



# *STOKES COUNTY*



# *PERSONNEL POLICIES HANDBOOK*









# Stokes County Employee Personnel Policy Handbook

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**Stokes County Human Resources Department**

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## Table of Contents

Description of Stokes County Government.....	4
Diversity and Inclusion.....	4
Americans with Disabilities.....	4
Right to Work.....	5
Workplace Harassment Prevention.....	5
Employment.....	6
Nepotism, Employment of Relatives and Relationships.....	7
Grievance Procedures.....	7
General Rules of Conduct.....	9
Disciplinary Action.....	10
Right to Appeal Disciplinary Action.....	11
Sexual Harassment.....	12
Open Door Policy.....	12
Separation and Disability.....	12
End of Employment/Unemployment Insurance.....	13
Workplace Safety.....	14
Workplace Searches and Monitoring.....	15
Drug-Free and Substance Abuse Policy.....	15
Closings and Delays.....	16
Reporting Injuries and Accidents.....	17
Accident Review Board.....	18
Workplace Violence Awareness and Prevention Policy.....	18
Concealed Carry Policy.....	19
Disclosure and Protection of Confidential Information.....	20
Whistleblowers Protection.....	21
Attendance and Punctuality.....	21
Required Licensures and Certifications.....	21
Information Technology Usage and Security Policy.....	21

Political Activity.....	27
Solicitations, Distributions, and Gifts and Favors.....	27
Outside Employment.....	28
Employee Personnel Records.....	28
Compensation.....	29
Workweek.....	30
Remote Working Policy.....	30
Payroll.....	32
Fair Labor Standards Act.....	32
Overtime Authorization.....	33
Employee Status – (Exempt/Non-Exempt, Law Enforcement, EMS, Communications).....	33
Employment Procedures .....	35
Employee Benefits.....	37
Family Medical Leave.....	41
Workers Compensation.....	43
Retirement.....	47
Leave of Absences.....	48
Supplemental Benefits.....	50
Time and Attendance Record.....	51
On Call Policy.....	51
Emergency Call Back Policy.....	52
Employee Travel and Reimbursement.....	53
Operation of a County Motor Vehicle.....	53
Uniforms.....	56
Professional Dress Code.....	56
Accrual Schedule.....	58
Compensatory Time Agreement.....	59
FMLA Request Form.....	60
Job Description Acknowledgment Form.....	61



## **Description of Stokes County Government**

The Stokes County Board of Commissioners is composed of five members elected by Stokes County citizens for staggered four-year terms. At the first regular meeting in December each year, the Board elects a chair and vice-chair from its members for a one-year term. Refer to the County website for dates and times of regular meetings. The public is welcome to attend these meetings. The Commissioners consider ordinances and resolutions that establish County policies and levy taxes. They also make appointments to boards, committees and commissions and set levels of service provided to Stokes County residents. The Commissioners appoint a County Manager as the administrative head of Stokes County Government. The County Manager supervises the day-to-day operations of all departments under the general direction of the Commissioners. Stokes County Government has a broad scope of responsibilities in many areas including Animal Control, 911 Communications, Emergency Services, Fire & Rescue, Sheriff's Office/Jail, Planning and Inspections, Public Health, Social Services, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Services, Public Libraries, Parks, Solid Waste, Public Buildings, Economic Development, Senior Services, Information Systems, Finance, Veterans Services, Human Resources, Board of Elections, Register of Deeds, Tax, GIS Property Mapping, District Resource Center, Vehicle Maintenance, Arts Council, and Natural Resources.

## **Diversity and Inclusion**

The Stokes County Board of Commissioners has established that equal employment opportunity is the policy of Stokes County; affirmative action shall be provided in personnel administration. Stokes County Government is committed to providing Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) to all employees and qualified persons regardless of race, color, religion, sex, gender, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, genetics, political affiliation or any other non-job related criteria. All employment and personnel policies and practices including recruiting, hiring, promotions, transfers, training, compensation, benefits, reductions-in-force, termination and tuition assistance will be administered in a nondiscriminatory manner consistent with EEO principles. The County is committed to complying with all applicable federal, state and local civil rights laws that pertain to employment.

## **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

### **Purpose**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits employers with 15 or more employees from discriminating against applicants and individuals with disabilities. This law provides reasonable accommodations to applicants and employees who are qualified for a job, with or without reasonable accommodations, so that they may perform the essential job duties of the position. It is the policy of Stokes County to comply with all federal and state laws concerning the employment of persons with disabilities in accordance with regulations and guidance issued by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Furthermore, it is our county policy not to discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities in regard to application procedures, hiring, advancement, discharge, compensation, training or other terms, conditions and privileges of employment.

This law prohibits discrimination on the basis of a disability in all employment practices including hiring, firing, compensation and all employment related activities.

## **ADA Accommodations**

The County will reasonably accommodate qualified individuals with a disability so that they may perform the essential functions of a job unless doing so causes a direct threat to individuals or others in the workplace and the threat cannot be eliminated by reasonable accommodation or if the accommodation creates an undue hardship to Stokes County. Contact the Human Resource department with any questions or requests for accommodation. Persons who feel they have not been afforded an equal employment opportunity after providing such notice to the Human Resources Director of such disability may follow the established grievance procedure outlined in this handbook. (See pg. 7)

## **Proof of Right to Work**

When an offer of employment is made to an applicant, the applicant shall be informed that proof of identity and eligibility to work in the United States will be required upon hire. A list of acceptable documents will also be described to the candidate. The Human Resources Department will ensure that the candidate's documents are verified no later than three (3) working days after the commencement of employment. All new employees hired by the County will be required to complete INS Form I-9. These forms will be maintained in the Human Resources Department. Employment is contingent upon satisfactory completion of the verification requirement.

## **Workplace Harassment Prevention / Complaint Procedure**

### **Purpose**

Stokes County Government strives to provide an environment where all employees are free to perform their job duties with respect and dignity; therefore, Stokes County will not tolerate or condone workplace harassment on the basis of race, sex, gender, religion, national origin, age, color, or disability in any department by co-workers, supervisors, or nonemployees who conduct business with the County. Retaliation or interference, coercion, restraint or reprisal against any person complaining of, or participating in an investigation of, alleged harassment is also prohibited. The County has established a training program for all employees as a part of its prevention plan.

**Workplace Harassment** is defined as unwelcome speech or conduct based upon race, sex, gender, religion, national origin, age, color, or disability or other protected status that creates a hostile work environment or constitutes quid pro quo harassment.

**Hostile Work Environment** is defined as unwelcome speech or conduct that unreasonably interferes with job performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment. Whether a hostile work environment exists depends upon, among other things, the following factors: (i) whether the harassment was verbal or physical or both; (ii) how frequently the harassment was repeated; (iii) how hostile and clearly offensive; (iv) the identity of the harasser (coworker or supervisor); (v) whether other people joined in the harassment; and (vi) whether the harassment was aimed at more than one person. In addition to actual verbal or physical behavior, some examples of things that could contribute to a hostile work environment include posted social media post, written materials and/or cartoons, radio or audio played and computer images or websites that another person could find offensive based on one of the protected statuses listed above.



### **Complaint Procedure**

1. Supervisors or any employee who experiences workplace harassment should immediately file a complaint with their immediate supervisor, the Human Resources Office, or the County Manager.
2. It is the employee's responsibility to complain in writing or to request an individual interview and be prepared to provide as much specific information as possible.
3. Supervisors on notice of harassment or any employee who experiences workplace harassment should also immediately report the prohibited conduct to their supervisor or the HR Director. Working very closely with Department Managers and other County administrators, the HR Department is responsible for managing all complaints of workplace harassment and for ensuring that complaints are investigated promptly, thoroughly and impartially.

### **Investigation Process**

The confidentiality and privacy of county employees and others involved will be maintained throughout the investigatory process to the extent practical and appropriate under the circumstances. The parties and appropriate management officials will be advised of the outcome of investigations. Any employee found to be in violation of this policy will be subject to disciplinary procedures up to and including dismissal.

## **Employment**

At Stokes County Government our intent is to ensure that each employee:

- Has a superior experience as a Stokes County Government employee.
- Understands County and Department expectations for work and behavior.
- Understands policies and procedures for Stokes County Government.

