completion of one full month. The cost of this coverage for the employee is paid for in full by the Lamar County Board of Commissioners. The cost for family members is funded solely by the employee/elected official.

### **Basic Life and AD&D Insurance**

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners provides Basic Life and AD&D for full-time employees/elected officials. Full-time employees/elected officials are eligible for Basic Life and AD&D after completion of one full month. The cost of this coverage for the employee/elected official is paid for in full by the Lamar County Board of Commissioners. The cost for family members is funded solely by the employee/elected official.



## **Employee, Spouse and Child Life Insurance (Voluntary)**

Voluntary Employee, Spouse and Child Life Insurance is offered to full-time employees/elected officials. Full-time employees/elected officials are eligible for insurance on the first day after completion of one full month. This is a voluntary benefit and is funded solely by the employee/elected official.

## **Short-Term Disability (Voluntary)**

Short-term disability is offered to full-time employees/elected officials. Full-time employees/elected officials are eligible for insurance on the first day after completion of one full month. Short-term disability is meant to bridge the 90-day period until long-term disability can cover an employee, if needed. If an employee becomes disabled and cannot work for a short period of time, this coverage pays a percentage of the employee's salary, up to the policy limits. This is a voluntary benefit and is funded solely by the employee/elected official. In addition, employees will not be paid PTO for approved absences covered by the short-term disability program, except to supplement the short-term disability benefits.

Short-term disability benefits will run concurrently with FMLA leave and/or any other leave where permitted by state and federal law.

## **Long-Term Disability (Voluntary)**

Long-term disability benefits are offered to full-time employees/elected officials. Full-time employees/elected officials are eligible for insurance on the first day after completion of one full month. If an employee becomes totally disabled and cannot work for an extended period of time, this coverage pays a percentage of the employee's salary, up to the policy limits. In addition, employees will not be paid PTO for approved absences covered by the short-term disability program, except to supplement the long-term disability benefits. This is a voluntary benefit and is funded solely by the employee/elected official.

Long-term disability benefits will run concurrently with FMLA leave and/or any other leave where permitted by state and federal law.

## **Employee Assistance Program**

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a resource designed to provide highly confidential and experienced help for employees in dealing with issues that affect their lives and the quality of their job performance. Lamar County Board of Commissioners wants employees to be able to maintain a healthy balance of work and family that allows them to enjoy life. The EAP is a confidential counseling and referral service that can help employees successfully deal with life's challenges.

The Employee Assistance Program is offered through Lincoln. It is a comprehensive counseling service offers employees unlimited 24/7 assistance for Family, Parenting, Addictions, Emotional, Legal, Financial, Relationships and Stress. In order to find out more about the EAP



call 1-888-628-4824 or go online to [GuidanceResources.com](http://GuidanceResources.com) (User ID and Password: LFG Support).

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners encourages employees to use this valuable service whenever they have such a need. Employees who choose to use these counseling services are assured the information disclosed in their sessions is confidential and not available to the Lamar County Board of Commissioners, nor is the Lamar County Board of Commissioners given any information on who chooses to use the services. For questions or additional information about this program, employees may contact the HR/Payroll Office.



## **X. Retirement**

### **Defined Benefit Pension Plan**

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners recognizes the importance of saving for retirement and offers eligible employees a Defined Benefit Pension Plan. Full-time employees, Lamar County Board of Commissioners, and eligible elected officials to the extent provided in the Plan become participants on January 1<sup>st</sup> following three (3) years of service. Employees will have a vested benefit after five (5) years of Vesting Service.

Eligibility, vesting, and all other matters relating to these plans are explained in the ACCG Retirement Services Enrollment Booklet that can be obtained from HR/Payroll Office.

### **457(b) Deferred Compensation**

Generally, all full-time and part-time employees are eligible to participate in the Plan. You can enroll on the first pay period of any month.

Eligibility, vesting, and all other matters relating to these plans are explained in the ACCG Retirement Services Enrollment Booklet that can be obtained from HR/Payroll Office. Should you have questions about retirement ask for the current Retirement Regional Managers contact information.



## **XI. Workers' Compensation**

Workers' compensation is a "no-fault" system that provides compensation for medical expenses and wage losses to employees who are injured or who become ill because of employment.

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners pays the entire cost of workers' compensation insurance. The insurance provides coverage for related medical and rehabilitation expenses and a portion of lost wages to employees who sustain an injury on the job.

The Lamar County Board of Commissioners abides by all applicable state workers' compensation laws and regulations.

If an employee sustains a job-related injury or illness, it is important to notify the Department Head/Constitutional Officer and HR/Payroll Office immediately. The Department Head/Constitutional Officer will complete an injury report with input from the employee and return the form to the HR/Payroll Office. The HR/Payroll Office will file the claim with ACCG. In cases of true medical emergencies, report to the nearest emergency room.

Workers' compensation benefits (paid or unpaid) will run concurrently with FMLA leave, if applicable, where permitted by state and federal law. In addition, employees will not be paid PTO for approved absences covered by the Lamar County Board of Commissioners Workers' Compensation Program, except to supplement the workers' compensation benefits such as when the plan only covers a portion of the employee's salary as allowed by state law.



## **XII. Definitions**

For the purpose of these policies and procedures, the following terms shall have the meanings respectively ascribed to them below, unless another meaning is specifically indicated.

Anniversary Date - The employee's original date of employment with the county service in a permanent position.

