

Tift County Board of Commissioners



Employee Handbook

Tift County Employee Handbook

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WELCOME, INTRODUCTION AND ADMINISTRATION

ADMINISTRATIVE WELCOME

Welcome to the staff of Tift County. You are an essential part of our group of employees who work side by side, each doing our own part, to ensure that the taxpayers receive the highest quality services that can be delivered. We are glad you have joined Tift County and we sincerely welcome you to our staff and we wish you all the success possible during your career at Tift County.

INTRODUCTION

The personnel system of Tift County contains policies and procedures governing employees of Tift County. The County's policies and procedures are to be followed with regard to employment, compensation, promotion, demotion, dismissal and all other activities dealing with personnel. This booklet is provided as a brief overview of several of the policies and procedures of Tift County but is not all-inclusive. A complete policy and procedures manual is kept in every department by the department head should you wish to review it, in its entirety.

ADMINISTRATION

The Board of Commissioners and the County Manager are empowered under the Statutes of the State of Georgia to establish departments, to employ personnel and to set salaries. The County Manager is responsible to the Board of County Commissioners for the administration of the Personnel Policies. The County Manager makes recommendations to the Board of Commissioners for appointments, demotions, suspensions and removal of all department heads or directors under the jurisdiction of the Board of Commissioners; and is responsible to the Board for appointments, demotions, suspensions, and removal of all County employees reporting to department heads or directors under the jurisdiction of the Board of Commissioners. The Human Resources Director is responsible for applying, interpreting and carrying out the Personnel Policies of Tift County as set forth by the Board of Commissioners and the County Manager.

ANTI-HARASSMENT

Harassment of any nature is prohibited by the County and is in violation of the law; therefore any harassing conduct in the workplace is prohibited. Harassment includes all unwelcome sexual advances, request for sexual favors, and other such verbal or physical conduct as well as discrimination based on a person's race, color, national origin, age, religion, disability status or gender. The anti-harassment policy adopted by the County Board of Commissioners applies to all officers and employees of the county including, but not limited to, full and part-time employees, elected officials, department managers, and regular and temporary employees covered under the Personnel Policies and ordinances of the County. This policy is distributed to all officials and employees of the County. Every official and employee is required to acknowledge his or her receipt of this policy in writing. A copy of the acknowledgement is kept in a permanent file in the County.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY POLICY

Tift County provides equal employment opportunity in all phases of employment and personnel administration in accordance with State and Federal laws, executive orders and regulations. All personnel actions such as hiring, promotion, transfer, demotion, termination, training, compensation and benefits are administered without regard to

race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, handicapped status or any other non-merit factor, except where sex or physical requirements constitute a bona fide occupational qualification necessary to properly and efficiently function on the job. All employment decisions are based on job-related factors.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITY ACT

Americans with Disability Act (ADA) prohibits employers from engaging in conduct which discriminates against individuals with a handicap. Employers are required to provide “reasonable accommodations” which will permit the disabled to work and advance in careers. The County has incorporated employee selection procedure guidelines, which include job descriptions listing the essential job functions and physical and mental requirements needed to perform the essential functions, specifically intended to eliminate discriminatory practices.

EMPLOYEE SUGGESTIONS

New ideas are important to any progressive organization. In your everyday work, you may think of changes which will improve County services or otherwise benefit both you and the County. We welcome and appreciate any suggestions you have that will improve the way in which we operate. Please submit suggestions in writing to your supervisor or to the Human Resources Director.

GIFTS AND FAVORS

No employee of Tift County shall request, receive or accept a gift, favor, cash, or loan of anything of value for himself/herself or another person if it tends to or appears to influence his/her opinion or judgments in the performance of official County duties.

RELEASE OF INFORMATION

All open records requests will be directed to the County Clerk or the County Manager.

POLITICAL ACTIVITY

Every County employee is entitled to exercise his/her right to vote. Employees may join or affiliate with civic organizations of a partisan political nature, attend political meetings, advocate and support the principles and policies of civic or political organizations in accordance with federal, state and local laws; however, neither an employee’s position nor County time shall be used for political purposes, nor should any employee actively campaign for any candidate or issue. (See Policies and Procedures manual for further explanations.)