There are three (3) categories of employment with Stokes County: Probationary, Permanent, and Temporary. A position may be either full-time or part-time within each category. Each category is defined as follows:

### **Probationary**

Each employee hired or assigned to a permanent position shall serve a probationary period of six (6) months. Probationary period may be extended for an additional period up to three (3) months, but under no circumstances may a probationary period exceed a total of nine months. Satisfactory completion of a probationary period with regard to job performance is a requirement before any employee shall be considered a "regular" permanent employee. An employee serving a probationary period may be dismissed at any time during the probationary period without following the dismissal stipulations allowed in this policy. Further, a dismissed probationary employee shall have no rights under the disciplinary, appeal, or grievance procedures.

*Health Department, Social Services, and Emergency Services Director are subject to the rules and regulations of the North Carolina Office of State Human Resources.*

### **Permanent**

Each employee in this category, after successfully completing a probationary period, is considered a permanent employee of the County.

*Health Department, Social Services, and Emergency Services Director are subject to the rules and regulations of the North Carolina Office of State Human Resources.*

### **Temporary**

Each employee in this category is employed with the County on a temporary basis. Employees in this category do not serve a probationary period. All employees not classified as probationary or permanent are considered temporary, and may be dismissed at any time without following the dismissal stipulations allowed in this ordinance. Temporary employees shall have no rights under the disciplinary, appeal, or grievance procedures.

The use of the word permanent in this article and throughout the resolution shall not be construed or interpreted to mean guaranteed or indefinite. Should it be determined that a position is no longer needed, or an employee violates the provision of the resolution, appropriate action may be taken.

## **Responsibility for Positive Employee Relations**

All employees of Stokes County Government have a responsibility to understand and promote county policies. Employees shall set a positive example through their ethical behavior. Supervisors shall welcome employee questions and concerns; listen and respond in a positive manner; and not retaliate against an employee for raising a concern in good faith.

## **Nepotism, Employment of Relatives and Relationships**

Stokes County discourages workplace practices that results in conflicts of interest, favoritism or the appearance of favoritism. This extends to practices that involve employee hiring, promotion, demotions and transfers. The employment of close relatives, partners, those in dating relationships or immediate family members within the same department or division will be avoided unless significant recruitment difficulties exist. Close relatives or members of an immediate family shall not be employed within the same department or division of the department if such employment results in a close relative supervising a member of his or her immediate family, or where a close relative occupies a position which has influence over the other's employment, promotion, salary administration or other related management or personnel considerations. (See pg. 36 for definition of immediate family.) The County Manager may make exceptions in cases with extenuating circumstances.

It is the policy of Stokes County that Supervisors are not to date their subordinates, and any occurrence is to be immediately reported to Human Resources. Any employee knowing of any such dating arrangements must report it immediately to Human Resources.

*Sheriff's Office and Register of Deeds please refer to the Employment Policy of the Stokes County Sheriff's Office and Register of Deeds.*



## **Grievance Procedure**

Problems can arise in any job situation. It is Stokes County's management philosophy that problems can best be resolved by free and open discussion. The County Grievance Procedure is designed to promote such discussion along with an orderly resolution to the problem. It is the County's desire to address employee grievances promptly and fairly. Except as specified under the Exceptions to Grievance Procedure section, any employee who has a problem or complaint concerning his or her job, working conditions or County policies may use the following grievance procedure. Employees are expected to continue to perform their jobs as directed by their supervisors until their grievance is resolved. For purposes of this Grievance Procedure, a mere disagreement or difference of opinion with a supervisor or another employee, including disagreement with a performance appraisal, a written warning or a position classification decision, is ordinarily not a grievable issue.

### **Step 1:**

Employees should first discuss the problem with their immediate supervisor. Many concerns can be resolved at this level. An employee must put the complaint in writing.

### **Step 2:**

If a satisfactory solution is not reached in Step 1, employees may request an appointment and meet with their Department Head to discuss the matter further. At the meeting with the Department Head, an employee should openly discuss the problem. If a satisfactory solution is reached, the matter may be considered resolved.

### **Step 3:**

If the matter cannot be satisfactorily resolved in a conference between an employee and the Department Head, an employee may then request an appointment to discuss the matter with the Human Resources Officer. The Human Resources Director will investigate the matter and report the findings to the employee and the employee's Department Head in writing.

### **Step 4:**

After meeting with the Human Resources Director, if an employees' problem is still unresolved, an employee may request an appointment and meet with the County Manager. After this conference, the County Manager will consider the matter and will respond to the employee and Department Head through the Human Resources Director. The decision of the County Manager is final.

*The Sheriff, and the Register of Deeds are elected officials and, by law, have the sole right to hire and dismiss their employees, as does the Tax Assessor, Health Director, and Department of Social Services Director for certain employees. Any employee in one of these departments who has a grievance should follow the grievance procedure established by their department.*

## **ADA Grievance Procedure**

Any person may file a complaint of non-compliance of the ADA with the Stokes County Human Resources Department. The following procedures shall be followed to provide a prompt and equitable resolution of the complaint.

1. The complaint should be filed in writing, contain the name and address of the complainant, and briefly describe the alleged violation.
2. A complaint shall be filed within thirty (30) days of the alleged violation.
3. An investigation, as may be appropriate, shall be conducted by Human Resources Director affording all interested persons and their representatives, if any, an opportunity to submit relevant evidence.
4. A written determination shall be issued by the Human Resources Director and a copy forwarded to the complainant no later than twenty-one (21) days after its filing outlining the findings of the investigation, the validity of the complaint, and a description of the resolution, if any.
5. The Department Head shall take the necessary appropriate action to resolve the complaint if possible, as well as initiate action to prevent further non-compliance if any exists.
6. A request for reconsideration of the case may be made in instances where the complainant is dissatisfied with the resolution. The request should be made within twenty-one (21) days of receiving the written determination of the Human Resources Director. The reconsideration request shall be presented to the County Attorney. The County Attorney shall review the complaint and issue a decision within thirty days of receiving the complaint. The decision of the County Attorney is final.
7. The right of a person to a prompt and equitable resolution of the complaint shall not be impaired by the person's pursuit of other remedies such as filing a complaint with the responsible Federal agency, and the use of this grievance procedure is not a prerequisite to the pursuit of other remedies.
8. The procedures shall be construed to protect the substantive rights of interested persons to meet appropriate due process standards and to assure that Stokes County complies with the ADA.

## **General Rules of Conduct**

The proper conduct of all employees is necessary to ensure a safe, productive and pleasant working environment. As a County employee, conduct yourself in accordance with the following guidelines:

- Know and observe all established County policies and procedures.
- Perform the job and duties assigned.
- Be prompt in reporting to work and devote full attention to your work while on duty.
- Know and abide by the published safety rules (pg. 14) of the County for your own protection, that of fellow employees and the public.
- Be fair, respectful, courteous and cooperative in dealing with the public and with fellow employees.

**The following actions are not permitted. Any employee discovered committing any of the following offenses while on duty is subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. This list is not all-inclusive:**

- Refusing to carry out the instructions of a supervisor or other authorized person
- Repeatedly disappearing from the work area without permission or without an acceptable reason
- Removing County property from the premises without permission from the proper authority
- Theft or misuse of County property or services (e.g., mailing personal things, personal use of a County car, extensive use of cell phone or office phone for personal calls, making personal long distance phone calls at the County's expense, personal use of tools or supplies, etc.)



- Intentionally falsifying County records or being untruthful during an investigation
- Using internet access, e-mail, the telephone, a facsimile machine or any other means to view, generate, send or receive materials that could be construed as fraudulent, illegal, harassing, obscene, indecent, profane or intimidating
- Violating the Drug-Free Workplace and Substance Abuse Policy
- Fighting or provoking a fight on County property; using abusive, obscene, profane or threatening language; or engaging in immoral conduct while on duty
- Engaging in workplace violence which includes, but is not limited to intimidation, threats, physical attack, profane or threatening language, domestic violence or property damage
- County employees, with the exception of sworn law enforcement officers, or other authorized personnel, may not at any time be in possession of a firearm, ammunition, or an explosive device in a County building or on County property
- Operating a County vehicle without a valid driver's license or otherwise in violation of policies regarding the use of County vehicles
- A suspension or revocation of drivers' license or a failure to notify the supervisor of the loss of driving privileges prior to reporting for the next scheduled shift if your County job requires a drivers' license
- A criminal conviction or failure to notify your department manager immediately but no later than five (5) business days after any criminal conviction
- Unwelcome or unsolicited speech or conduct based on age, race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability or any other factor that creates a hostile work environment
- Destruction, altering or removal of public record from the office where it is usually kept

## Disciplinary Action

While it is Stokes County's desire and expectation that all employees' job performance meet or exceed expectations, realistically there may be times when an employee's job performance or personal conduct falls below an acceptable level. In those instances where an employee does not achieve acceptable standards of performance or violates established rules of conduct, supervisors are expected to take prompt action in accordance with the disciplinary procedures provided below. *Employees of the Sheriff's Department should refer to their department policy. Health Department and Social Services follow the discipline guidelines of the North Carolina Office of State Human Resources.*

As soon as performance or conduct deficiencies occur, supervisors are encouraged to counsel or give feedback to employees. If one or more coaching conversations fail to resolve the problem, supervisors should proceed to the following disciplinary measures:

**Corrective Action:** Corrective Action is designed to assist employees to correct job-related performance or conduct that does not meet expected or required standards of Stokes County. This level of discipline is designed to provide employees with fair understanding of what is expected of them and an opportunity to improve their performance and correct their conduct. Corrective Action includes verbal coaching, formal verbal warnings, and written warnings.