Appeal - The right of an employee to appeal a decision in the manner prescribed in these policies and procedures.

Classified Service - The classified service consists of all positions included in the classification and pay plan with the exception of those positions specifically excluded by the County Commission.

Classification and Pay Plan - The system of assigning jobs to classes and to appropriate pay grades.

County Administrator – The person responsible for the day-to-day operations of the County.

Compensatory Time - Time worked in excess of the regular work schedule for the position in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act for State and Local Governments.

Constitutional Officer – Those persons whose positions draw their authority from the Georgia Constitution.

Continuous Service - Continuous service is employment that is uninterrupted except for authorized leaves of absence, suspension, or separation due to a reduction in work force.

County – This refers to Lamar County, Georgia.

County Commission - This refers to the Lamar County Board of Commissioners.

Demotion - Demotion means a change in the rank of an employee from a position in one class to a position in another class having a lower minimum starting salary and less discretion and/or responsibility.

Department Head - The position with overall administrative responsibility for a department.

Dismissal - The termination of an employee.



Elected Officials - The persons filling the offices of Sheriff, Tax Commissioner, Clerk of Superior Court, Magistrate Court Chief Judge, Probate Judge and Lamar County Board of Commissioners are considered to be elected officials.

Eligible - A person who has made a passing score on any examination required under these regulations or who has otherwise qualified to be employed by the County.

Employee - A person, including Department Heads, hired to work for the Lamar County Board of Commissioners for which he or she is compensated on a full-time or part-time basis.

Full Time Employee – An employee who works forty (40) hours per week.

Immediate Family - An employee's wife, husband, mother, father, guardian, son, daughter, brother, sister, grandchild, and grandparent, as well as the various combinations of half, step, in-law, and adopted relationships that can be derived from those family members named herein.

Lay-Off - The separation of an employee from the classified service due to lack of work, lack of funds, abolishment of the position or for other material changes in duties or organization.

Merit Increase - An increase in pay based on an employee's job performance.

Overtime - Time worked in excess of the regular work schedule for the position in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Part-time Employee - An employee who works on a continuing basis, but who works thirty (30) hours or less per week.

Performance Evaluation - A method of evaluating each employee on a periodic basis as to his or her performance on the job.

HR/Payroll Officer – The person designated by the County to oversee the Human Resource/Payroll Office of the County.

Probationary Employee - An employee serving the first three (3) months of his or her employment, re-employment, or reinstatement to any position in the classified service. A probationary employee is not a regular employee until completion of the three (3) months probationary period.

Probationary Period - The completion of three (3) months of consecutive employment shall be a period of adjustment for new employees of Lamar County.



Promotion - A change in rank of an employee from a position in one class to a position in another class having a higher minimum salary and carrying a greater scope of discretion and/or responsibility.

Regular Employee - An employee who has completed the probationary period.

Reprimand - A formal means of communicating to an employee that a problem exists and that it must be corrected.

Resignation - The termination of an employee at the employee's request.

Salary Increase - An increase in salary within the salary range prescribed for the class by the classification and pay plan.

Suspension - An enforced leave of absence, either with or without pay, for either a disciplinary purpose or pending investigation of charges against an employee.

Temporary Employee - An employee who works on an intermittent, seasonal, or occasional basis and who may work more or less than 30 hours per week while completing the temporary assignment or task.







## **PERSONNEL POLICY AND EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND RECEIPT**

I hereby acknowledge receipt of the employee handbook of the Lamar County Board of Commissioners. I understand and agree that it is my responsibility to read and comply with the policies in the handbook.

I understand that the handbook and all other written and oral materials provided to me are intended for informational purposes only. Neither it, Lamar County Board of Commissioners practices, nor other communications create an employment contract or term. I understand that the policies and benefits, both in the handbook and those communicated to me in any other fashion, are subject to interpretation, review, removal, and change by management at any time without notice.

I further understand that I am an at-will employee and that neither this document nor any other communication shall bind the Lamar County Board of Commissioners to employ me now or hereafter and that my employment may be terminated by me or the Lamar County Board of Commissioners without reason at any time. I understand that no representative of the Lamar County Board of Commissioners has any authority to enter into any agreement for employment for any specified period of time or to assure any other personnel action or to assure any benefits or terms or conditions of employment or make any agreement contrary to the foregoing.

I also understand and agree that this agreement may not be modified orally and that only the County Administration of the Lamar County Board of Commissioners may make a commitment for employment. I also understand that if such an agreement is made, it must be in writing and signed by the Department Head/Constitutional Officer/HR/Payroll Director.

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Employee's Name in Print

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Signature of Employee

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Date Signed by Employee

**TO BE PLACED IN EMPLOYEE'S PERSONNEL FILE**



## **Receipt of Harassment/Sexual Harassment Policy**

I have read and I understand the Lamar County Board of Commissioners Harassment/Sexual Harassment Policy (Personnel Policy and Employee Handbook page 6).

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Employee's Name in Print

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Signature of Employee

---

Date Signed by Employee

**TO BE PLACED IN EMPLOYEE'S PERSONNEL FILE**



## Lamar County Board of Commissioners Complaint Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Status ☐ Employee ☐ Customer  
☐ Department Head Other: (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Incident: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of Incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Please describe the incident in detail:

\_\_\_\_\_  
If there are others who have witnessed the incident, please provide their names and department:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Is this the first time you have raised this concern about this person?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

09/01/2022