EMPLOYMENT OF RELATIVES AND IMMEDIATE FAMILY

Because of the possible conflict of interest involved in disciplinary actions, evaluation of performance, salary recommendations and other personnel actions, members of the same immediate family may not be employed at the same time if one of the employees is directly supervised by another member of the immediate family. Relatives of current elected officials in Tift County are excluded from employment as a department head with the County. No County department will employ two (2) members of the same immediate family. For the purpose of this policy, “immediate family” includes spouse, mother, father, guardian, children, sister, brother, grandparents, grandchildren, plus the various combinations of half, step, in-law and adopted relationships. If by reason of marriage County employees become in violation of the provisions of this policy, one or the other must accept a job reassignment, if available, or must elect to resign from County employment within sixty (60) days of said marriage. Employees must disclose to the Human Resources Director all family relationships of present employees and potential applicants.

OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT

Employees are discouraged but not restricted from engaging in other employment during their off duty hours. Employment with the County shall be considered the primary employment. Employees engaging in outside employment or business association must advise their department head and the Human Resources Director. The County Manager will review such employment for possible conflict of interest and take appropriate action.

USE OF COUNTY PROPERTY/VEHICLES

Employees shall not use County property, equipment or vehicles except in the performance of official duty, nor shall they permit their use by an unauthorized person, either on or off duty, except as authorized by the County, in writing. Employees who are assigned a vehicle are responsible for the maintenance of that vehicle. All accidents involving county property are to be reported immediately. Failure to comply with this policy may result in a loss of driving privileges or other disciplinary actions up to and including termination. Please refer to the Personnel Policy Manual for further information.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

The electronic communications systems hardware and software are County property, and all messages composed, sent or received on the electronic communications systems are and remain property of the county and are subject to the open records act. They are not the private property of any individual. Use of this system is reserved solely for the conduct of County business. Passwords to access this system should never be shared.

DRESS AND APPEARANCE

As an employee of Tift County, personal appearance at work plays an important part in the overall image the County projects to the general public whom we serve. Employees should present a neat, professional appearance at all times. Employees who are issued uniforms are required to wear the uniforms while on duty status and prohibited from wearing the uniforms while off duty.

SMOKING

Smoking is a fire hazard as well as a serious health hazard. Smoking is not permitted inside government buildings or in County vehicles. Your supervisor will show you the designated smoking area for your department. The same rules apply to the use of smokeless tobacco. Violation of the County's smoking policy is grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

PERSONAL BUSINESS

Conducting personal business while on official duty is discouraged. If it is necessary for the employee to make telephone calls or meet with persons not employed by the County, the discussions should be held during breaks or meal period. Exceptions will be allowed only in case of emergency.

PERSONAL MAIL

Personal mail should be addressed to your home to assure prompt delivery. The County cannot be responsible for personal mail addressed to the County.

TELEPHONES

Telephones located throughout the various departments are intended to be used for County business and are not for personal use. Personal calls may be made only with approval of the employee's supervisor, and must be kept as brief as possible.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE POLICY

The County maintains a policy prohibiting the use, possession, and/or sale of illegal drugs. Employees are also prohibited from the use and possession of alcoholic beverages while at work. Employees found to violate these prohibitions will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

DRUG AND ALCOHOL SCREENS

The County reserves the right to request a drug and/or alcohol screen on any employee, under the following circumstances:

- (1) As part of a pre-employment, post offer physical assessment.
- (2) As part of an overall search and inspection of an employee's working area, department, or work location.
- (3) As part of a quarterly random drug screen for employees.
- (4) When the employee's supervisor has reasonable suspicion or cause to suspect that the employee is using or has used drugs alcohol or another prohibited substance.
- (5) When an employee is found to be in possession of drugs, alcohol or another prohibited substance or when any of these items are found in an area which is controlled or used exclusively by the employee.
- (6) Following a vehicular accident, a serious work quality error apparently due to an employee's inattentiveness, serious judgment error, or perception error, an incident where safety precautions were violated, or whenever an employee has caused, contributed to the cause, or suffered an injury requiring medical attention or lost working time for any person, or where damage to property has resulted from an employee's job performance.
- (7) As part of a routinely scheduled employee fitness-for-duty medical examination or following an employee's reinstatement to duty following treatment for substance abuse.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PLAN

Tift County maintains an Employee Assistance Plan (EAP) for employees who may need expert counseling about personal issues. The EAP is available to assist employees and their immediate families (spouse and their dependent minor children) with problems such as substance abuse, gambling, financial, acting out teenagers, marital problems, depression, etc. The County has prepaid basic services, assessment and counseling sessions for the first five (5) visits. The EAP may be accessed directly by the employee. All voluntary self-referrals will be held strictly confidential by the EAP. In cases of positive drug or alcohol screens the County may make mandatory referral to the EAP. In these cases, the County will request that the employee grant permission to the EAP to share information relating solely to attendance, assessment and treatment.