**Verbal Coaching:** Verbal coaching involves a discussion between a Department Head or Supervisor and an employee to address performance or conduct concerns of a minor nature. Verbal coaching is

intended as an informal discussion between the Department Head or Supervisor and the employee and does not need to be documented.

**Verbal Warning:** A Department Head or Supervisor has an oral conversation with an employee about a deficiency. A written record of discussion is placed in the employee's personnel file for future reference.

**Written Warning:** A written warning is to be used for a first instance of a serious failure in job performance or personal conduct, or when coaching, counseling and/or verbal warning(s) have failed to resolve a particular issue. Receipt of a written warning places an employee in a probationary status for not less than ninety (90) days. Failure to show immediate and sustained improvement in the area(s) noted in a written warning will result in further disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from employment.

**Dismissal:** Dismissal from employment will result when an employee fails to demonstrate improvement in deficient areas despite written warning(s) as noted above or when an employee engages in misconduct or violation of policy which is so serious as to warrant immediate dismissal without progressive discipline. Examples would include, but not limited to, engaging in criminal actions in the workplace, workplace violence, use of alcohol or drugs in the workplace, gross insubordination, or theft of County property.

#### **Disciplinary Authority**

Elected Officials (Sheriff and Register of Deeds) and Appointed Department Heads have the discretion to suspend or dismiss employees. However, it is advisable they consult with the Human Resources Director on disciplinary actions. All other Department Heads are required to consult with the Human Resources Director prior to taking action to suspend, or dismiss employees. There should be no involvement from the Stokes County Board of Commissioners when dismissing an employee not appointed by the Stokes County Board of Commissioners. Suspensions are very rarely used as disciplinary action but may be considered in unusual circumstances. If an employee is suspended with pay pending an investigation, all attempts will be made to resolve the investigation within 7 business days.

### **Right to Appeal Disciplinary Action**

Every permanent employee (including permanent part-time employees) shall have the right to appeal a disciplinary action taken against them by their supervisor. This process is to assure each employee that disciplinary decisions are administered fairly and uniformly.

**Step One:** The employee shall present, in writing his/her intention to appeal to his/her immediate supervisor within ten (10) working days of the time the employee is notified of the disciplinary action.

**Step Two:** The supervisor shall file the notice of appeal with his/her Department Head. The Department Head shall arrange a date for the disciplinary hearing within ten (10) working days of receiving the notice of appeal.

**Step Three:** The Department Head shall review all documents pertaining to the case and may hear from either party verbally. The Department head may require the supervisor, the employee, or both be present when he/she renders a decision.

**Step Four:** Should the employee disagree with the decision rendered by the Department Head, he/she may appeal the decision to Human Resources. The appeal must be filed with the Human Resources

Director within ten (10) working days of the formal decision by the Department Head. The Human Resources Director shall render a decision within ten (10) working days of receiving the appeal. All decisions of the Human Resources Director are final. If for some reason, no agreeance is made, the decision will then be made by the County Manager.

*For employees in the Sheriff's Department and Register of Deeds, there shall be no appeal beyond the decision of the respective office holders. Employees covered under the State Personnel Act shall follow guidelines/procedures set forth by the North Carolina Office of State Human Resources.*

## **Appeal Procedure – Discrimination**

Any applicant for County employment, County employee, or former County employee who has a reason to believe that employment, promotion, training, or transfer was denied him/her or that demotion, layoff or termination of employment was forced upon him/her because of his/her age, sex, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, political affiliation, or physical disability, except where specified age, sex, or physical requirements constitute a bona fide occupational qualification necessary to proper and efficient administration, shall have the right to file his/her appeal directly with the Human Resources (in the case of a general County employee) or the State Personnel Commission (in the case of competitive service employees.)

An employee or applicant must appeal an alleged act of discrimination within thirty (30) days of the alleged discriminatory action.

## **Complaint Procedure - Sexual Harassment**

The North Carolina State Personnel Sexual Harassment Policy adopted effective April 1, 1985 defines sexual harassment as *“deliberate and unwelcome verbal and/or physical conduct of a sexual nature or with sexual implications by a supervisor or a co-worker which: 1) has or may have direct employment consequences resulting from the acceptance or rejection of such conduct; 2) creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment; or 3) interferes with an individual's work performance.”*

Employees are entitled to work in an environment free from sexual harassment. No personnel decisions shall be made on the basis of the granting or denial of sexual favors. Neither shall the receipt of services offered by this County to the public be contingent upon the granting or denial of sexual favors.

Any applicant, general County employee, competitive service employee, or former employee of the County who believes that he/she has been sexually harassed by a County employee may file a complaint to the employees Supervisor or Department Head. In the event the complaint is filed against one of the two listed above, the complaint should be made to the County Manager.

## **Open Door Policy**

The purpose of this policy is to provide full open access to the County Manager should an employee desire to meet one on one. Please contact the County Managers office to schedule a meeting time. It is not the intent of this policy for employees to bring matters to the County Manager that should be resolved within their supervisory chain of command. Such matters will be directed back to the employee's supervisor or Department Head.

## **Separation from Employment**

All separations of employees from positions in the service of the County shall be designated as one of the following types and shall be accomplished in the manner indicated: Resignation, reduction in force (RIF), disability, retirement, dismissal, or death.

**Resignation:** All permanent non-exempt employees must give a minimum of two (2) weeks' notice, unless authorized by the County Manager. All permanent exempt employees must give a minimum of three (3) weeks' notice. Such notice shall be in writing and given to the Department Head, or in case of a Department Head to the County Manager or to the appropriate Board of Authority. (See pg. 33 for definition of Exempt and Non-Exempt employees)

Should an employee resign with less than a two (2) weeks' notice or three (3) weeks' in the case of an exempt employee, the employee shall forfeit all payment(s) for accumulated leave. Sick leave will only be approved during the final two weeks of a notice with a physician's certification or comparable documentation.

*The County Manager shall waive the provisions of this policy in the event of a catastrophic health event, family emergency, or to meet the needs of the department.*

### **Reduction in Force (RIF)**

In the event that reduction in force becomes necessary consideration shall be given to the quality of each employee's past performance, organizational needs and seniority in determining those employees to be retained. Employees who are laid off because of reduction in force shall be given at least thirty (30) days' notice of anticipated layoff. No permanent employee shall be separated while there are temporary employees serving in the same class in the department, unless the permanent employee is not willing to transfer to the position held by the temporary employee.

### **Disability**

An employee may be separated for disability when the employee cannot perform the required duties because of physical or mental impairment. Action may be initiated by the employee of the County, but in all cases shall be supported by medical evidence as certified by a competent physician. The county may require an examination at its expense and performed by a physician of choice.

## **End of Employment**

An employee's end of employment date will be their last day worked or the last day of the approved leave, whichever is later. An employee may not use accrued leave beyond the last day worked in order to receive longevity pay, holiday pay or for any other reason. All insurance policies will be terminated at midnight on the last day worked. Retirement is the only exception.

## **Unemployment Insurance**

In accordance with Public Law 95-566 and Chapter 1124 of the Session Laws of 1977 of the North Carolina General Assembly, local governments are covered by unemployment insurance effective January 1, 1978. County employees who are laid off or released from County service may apply for

unemployment compensation through the nearest office of the Employment Security Commission who will determine the employee's eligibility for this benefit.

### **Payment of Accrued Leave:**

**Accrued annual leave:** The accrued annual leave will be paid in the last paycheck for all reasons of separation.

**Accrued sick leave:** The accrued sick leave will not be paid out. If an employee resigns from Stokes County employment and retires within a year, Stokes County will report to the Retirement System the accrued sick leave at the time of separation. If the employee resigns and goes to another North Carolina government agency within a year, the employee should check with the new employer to see if they accept a transfer of sick leave.

### **Return of County Property**

Employees separating from employment for any reason must return all county property at the time of separation, including but not limited to uniforms, cell phones, keys, PCs and identification cards.

### **Exit Interview**

When an employee ends employment with Stokes County by resignation or retirement, an exit interview will be scheduled with the Human Resources Department. The separating employee needs to contact the Human Resources department prior to separation to schedule an exit interview. The interview will be no later than the employee's last day of work. In the event an employee is terminated, they will be contacted by the Human Resources Department to schedule their interview. The purpose of the exit interview is to discuss relevant matters of concern to the terminating employee. Such matters include:

- Reason for termination
- Status of employee benefits
- Refund of retirement contributions
- Forwarding address

## **Workplace Safety**

Stokes County places a high value on the safety of its employees and is committed to providing a safe workplace. A Safety Program was developed to identify and eliminate hazards in the workplace. The Safety Program focuses on injury prevention through employee training and education, development of departmental and county-wide safety policies and procedures, planning for foreseeable emergencies, inspection of County worksites to identify and correct hazards, and assisting departments in complying with OSHA standards. Our goal is to sustain a culture of safety and awareness.

### **Animals in the Workplace**

Animals or pets, other than service animals, are not permitted in the workplace, even if the workplace is outdoors.

### **Employee Badges**

Safety and security of employees is of utmost importance. Each employee is issued a personal ID badge which should be carried at all times.

### **Smoking Policy**

The use of all tobacco products, including cigarettes, cigars, electronic cigarettes, smokeless tobacco products, and any new tobacco products of any and all types is limited to designated areas with county issued ash receptors. An employee should refer to his or her designated department for those designated areas. Designated areas are specific to the building in which the employee works. Tobacco usage is limited to designated smoking areas and should not be used inside County buildings, County vehicles, any enclosed areas and where work is performed.

### **Possession of Firearms, Explosive Devices, or Weapons**

County employees, with the exception of sworn law enforcement officers, or other authorized personnel, may not at any time be in possession of a firearm, ammunition, or an explosive device in a County building or on County property. Possession is defined as carrying on one's person, in a container of any type, or placement in a desk, office, or personal vehicle. Violation of this policy may result in serious disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

### **Workplace Searches and Monitoring**

Situations will arise where there is a legitimate, job-related concern that requires Stokes County to conduct a search or to monitor. All employees should assume that there is no expectation of privacy and that what they do while at work or on County premises is not private. A search is a part of an investigation process to determine the facts and does not constitute an accusation of wrongdoing. The reasons for such searches may include, but are not limited to the suspicion of using or possessing County property without permission or in an unauthorized manner; use or possession of drugs, alcohol, weapons, stolen property or other illegal contraband; and harassment, violence or threats of violence. A department, after consultation with the Human Resources Director and with the consent of the subject may contact the Stokes County Sheriff's Office to search, inspect, or monitor persons, vehicles, work spaces, desks, lockers, computers, telephones, packages or other items on County premises or on those premises where an employee is conducting business on behalf of the County. Any such search must be conducted by at least two persons, one of whom must be at the level of Department Head or above. Employees refusing to allow or to properly cooperate in a search where there is reasonable suspicion will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

In addition, it is expected that in the normal course of work employees may enter your work areas in your absence to continue work-related functions. Anything that is discovered in this process is subject to investigation.

### **Drug-Free and Substance Abuse Policy**

Stokes County is committed to promoting and maintaining a safe, healthy, and efficient working environment for all employees within the county. To help achieve this goal, employees are prohibited from:



- Possessing, distributing, selling, manufacturing, or being under the influence of any illegal drug;
- Consuming alcoholic beverages while on County premises, County customer premises, in County vehicles, or while on County business or time; and
- Abusing inhalants or prescription drugs or possessing prescription drugs that have not been prescribed for the employee by a physician.

An employee will be considered "under the influence" if the presence of alcohol or the above-cited use of such drugs is detected. If a supervisor suspects that an individual is at work and under the influence of alcohol or drugs, the supervisor will notify the Department Head and the Human Resources Director. Any employee who refuses to grant consent for submission to a drug or alcohol screen is grounds for immediate termination or it may be considered a "voluntary termination."

**Self-Reporting Requirement** - Prior to employees driving a County motor vehicle as a part of their regularly assigned duties or prior to driving sporadically as assigned, employees shall disclose the following occurrences to their Department Head or to the Human Resources Director: arrests for on or off-duty DUIs, as well as convictions and the terms of any "diversion" program as a result of on or off-duty driving while impaired by alcohol or drugs; and the use of prescription drugs according to a physician's instructions or the use of over-the-counter drugs for medicinal purposes in the event such drugs would impair their physical, mental, emotional, or other faculties. Such reporting is a confidential record in the same manner as FMLA records. The confidential nature of the employee's counseling and rehabilitation for drug or alcohol abuse will be preserved.

### **Drug Testing**

All applicants for County employment are subject to drug testing prior to a final offer of employment.

### **During Employment:**

- **Post-Accident** – After any work related accident involving County safety-sensitive employees the County may require post-accident drug testing.
- **Reasonable Suspicion** – When an employee reports to work and is believed to be under the influence of a controlled substance or impaired by the use of prescription/nonprescription medication or alcohol.
- **Random Basis** – The County may randomly test safety-sensitive employees, defined as those whose primary duties are likely to endanger the public or other employees if they are under the influence.

*Sheriff's Office employees please refer to the Drug Testing Policy of the Stokes County Sheriff's Office*

### **Closings and Delays**

It is the policy of Stokes County to remain open during most periods of inclement weather; however, where extraordinary circumstances warrant, due to weather or other unforeseen business interruption, the County Manager and the Assistant County Manager reserves the right to close and/or delay the facility, or to dismiss employees early. Notifications will be placed on the County website, WXII-Channel 12, WFMY-Channel 2 and WGHP-Fox 8.

In the event the offices are closed, delayed, or employees are dismissed early - no one (citizens or county employees) should report to work without their Department Head's approval. Department Heads should have the County Manager's approval before working during a "closed" condition or authorizing any of their employees to work during a "closed" condition. Pre-approval to work during a "closed" condition is granted to those Department Heads performing a public safety function, which includes the Sheriff's Department, Jail, Emergency Communications, Emergency Medical Services, Fire Marshal, Vehicle Maintenance, Public Works, On Call Social Workers, and On Call Health Department Nurses. During a "closed condition", regular scheduled hours will not be charged against the employee. Employees will not receive compensatory time for hours worked during a closed condition unless approved by the Department Head or County Manager.

### **Emergency Management during Natural Disaster**

During and after major emergencies and disasters (such as tornadoes, ice storms, hazardous material spills, etc.) the residents of Stokes County will still expect the County to provide some level of service; therefore it is an expectation that employees be available to work.

## **Reporting Injuries and Accidents**

If an employee is injured as a result of an accident while on duty, regardless of the severity of the injury, the employee is required to report the injury at once to his/her immediate supervisor so that proper medical attention can be provided. The injured employee and their direct supervisor are required to complete the county's incident reports with a copy forwarded to Human Resources as soon as possible following incident.

### **Accidents**

In the event of an accident involving a County-owned vehicle, the operator/employee should:

1. Render first aid if qualified to do so and arrange for medical care if necessary;
2. Notify 911 Emergency Services
3. Never move the vehicle or leave the scene of the accident without law enforcement approval
4. Exchange driver's license numbers, insurance information, and vehicle numbers with all parties involved. Obtain the names and addresses of anyone witnessing the accident. Offer no information regarding the responsibility for the accident or what should have been done to avoid the accident. Stay calm. These stipulations are especially important if the accident takes place outside of Stokes County.
5. The operator shall report any accident to his/her supervisor immediately;
6. The Safety Officer shall report the accident to the Accident Review Committee immediately;
7. All claims against the County insurance policies will be forwarded to the County Risk Manager;
8. Operators/Employees shall not permit unauthorized persons to operate or ride in or on a County vehicle.

### **Vehicle Accidents**

When a County employee is involved in a vehicle accident involving a County-owned vehicle, the employee shall:

1. Notify his/her supervisor immediately.

2. The supervisor/director will immediately notify the County Vehicle Maintenance Supervisor of the accident.
3. The employee will complete and submit a Stokes County Vehicle Accident Report to their supervisor/director as soon as possible following the accident. The supervisor/director will forward a copy of the Accident report to the Vehicle Maintenance Supervisor immediately after receipt of the completed form from the employee.