WORKER'S COMPENSATION

An employee who sustains a job-related injury that is compensable under the Georgia Worker's Compensation Act must use a physician from the County's panel of physicians. An employee who is able to work, with restrictions, will be placed in a modified duty job until such time as the restriction is removed. Employees who are injured and are able to work with restrictions will be placed in their own departments. Should there be no suitable task for which the employee is otherwise qualified, he/she will be placed in another department, with the approval of the County Manager. An employee who sustains a job related injury and is unable to work and is assessed as having a temporary total disability by a County Worker's Compensation Panel physician shall be paid by Worker's Compensation.

PROBATIONARY PERIOD

All employees will be required to satisfactorily complete a probationary period of three (3) months prior to becoming a regular employee. Employees of the Sheriff's Department, or other departments requiring the completion of mandated training, shall satisfactorily complete the specific required probationary period. An employee serving a probationary period following initial appointment may be dismissed at any time during the probationary period with or without cause.

PROMOTIONS

It is the County's policy to fill new and vacant positions from within the County, when possible, by promoting qualified employees. All interested employees are invited and encouraged to apply and receive consideration for open positions. Final decisions will be made based upon ability, experience, past performance, training, and education.

TRANSFERS

You may request a transfer from one department or shift to another by notifying your department head. If a vacancy occurs and a regular employee is eligible for a transfer and is selected, the elected official or department head will notify the Human Resources Director. The transferred employee may be required to undergo a training period to determine his/her ability to perform the new duties. No increase in pay is involved in a transfer. Any transfer must be approved by both department heads involved.

DEMOTIONS

A demotion is defined as the assignment to a position with a decrease in duties and responsibilities. When an employee is demoted he/she shall be paid at a rate which is within the range of the lower position.

REINSTATEMENTS

An employee who has resigned in good standing or whose position has been abolished may be rehired, if a vacancy exists, to the same or similar position by the same department from which the employee left. Reinstated employees are considered new employees for purposes of vacation, leave, retirement and salary increases and must once again serve a Probationary Period regardless of whether training or regular status was held prior to separation.

HOURS OF WORK

It is the County policy to establish work schedule, which are based on the needs of the citizens served and in compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The employee's work schedule will be set by department heads or elected officials, subject to approval by the County Manager.

Two rests breaks of 15 minutes each may be scheduled during the workday. Rest breaks are considered hours worked for determining eligibility for overtime. Rest breaks cannot be combined or accumulated, or used for late arrival or early departure from work. Employees in administrative, professional or executive positions (Exempt) shall work the number of hours necessary to assure the satisfactory performance of their duties.

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

Regular attendance and reporting to work on time are extremely important to the effective delivery of quality services. Being on time means that you should be at your workstation ready for work at the starting time of your shift and remain on the job until your shift is over. However, each of us may be late or absent from time to time, and during those times it is important that you let us know of your absence or tardiness as far in advance as possible. You must

notify the department head or elected official prior to the scheduled reporting time. Violation of this policy and repeated or unjustified absenteeism or lateness is cause of disciplinary action.

EDUCATION POLICY

Tift County believes strongly in the benefits of education. In an effort to provide incentive and assistance toward certifications, job related training and continuing education; educational funding and reimbursement is available to career service employees to fund or reimburse pre-approved expenses for educational training and courses which directly relates to the employee's present job. For further details, please refer to the Personnel Policy Manual 4.16.

TIME SHEETS

The County is required by law to keep an accurate record of the hours worked each day by its employees. Your time sheet is therefore very important. Keeping an accurate record of your time is also very important to you since it is the record on which your pay is figured. Your supervisor is authorized to approve your time card. Signing another employee's time sheet or asking someone else to sign yours is a violation of policy and will subject you to discharge. This also applies to time cards and clocking in for someone else or asking someone to clock you in.

PAYDAY

Payday falls on every other Friday. Checks are issued on Thursday after 2:00 PM. Please refrain from asking to receive your check earlier because our policy does not allow any exceptions. If you are absent on a payday, your check will be held for you, unless you provided written permission for another employee or a relative to pick it up for you. Any error or question concerning your paycheck should be brought to your supervisor. Your supervisor will make every effort to get the error corrected with the payroll department or to explain any questions you may have as quickly as possible.