***Failure to follow the steps outlined may result in disciplinary action against the employee***

## **Accident Review Board**

Whenever an employee is involved in a vehicle accident while operating a County-owned vehicle, he/she shall appear before the Accident Review Board for a determination as to whether or not the accident was preventable or non-preventable.

### **Purpose of Accident Review Board**

- A. To establish a fair and impartial review system for all accidents involving motorized equipment and operators with the primary objective being to improve the driving safety of County-owned motorized vehicles.
- B. To identify problem drivers, unsafe conditions, and pursue remedial steps to reduce damage to County-owned vehicles and prevent injury to County employees.
- C. To establish the responsibilities for each vehicle accident.

### **Composition of the Accident Review Board**

- A. The Accident Review Board shall be comprised of the current Safety Committee.

### **Appearance before the Board**

Approximately five (5) working days prior to a regularly scheduled Board meeting, the Board Secretary shall notify all relevant County personnel to appear. Notification shall be directed through the appropriate department heads.

- A. All personnel shall appear before the Board at its regularly scheduled meeting.
  - a. Any employee unable to appear due to sickness, personal injury, or death to an immediate family member, must notify the Board Secretary twenty-four (24) hours in advance.
- B. Other than those cases which have been deferred, all vehicle accident cases scheduled shall be heard and action taken, whether or not the individual is present. Departments Heads shall be notified of the action taken by the Accident Review Board.

## **Workplace Violence Awareness and Prevention Policy**

It is the intent of Stokes County to provide a safe workplace for all employees. The County will not tolerate intimidation, threats, verbal abuse, bullying, physical attacks, or any other act of violence

against employees, visitors, customers, county facilities or property. This includes such conduct by anyone on County property, or on a County-controlled site and in connection with County employment or County business. This zero-tolerance policy also prohibits such conduct while not at work if there is a potential adverse impact on an employee's ability to perform their assigned duties. Although nothing can guarantee that an employee will not become a victim of workplace violence, this policy provides information which will assist the County with its efforts to keep the County free from violence or the threat of violence. Whether perpetrated by or towards an employee, any violence or the threat of violence is strictly prohibited. A violation of this policy will lead to an investigation and corrective action up to and including a separation from employment or if applicable, a referral for prosecution. Employees should be alert to the possibility of violence by employees, former employees, customers, and visitors; should take seriously any violent act or threat against themselves or others; should not attempt to handle a violent or potentially violent incident on their own; and should report such acts of violence or threats as follows:

**Call 911 -- Violence or Imminent Violence:** Employees shall call law enforcement immediately if employees believe a danger exists or if a danger is imminent which could cause death or serious physical harm. After calling law enforcement, employees shall notify their Department Head, or any supervisor, or any on-site security.

**Threat of Violence.** Employees who witness a threat, or receive a threat, or are on notice of a threat to another; shall immediately notify their Department Head, or any supervisor, or any on-site security.

**Potential Threat.** Employees shall report any behavior that they witness and regard as potentially threatening or violent if it is carried out in connection with County employment or County business and shall do so even without a specific threat, and regardless of the relationship between the individual who initiated the behavior and the person being threatened.

**Additional County Contacts.** Employees should report to the Human Resources Director or the Risk Manager if unable to contact the Department Head or a supervisor.

## **Conceal Carry Policy**

***This section does not pertain to sworn law enforcement or security personnel.***

Stokes County allows employees who have a Conceal Carry Permit issued by the State of North Carolina (or issued by a State with reciprocal agreement with North Carolina) to carry concealed weapons (CCW) on/in County property unless otherwise prohibited by State and Federal Statute. Some Federal or State programs, funding, rules or regulations prohibit carrying concealed weapons in specific areas/buildings or while participating in regulated programs, activities or in any transportation vehicle. In those situations employees, interns, or volunteers are not allowed to have a CCW with them or in a County building that provides the services. Always check with your Supervisor or your Department Head if you are unsure.

Employees must follow all state rules, regulations, and laws regarding the use of a CCW for self-defense or in the defense of others. Failure to do so can result in a personal liability issue and/or legal or criminal implications.

Safety Rules for CCW (any violations of these rules will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination).

- Concealed means concealed. Do not display a CCW at work or in public unless a qualifying emergency justifies it.
- Employees must keep the CCW under their control at all times while on County property. Do not leave your CCW unattended in a purse, bag, briefcase, etc.
- You may lock your CCW in a personal gun safe if you are the only one in control of the unlocking method. The gun safe must not be visible to the public. The County is not responsible if your CCW is lost or stolen.
- If so equipped, the safety must be engaged.
- In an emergency, never display your CCW in the presence of law enforcement.
- Open carry of a firearm or fixed blade knife is considered menacing and is not allowed.
- Employees must refrain from telling other employees that they have a CCW as this may be perceived as hostile or threatening.
- In keeping with state law, if approached by a law enforcement officer who is conducting an operation in an official capacity, the CCW holder should notify the officer that they have a CCW and have a permit. Employees must follow the officer's directions accordingly. This does not include casual/business contact with our local Sheriff's Department employees.

## **Disclosure and Protection of Confidential Information**

Employees are not authorized to disclose confidential information: (a) to any other County employee unless there is a legitimate business reason, on a need to know basis, and pursuant to their job descriptions or; (b) to any person outside of the County unless management expressly states that the information may be disclosed to that person. An employee authorized to do so may access, use, or disclose confidential information only if they exercise due diligence in order to ensure the privacy and security of such information. This expectation applies to all such information whether in oral, written, photographic, or electronic form. The employee duty also extends to ensuring the privacy and security of County devices such as computers, smart phones, and tablets. This duty continues even after an employee separates from the County. County employees are required to treat all information as confidential County property unless the employee's Department Head directs otherwise or the employee obtains prior approval to disclose. This requirement extends to all contractors, personnel with organizations partnering with the County, and volunteers. Individuals allowed access by consent, by authorization based upon employees' job title, or by law are required to limit further use and disclosure. Such safeguards require employees to restrict access to certain designated areas and documents. Violations of County privacy and security policies or state and federal regulatory requirements which result in unauthorized or inappropriate use, disclosure, or access may be considered a breach, will not be tolerated, and subjects an employee to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from employment.

All employees are subject to close supervision and monitoring by Department Heads to ensure that employees review and comply with obligations under policies designed to safeguard the County's confidential property.

For the purpose of this policy, the term "confidential information" refers to any non-public information.

## **Whistleblowers Protection**

Any employee who reasonably believes that a policy, practice, or activity of Stokes County Government is in violation of law, a clear mandate or public policy must file a written complaint with the Human Resources Director. This enables Stokes County to investigate and, if the complaint is substantiated, to correct the alleged violation. Stokes County will not retaliate against an employee who, in good faith, has made a protest or raised a complaint against some practice of the County or of an employee of the County, or of another individual or entity with whom the County has a business relationship, on the basis of a reasonable belief that the practice is in violation of law, a clear mandate or public policy. Stokes County does not retaliate against employees who disclose or threaten to disclose to a supervisor or a public body, any activity, policy, or practice of the County that the employee reasonably believes is in violation of a law, rule or regulation mandated pursuant to law or is in violation of a clear mandate or public policy concerning the health, safety, welfare or protection of the environment.

## **Attendance and Punctuality**

Attendance and punctuality are very important responsibilities of a County employee. When an employee is unable to report for work, it is his/her responsibility to notify the supervisor. An employee should contact the supervisor as soon as it is apparent the employee will be unable to report to work.

Excessive tardiness may affect promotion and continued employment. An employee absent without an excuse shall be subject to suspension. Continued or repeated unexcused absences shall result in dismissal. An employee absent from work for three consecutive days without notification to the supervisor may be terminated as a voluntary resignation.

## **Required Licensures and Certifications**

### **Employee Responsibility**

If an employee's job requires a specific license (including driver's license) or certification, it is the employee's responsibility to keep the license or certification current and in good standing. An employee is required to notify the supervisor immediately upon notice of any pending disciplinary action, sanction or loss of privileges, suspension, revocation, lapse or loss of any credentials that make you eligible to perform your duties.

### **Department Responsibility**

It is the responsibility of each County department to confirm proof through the proper licensing authority that such credentials are valid for each new hire, to monitor credentials regularly dependent upon the renewal cycle, and to perform periodic checks of licenses and certifications for all employees whose job requires it.

## **Information Acceptable Use Policy**



The Purpose of this policy is to encourage responsible and acceptable use of technological resources provided by the county. This policy is designed to help you understand the County's expectations for the use of these resources. The Stokes County Sheriff's Department is exempt from this policy.

### **General Guidelines**

Employees are responsible for using assigned resources in a professional, ethical and lawful manner. Employees must respect copyrights, software licensing agreements, property rights, privacy and the prerogatives of others, similar to other business transactions.

Employees will be assigned a password for access to various resources. Under no circumstance should an employee divulge his/her password to anyone, including co-workers, supervisors or department heads. Employees will be held directly responsible for any activity connected to their user ID and/or password, therefore password sharing is prohibited. Employees will be required to change their password every 60-90 days.

Employees are considered a representative of the County while using county resources and should act accordingly. Individuals who are not employees of the county are not allowed to use county resources with exception to designated Public Access stations. Employees must logoff their machine while away from their desk for an extended period of time or out of the office. Employees are required to activate screen saver passwords while away from their desks for any period for time. Department Heads are responsible for notifying the Information Systems Department before termination action is taken for any employee so the appropriate steps are taken to remove employee access. Only those employees or officials who are duly authorized to speak to the media, to analysts or in public gatherings on behalf of the County may speak or write in the name of the County, including but not limited to, E-mail or Internet access. No access to any county system is allowed for former employees.

All technological resources and all information transmitted by, received from, or stored on any County resource is the property of the County and as such, are subject to inspection by County officials. The County reserves the right for business purposes to enter, review and monitor the information on all systems, including voice mail, e-mail, and information stored on computer systems or media, without advance notice. This might include investigating theft, unauthorized disclosure of confidential business or proprietary information, personal abuse of the system or monitoring workflow and productivity. All information on the County's Computer and Information System Network is subject to the public records law.

Some technological resources such as cellular phones are billed from the first minute of use and are not allowed to be used for personal use except in an emergency. In the event of emergency use the employee is expected to reimburse any charges to the County.

### **Internet Access**

Internet Access is a privilege. Internet Access is a resource granted to increase productivity and provide opportunities for professional growth. Internet access is intended to be used for business purposes. The Internet must not be used to compromise the integrity of the county and its business in any way. Employees shall make no intentional use of Internet services in an illegal, malicious, or obscene manner, including but not limited to, using the services to access materials such as those advocating hate, pornography or violence except when used by law enforcement officials for law enforcement purposes.

Internet Access provides easy access to many types of software applications. This access does not indicate that the software itself is free nor that it may be distributed freely. Employees are not allowed to download any software package without written permission from the Information Systems Department.

If a user is inadvertently connected to a site that contains sexually explicit or offensive material, the user must disconnect from that site immediately, regardless of whether that site had been previously deemed acceptable by any screening or rating program.

No employee shall use the County's Internet resources to deliberately propagate any malicious or destructive code or device, including but not limited to viruses, worms or trap-door program code.

The County will comply with reasonable requests from law enforcement and regulatory agencies for logs or archives regarding any employee's Internet activities.

Internet Access exposes users to endless offers, promotional, demos, freebies, discounts, scams, chain letters etc. It is the employee's responsibility to demonstrate good judgment when conducting business on the internet. Employees are prohibited from participating in chain letters.

#### **Electronic Mail (E-Mail)**

The county provides employees with email privileges to be used as a business tool in the performance of day-to-day job functions. All E-mail messages are the property of the County and are not to be considered private. E-mail messages are subject to the Public Records Law. The county reserves the right to inspect any or all E-mail messages. This policy applies to both incoming and outgoing E-mail messages. Under no circumstances should confidential information be transmitted via E-mail message.

Each Outgoing E-mail message must contain the following information at the end of each message:

- Your Full Name
- Your Organization, Department and/or Division
- Your Full Internet E-mail Address

This information is recognized as a signature card. Upon request, the Information Systems department will be happy to assist you in setting up this information.

Ninety percent (90%) of viruses are contracted through E-mail messages. Viruses can cause computer downtime, loss of data and corruption of data. Therefore, employees are urged to use extreme caution when opening E-mail attachments and when downloading information from the Internet. Although the county has various virus scanning software applications installed throughout the network to detect viruses it is still possible for the county to be exposed to a virus. Early detection is the best defense against viruses, so employees are required to contact the Information Systems Department immediately in the event of a virus.

Each employee is responsible for inspecting the E-mail message folder on a weekly basis and remove any unneeded messages including messages in the Inbox, Sent Box and Trash Can. Each user will be

designated 75 MB of space for storing email messages. Once you have exceeded your allotment, you will no longer be able to send an email message until you remove older email messages.

Employees are prohibited from participating in chain letters. E-mail must not be threatening, insulting, obscene, abusive, or derogatory. E-mail shall not include remarks that are defamatory toward any person, or constitute sexual harassment. Sending, receiving, forwarding, displaying, printing or otherwise disseminating material that is fraudulent, harassing, illegal, embarrassing, sexually explicit, obscene, intimidating, or defamatory is prohibited. The display of any sexually explicit image or document on any County resource is a violation of the County's policy on sexual harassment. In addition, sexually explicit material may not be archived, stored, distributed, edited or recorded using the County network or computing resources.

E-mail must not be used to compromise the integrity of the county and its business in any way.

- Guidelines for E-mail Etiquette :
- Proofread and use spell check
- Keep messages brief and to the point
- Don't over distribute e-mail
- Avoid sending e-mail in anger or as an emotional response
- Avoid putting text in all capital letters
- Reread your message for content and tone before sending
- Don't make messages "urgent" when they don't need to be

### **Security**

It is the responsibility of the Information System department to provide a secure and reliable computing environment. This task is addressed through software applications, hardware devices, policies and procedures and security features. The County has designed the network in such a way as to try to ensure the safety and security of the network. Any employee who attempts to disable, defeat or circumvent any County security feature is be subject to immediate dismissal.

### **Audits**

The Information Systems Department will conduct audits at least once per year. Random audits will be performed as deemed necessary. Unannounced audits will be performed based on the discretion of the Information Systems department. These audits will include, but not limited to, Hardware, Software, E-mail and Internet functions. The Information Systems Department will take the appropriate action necessary to correct any deficiencies. Deficiencies of a significant nature will be reported directly to the Stokes County Board of Commissioners.

Illegal software will be removed by the Information Systems Department and the employee responsible for the illegal software will be subject to disciplinary action.

### **Hardware / Software**

Employees must follow standard purchasing procedures in obtaining any software application or hardware device. Employees must obtain approval from the Information System Department prior to obtaining any software application or hardware device.

This practice is a vital component in establishing software licensing compliance, eliminating vulnerability to viruses, unexpected hardware/software interactions and applications that may subvert or bypass security controls. The Information Systems Department must inspect or test any software application or hardware device to determine compatibility, document inventory and validate prior to installation.

Hardware/Software obtained through methods other than described above will not be permitted. Use of software and/or hardware devices obtained personally by an employee will not be allowed. The Information Systems Department must approve all requisitions for any software application or hardware device.

### **Personal Use**

Personal use of county resources by county employees is subject to the following restrictions: Personal Use of a county resource are subject to the guidelines of this policy including but not limited to inspection and monitoring.

Any activity must be at no cost to the county.

Personal Use must not interfere with any county employee or co-worker's performance of duties.

Personal Use must not undermine the use of county resources for official purposes.

Employees may not use County Internet resources for commercial or personal advertisements, solicitations, promotions, destructive programs, political material or any other unauthorized or personal use.

Personal Use of county resources by an employee neither expresses nor implies sponsorship or endorsement by the county.

Personal resources, i.e. any resource not provided by the county, is strictly prohibited. Under no circumstances is any employee allowed to use software, hardware and or peripheral device with any county resource.

### **Disciplinary Action**

Any violation of this policy will be reported to the Stokes County Board of County Commissioners. Violators of this policy are subject to disciplinary action up to and including immediate dismissal, legal charges if they apply and legal suits to recoup any losses the county may have incurred as a result of the violation.

Definitions of social media /terms for the use of this policy:

- Social Networking sites .... Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, Snap Chat, TikTok and any similar sites now existing or established in the future
- Blogs and Micro blogs ..... Twitter and any similar blog site now existing or established in the future

- Video Sharing sites...YouTube and IReport and any similar sites now existing or established in the future
- Photo Sharing sites...TwitPic, Flickr and Instagram and any similar sites now existing or established in the future
- Chat Rooms
- Uploading Content
- Comments on Websites or Blogs

Stokes County employees are allowed to have personal social network sites are subject to the rules and conditions set forth in this policy. These sites must remain personal in nature and be used to share personal, non-work related information, unless the information is clearly positive in nature. Employees should also be mindful that they represent the County of Stokes when using social media, even during their off-time from work; and that no information should be posted that could create a negative perception of the County of Stokes.