PAYROLL DEDUCTIONS

The County is required by law to deduct from your paycheck federal and state withholding taxes and social security taxes. These amounts, which are designated, on your paycheck, are forwarded directly to the state and federal government. As a service to our employees, the County also makes other deductions, which have been authorized by you in writing. These include such things as medical insurance premiums, credit union, United Way, etc. If you have any questions about a particular deduction from your paycheck, contact your supervisor and he/she will consult with the payroll department.

GARNISHMENTS

Garnishments represent deductions from your pay for an unpaid debt. By law, the County is required to honor legal garnishments of employees' wages. Employees are expected to handle their personal affairs with a proper sense of responsibility and without requiring County involvement.

PAID HOLIDAYS

The County observes the following days as legal holidays:

New Year Day	January 1
Martin Luther King, JR’s Birthday	January 15 or day observed
Good Friday	Friday before Easter Sunday
Memorial Day	Last Monday in May
Independence Day	July 4
Labor Day	First Monday in Sept.
Thanksgiving Day	Fourth Thursday in Nov.
Day after Thanksgiving	Fourth Friday in Nov.
Christmas Eve	December 24
Christmas Day	December 25

When a holiday falls on a Saturday, the proceeding Friday shall be observed as the holiday; when a holiday falls on a Sunday, the following Monday shall be observed as the holiday. Holidays will not be counted as time worked for overtime computations.

ANNUAL LEAVE

All full-time employees, both regular and probationary, shall accrue vacation leave from the date of employment. No employee shall be eligible for annual leave until the probationary period had been completed. The only exceptions to this will be on emergency basis with your supervisor’s or department head’s approval. Annual leave is to taken at the convenience of the employee and employer. Annual leave must be requested three (3) days in advance.

Regular employees earn annual leave as follows:

Years of Aggregate Service	Hours earned per month	Total earned per year
Less than 1 year	4 hours	48 hours
1 but less than 2 years	6.67 hours	80 hours
2 but less than 10 years	8 hours	96 hours
10 years or more	10 hours	120 hours

Annual leave will be charged in increments of no less than one-half (1/2) days and shall not be accumulated for more than 240 hours. Unused Annual leave, not to exceed 240 hours, may be paid in a lump sum upon separation.

SICK LEAVE

Sick leave is a benefit to allow an employee who is ill to maintain their income while they are unable to work. Most employees are responsible in their use of sick leave. We hope that you will be responsible in your use of the sick leave benefit. Remember, if you are out, your co-workers must carry an additional load. Regular full-time employees accrue sick leave at the rate of 8 hours per month. An employee in pay status of less than fourteen (14) calendar days during the calendar month will earn no sick leave for that month.

SICK LEAVE DONATION

Employees who have been employed for twelve (12) consecutive months or longer and have exhausted all accrued leave and exhibit a medical necessity for more leave may have leave donated to them. Such employees shall communicate this need to their supervisor to allow for solicitation of donated leave. To donate leave, employees must have a sick leave balance of not less than two hundred forty (240) hours and may not donate an amount that would cause them to have less than two hundred forty (240) hours. Please refer to Personnel Policy Manual sections 7.08 and 8.06 for further information.

FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE

If you are an employee with at least one-year of service and have worked at least 1250 hours in the previous twelve months, you are eligible for a leave of absence. If you want to take a leave of absence, your request must be made in writing and presented to your supervisor thirty (30) days in advance with the exception of emergency situations. If the reason for leave is due to your own or your immediate family (parent, spouse or child) member's serious medical condition or for the birth or adoption of a child, and the leave lasts no more than twelve weeks, you will be reinstated to the same or substantially similar job. A serious health condition is an illness, injury, impairment or physical or mental condition that involves inpatient care in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical care facility, or requires continuing treatment by a healthcare provider. It does not include short-term minor illnesses. A substantially similar job is a job that has similar pay and benefits and involves similar skill, effort, responsibility, and authority.

The County, at its discretion, may require you to provide appropriate certification from healthcare providers to support requested medical leaves. To obtain leave to care for a parent, spouse, or child with a serious health condition, the certificate must contain several pieces of information:

- The date the serious health condition began.
- The probable duration of the condition.
- The appropriate medical facts concerning the conditions.
- A statement that the employee is needed to care for the parent, spouse or child.
- An estimate of the necessary duration of the leave.

To receive leave for your own medical condition, the County requires certification of all of the above, in addition to a statement that you are unable to perform the functions of your job.