Under the County's Personnel Policy, reports of inappropriate use of social media related to the work place will be investigated, and possible disciplinary action taken, when the policy is violated. Employees should never use their government e-mail account or employee contact information in conjunction with personal social networking sites. The reason is that problems can arise when a personal posting identifies or appears to be associated with the County of Stokes.

Based on the information above, the County of Stokes reminds its employees that they must ensure a distinct separation between personal and work-related use of social media. Use of social media in any manner, is strictly prohibited while an employee is on the job, unless the social media is being used in an official capacity, which has been approved in writing by the Department Head and Stokes County IT Director. The use of social media on county owned devices is strictly prohibited at all times unless specifically authorized as set forth above.

An employee who chooses, while off duty, to maintain social media sites, to participate in social media, or to participate in social networking platforms, (1) shall conduct himself/herself in a manner that will not reflect negatively upon the County; and (2) shall have the right to comment on issues of general or public concern so long as the comments do not disrupt the workplace, interfere with employee relationships with other employees, hinder productivity, or harm public confidence in his/her department or County government.

### **Definition of Terms**

**County** – Stokes County Government and all of its departments and/or divisions.

**Computer** – Any County-Owned Personal Computer (PC) , Laptop Computer, Desktop Computer, Servers, Single User Computers, Multi-User Computers and workstation including any device attached to a computer.

**Network** – Any County-Owned Hardware, Software, Policies, Procedures, Rules, Protocol, Security feature, wiring, cabling, configuration or any device attached to the network.

**Resource** – Any County-Owned Computer, device, function, feature, Hardware, software or privilege assigned to an employee to aid in the performance of job duties.

**User ID** – A unique identifier assigned to an employee allowing the user to maintain accountability for resource usage.

**Password** – A unique identifier associated with an employee User Id used to gain access to authorized functions.

**Audit** – A function performed to detect any misuse, abuse, violation or issue with any county resource. The Information Systems department reserves the right to take the appropriate action necessary to correct any deficiencies situation found to threaten the security of county resources.

**Employee** - Any Active Full-Time, Part-Time, Elected Officials, Appointed or Board Members.

## **Political Activity**

As prohibited by Chapter 153A-99 of the General Statutes of North Carolina:

Stokes County employees have a civic responsibility to support good government by every available means and in every appropriate manner. Each employee may join or affiliate with civic organizations of a partisan or political nature, may attend political meetings, may advocate and support the principles or policies of civic or political organizations in accordance with the Constitution and laws of the State of North Carolina and in accordance with the Constitution and Laws of the United States of America.

However, no employee shall:

1. Engage in partisan or political activity while on duty;
2. Use official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with affecting the result of an election or nomination for office;
3. Be required as a duty of employment or as a condition for employment, promotion, or tenure of office to contribute funds for political or partisan purposes;
4. Coerce or compel contributions for political or partisan purposes from another employee or serve as a fund raiser for a specific candidate or party; or
5. Use County funds, supplies or equipment for any political or partisan purpose;
6. Distribute or post any political goods, supplies, or materials for a specific candidate or party while on duty.

County employees subject to the State Employees Act and employees in certain Federally-aided programs are subject to the Hatch Act as amended in 2012. This federal act also prohibits candidacy for elective office in a partisan election. All county employees may be a candidate for and may serve in a nonpartisan elected or appointed public office, whether paid or not, including, but not limited to school boards, or city or town councils.

## **Solicitations, Distributions and Gifts and Favors**

In order to protect employees from unwanted interruptions, it is the policy of Stokes County that solicitations by outsiders for any reason and solicitations by employees on County property are forbidden. (This provision does not apply to official campaigns such as United Fund of Stokes County.)

### **Gifts and Favors**

No official or employee shall accept any gift, favor or object of value that may tend to influence the employee in the discharge of his/her duties.



This policy shall not prohibit:

1. Receipt of honorariums for officers' or employees' participation in meetings;
2. Advertising items or souvenirs of nominal value;
3. Meals furnished at banquets or business dinners;
4. Receipt of exchange of gifts or favors between employees/officers and their friends and/or relatives where it is clear that the motivating factor is a personal relationship rather than a business relationship.

## **Outside Employment**

The work of the County should take precedence over other occupational interests of an employee and secondary employment work should not interfere with the employee's county duties, involve a potential conflict of interest, or in any way compromise the integrity or credibility of Stokes County Government. All outside employment for salaries, wages, or commission, and all self-employment must be disclosed to the Department Head in writing and is subject to review for conformance to this policy by the Department Head and County Manager. Conflicting outside employment will be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

## **Employee Personnel Records**

Stokes County takes utmost precautions to protect confidential employee information. It is maintained in secured files for necessary business purposes only and considered property of the County. While most of the information contained in your personnel file is confidential, some information is a matter of public record under North Carolina law (G.S. §153A-98). Employees may inspect their personnel files at reasonable times upon reasonable notice.

## **What is Public Record?**

- Name
- Age
- Date of original employment
- Terms of any written or oral employment contract
- Current position title
- Current salary (including benefits, incentives, bonuses, deferred and all other forms of compensation)
- Date and amount of each increase or decrease in salary
- Date and type of each promotion, demotion, transfer, suspension, separation or other change in position classification
- Date and general description of the reasons for each promotion
- Date and type of each dismissal, suspension, or demotion for disciplinary reasons
- For dismissals due to disciplinary reasons, a copy of the written notice of final decision setting forth the specific acts or omissions that are the basis for the dismissal
- Current assigned office

## **Compensation— *Salary, Position Classification, Salary Computation, Employment Offer, Longevity Plan and Workweek***

### **Salary & Position Classification Schedule**

The salaries for Stokes County employees are set and maintained through a detailed position classification grade and salary schedule. Each position contains a detailed list of job requirements and is assigned a salary grade with a minimum, midpoint, and maximum salary for the responsibilities, education, and experience of that position. Each grade is assigned 30 steps.

### **Salary Computation**

Each employee hired or assigned to a permanent position shall serve a probationary period of six (6) months. At the end of the probationary period, the employee will receive a 1% salary increase, and an additional 1% salary increase on their anniversary date to equal the 2% annual increase for service time with Stokes County.

Upon new hire, promotion, grade change, reclassification, and voluntary transfer, each employee will be compensated at the minimum salary for the position assigned. If an applicant's qualifications exceed the minimum requirements and are relevant to the position the County Manager may approve a Department Heads request to negotiate the salary for the position *up to* midpoint. In rare instances an employee may be involuntarily transferred to a lower grade position. Should that happen, the employee will be frozen at their current salary and placed on the lower grade until the employee's salary catches up with the salary on that grade.

In the Department of Social Services, if an employee is hired for a position and does not qualify per the North Carolina State Office of Human Resources, the employee can participate in the Work Against Program.

### **Longevity Plan**

Permanent employees will be given a 2% salary increase on the minimum salary for that grade, for service time with Stokes County on their anniversary date each year. No additional steps will be given for any specific years of service.

### **Definitions:**

**-Anniversary Date** - The date the employee is classified as a full-time employee eligible for benefits.

**-Work Against Program** – If an employee is hired for a position and does not qualify per the North Carolina State Office of Human Resources, the employee would be placed on the lower grade, but compensated at the closest salary for the position hired. (Example: An employee is hired for a Social Worker III position but only qualifies for a Social Worker II position; that employee would be paid the minimum salary of the Social Worker II, plus the difference in Social Worker III and Social Worker II.)

### **Promotion/Reclassification or Grade Change**

When suitable, vacancies in positions shall be filled by the promotion of employees currently in the service of Stokes County. The county provides Equal Employment Opportunities, therefore candidates for promotion shall be chosen only on their qualifications and work records.

### **Employee Stipend**

Employee stipends are intended for meeting temporary needs of the department when services cannot be provided by other means. An employee stipend may be paid when an employee is temporarily assigned a substantial portion of the duties of a position in a higher grade or classification, or when other significant new projects or duties, that are not part of the employee's regular position, are assigned. An employee stipend is not to exceed one year, with the employee possibly returning to his/her original position upon the expiration of the temporary action. All stipends and temporary assignments including any extensions and returning to original positions, must be approved by the County Manager.