FUNERAL LEAVE

An employee shall be granted reasonable leave by his/her Department head when necessary for death of a member of his/her immediate family. Reasonable leave shall consist of up to twenty-four (24) hours, which will be considered administrative leave and will not be deducted from the employee's accrued leave. Immediate family is defined as a spouse, mother, father, guardian, children, sister, brother, grandparents, grandchildren, and in-laws. In the event of the death of a relative who is not within the immediate family, eight (8) hours will be granted with pay. Funeral leave of up to two (2) hours will be granted with pay for funerals of people other than relatives. Employees are expected to take no more funeral leave than is necessary. However, if more leave is required than is provided in this policy, annual leave may be used if approved in advance by the elected official or department head.

CIVIL LEAVE

A regular employee who is summoned as a member of a jury panel shall be granted leave with pay for hours required for such duty not to exceed the number of hours in the employee's normal workday. If the jury does not require absence for the entire workday, the employee shall return to duty immediately upon release by the court. The employee may keep the fees or allowances received from jury duty. In no case shall paid leave be granted for court attendance when an employee is engaged in personal litigation or services as a paid expert witness. While on civil leave, benefits and leave shall accrue as though the employee was on regular duty.

MILITARY LEAVE

If you are inducted into the armed services or if you have reserve duty obligations, you will be granted a military leave of absence. Upon completion of your duties, you will be reinstated into your former position or into another position of equal seniority, pay and status, consistent with applicable laws. Please notify your supervisor and the Human Resources Department as far in advance as possible so that arrangements may be made.

RESIGNATION/TERMINATION

Employees who intend to voluntarily terminate their employment with the County are required to provide adequate written notice. Supervisors and Department heads are expected to give at least one month's notice and all other employees should give at least two weeks notice. Employees who do not provide adequate notice will not be considered for rehire, and will be considered not to have resigned in good standing. Employees who are terminating their employment with the County may be asked to participate in an exit interview with the Human Resources Director. At that time you will be asked to describe the circumstances of your leaving and be informed of any employee benefits or conversion privileges which may be available to you.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION

It is the intent of the County that effective supervision and employee relations will avoid most matters, which necessitate disciplinary action. Each instance differs, in many respects, from other situations and the County retains the right to treat each occurrence on an individual basis, without creating a precedent for other cases, which may arise in the future. Disciplinary action is intended to correct improper conduct or deficiencies, not to punish an offending employee. Disciplinary action shall, therefore, only be severe enough to constitute an attempt to bring about correction. Dismissal shall be resorted to only when other efforts to bring correction have failed, or when the severity of the offense warrants such measures. **For further information on disciplinary action refer to Section 10 of the Tift County Personnel Policies.**

JOB ABANDONMENT

Unauthorized leave from work for a period of two (2) consecutive days shall be considered a voluntary resignation.

RETIREMENT

The County provides a retirement plan for all qualified employees. Details of the plan are maintained in the office of the Human Resources Director.

SOCIAL SECURITY

The County pays to the federal government an amount equal to 7.65% of your taxable income. You, as required by law, match this amount. These funds are sent to the Social Security Administration where they fund retirement benefits, disability benefits and Medicare health benefits for the elderly and disabled.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

In accordance with Georgia law, local governments are covered by unemployment insurance. County employees who are laid off or released from the County service may apply for unemployment compensation through the local office of the Georgia Department of Labor who will determine the employee's eligibility for this benefit.

INSURANCE

The County sponsors a health care plan for full-time employees who have completed at least three full months of service. Details of the plan are maintained in the office of the Human Resources Director.

DENTAL INSURANCE

The County offers optional dental insurance for full-time employees who have completed at least three full months of service. Details may be obtained at the Human Resources office.

LIFE INSURANCE

A term life insurance policy, with a benefit amount equal to one times salary is available to full-time employees who have completed at least three full months of service. The County pays for the cost of this plan which has a coverage amount of one (1) times your salary rounded to the nearest \$1000 and not to exceed \$50,000. You may choose to purchase more. Details may be obtained at the Human Resources office.

SUMMARY

This handbook has been prepared as a guide for policies, benefits, and general information which should assist you during your employment. However, these guidelines should not be construed as a contract. The County reserves the right to make changes in content or applications, as it deems appropriate and these changes may be implemented even if they have not been communicated, reprinted, or substituted in this handbook. It should also be understood that nothing in this handbook changes the fact that employment is at-will for an indefinite period unless terminated at any time by you or the County.

This handbook is nothing more than an overview of the complete Policy and Procedures Handbook that is kept in each department by that department head or supervisor. It is the employee's responsibility to familiarize himself/herself with the complete policies and procedures of Tift County.