### **Workweek**

The workweek for general County employees is thirty-seven and one-half (37 ½) hours per week unless otherwise designated according to their job requirements. The schedule of some departments vary from the basic schedule. For example, law enforcement personnel normally work 168, 170, or 180 hours in a 28 day cycle, Communications personnel normally work 168 hours in a 28 day cycle, and EMS works either 218.25 or 242.25 in a 28 day cycle. The basic workweek begins at 12:01 a.m. on Saturday and ends at 12:00 a.m. on the following Saturday for all County employees. Employees who work a 37.5 or 40.0 hour work week will be required to take a one hour lunch break unless a change is approved by their immediate supervisor.

Flex schedules must be approved by the Department Head/County Manager.

### **Remote Working Policy**

#### **Purpose**

A Remote Working Program is an arrangement that allows eligible Stokes County employees to work in a designated area outside the office while still being accountable for their work. Remote Work is a cooperative arrangement between employees, their supervisors, and employing departments.

#### **Policy**

Remote Work is a privilege, not a right. County employees who work remotely must have an approved remote work agreement with their Supervisor or Department Head under this policy. A department may have additional remote work requirements, guidelines, or procedures, provided they are consistent with this program. Remote work does not change the duties, obligations, responsibilities, or terms and conditions of County employment. Employees who work remotely must comply with all County rules, policies, practices, and procedures. The employee's compensation, benefits, work status and work responsibilities will not change due to participation in the remote work program.

Employees may not engage in activities while on the Remote Work Program that would not be permitted at the regular worksite. Employees working remotely may take care of personal business during breaks and unpaid lunch periods as they would at the regular worksite. Remote work is not designed to be a replacement for appropriate child or adult dependent care. Although an individual employee's schedule may be modified to accommodate child or adult dependent care needs, the focus of the arrangement must remain on job performance and meeting business demands. Eligible

employees are required to read the Remote Working Policy and submit an agreement to their Department Head for approval before proceeding to work remotely. A Supervisor or a Department Head may end, or modify a remote work agreement for any reason. Similarly, an employee working remotely may end or request to change a remote work agreement at any time. Employees may be removed from the program if they do not comply with the terms of their remote work agreement. The program is intended to be cost neutral. The County is required to provide a dedicated lap top computer for employees approved for remote work. All other supplies needed to work remotely (desk, chair, cell phone, fax, copier, etc.) are the responsibility of the employee and the County assumes no responsibility for set-up or operating costs at an alternate worksite (telephone or internet services, etc.). All County rules regarding the use of computers and the internet apply while an employee is working remotely, regardless of whether the employee is using County-provided or personal equipment.

### **Eligibility**

Eligibility for working remotely is based on both the position and the employee. Not every job, or every employee, is well suited for the remote work program. When determining if a position is eligible for remote work, the Department Head shall consider the following:

- Position is independent in nature;
- Position is primarily knowledge-based;
- Position does not require the employee's immediate presence at the regular worksite to address unscheduled matters; and
- Position is not essential to the management of on-site workflow.

When determining if an employee is eligible for remote work, the Department Head shall consider the following:

- Employee has demonstrated dependability and responsibility;
- Employee has effective communication with supervisors, coworkers, and clients;
- Employee has demonstrated motivation;
- Employee has the ability to work independently;
- Employee consistently demonstrates a high rate of productivity;
- Employee has a high level of skill and knowledge of the job;
- Employee can prioritize work effectively; and
- Employee has good organizational and time management skills

### **Work Hours**

County work rules that are applicable at the regular worksite are also applicable while working remotely. Those include but are not limited to:

- Employees working remotely shall be available during scheduled work times and shall respond to supervisor requests promptly.
- Employees must account for and report time spent working remotely the same way they would at the regular worksite, or according to the terms of the remote work agreement.

- Employees may work overtime only when directed to do so and approved in advance by the supervisor.
- Employees must obtain approval to use vacation, sick, or other leave in the same manner as employees who do not work remotely.

## **Pay Periods**

The County's pay period shall be based on a twenty-eight (28) day cycle. There shall be thirteen (13) pay periods within a year. Paychecks shall be issued eleven (11) calendar days following the last day of the pay period. Pay date will be on Fridays.

## **Payroll Deductions**

Normal deductions shall be made from each employee's paycheck each pay period for:

- Federal Income Tax
- State Income Tax
- FICA (Social Security and Medicare)
- Retirement (Permanent employees)
- Garnishments/Wage Withholdings

Employees may request to have the additional deductions each pay period:

- Insurance
- Credit Union
- 401K Supplemental Retirement Income
- Deferred Compensation Plans
- Stokes County Property Tax Deductions
- Flex Spending Benefits
- Firefighter and Rescue Squad Pension Fund

## **Direct Deposit**

Direct Deposit is the counties method for issuing payroll payments to employees. Employees must provide written authorization via the "Direct Deposit Authorization Form" to Human Resources within one (1) week of hire date. Direct Deposit will remain in effect until changed by the employee.

## **Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)**

It is the policy of Stokes County to fully comply with the FLSA. All positions in the County are designated exempt or nonexempt under FLSA depending on whether they meet the requirements of the Act. These designations have nothing to do with the importance of a position to the County. Employees who are non-exempt must be paid overtime or granted compensatory time for hours over 40 worked each workweek. There are specific exceptions under the FLSA for law enforcement and firefighting. Employees who are exempt do not have to be paid overtime for hours over 40 worked each workweek. It is County policy to promptly investigate and correct any improper payroll deductions or other payroll

practices that do not comply with the FLSA. If an employee believes that an improper payroll practice has occurred, such as an improper deduction from an exempt salary, the employee is required to file a written complaint to the Human Resources Director. The report should provide the date the reduced paycheck was issued and the circumstance that led to the deduction. HR will see that the matter is appropriately reviewed. The employee will be reimbursed for the amount of any inappropriate deduction taken. Nonexempt employees required to work when daylight savings time begins or ends will be paid for the hours actually worked. In the spring, employees will be paid one hour less when clocks are set forward one hour. Conversely, in the fall when clocks are set back one hour, employees will be paid for the extra hour. The extra hour is work time and included for purposes of calculating overtime.

## **Overtime Authorization**

From time to time, it becomes necessary for employees to work additional hours beyond the normal work period amount. Compensatory time will be given in lieu of overtime pay, except for personnel working in EMS and Communications and temporary employees. Compensatory Time must be approved by an employee's direct supervisor. If circumstances arise and the employee is not able to obtain approval such as having to work after the end of the workday/shift due to an emergency, the employee should notify their direct supervisor as soon as possible.

## **Employee Status**

### **Non-Exempt Employees**

This class of employee shall receive one hour of compensatory time for each hour worked over their standard work schedule up to forty (40) hours in a seven day workweek. Compensatory Time will be awarded at a rate of 1.5 hours for each hour physically worked in excess of forty (40) hours in a seven day workweek. For example, if an employee's standard work schedule is 37.5 hours per week, and he/she works 42 hours in a week. He/she will receive 5.5 hours of compensatory time and pay for 37.5 hours.

Law enforcement personnel who are classified as 207 (K) non-exempt shall receive compensatory hours at a rate of 1.5 hours for each hour physically worked in excess of 171 hours in each 28 day work period.

All overtime worked must be properly documented and must receive approval of the supervisor before it is worked. Compensatory time shall be awarded at the end of each pay period as outlined above, but may be used as paid time off any time after it is earned, with the approval of the supervisor. Each supervisor has discretion in allowing or directing an employee to use compensatory time. No compensatory time shall be allowed for work during an employee's lunch hour unless such work is of an emergency nature. In the event of a voluntary or involuntary termination of a non-exempt employee, compensatory time shall be eligible for monetary reimbursement.

Each non-exempt employee hired by the County except EMS and Communications personnel and temporary personnel, shall be required to sign the Compensatory Time Agreement (See pg. 58) stating compensatory time in lieu of overtime pay is acceptable. Agreeing to the compensatory time method of payment is not a condition of employment, however, if an employee disagrees with this form of



payment the employee shall be disallowed from working overtime or may be directed to taking time off during the week overtime is worked.

Non-exempt employees will be required to use compensatory time as soon as possible after accumulation at the direction of the Department Head and will be required to use compensatory time before the use of any other leave. Sheriff's Department and Jail employees who accrue both holiday time and compensatory time will be required to use holiday time first.

### **Exempt Employees**

Employees in this class are deemed to be exempt from the Fair Labor Standards Act minimum wage and overtime standards. Employees in this class fall into three categories: Executive, Administrative, and Professional. The County shall follow either the short test or the long test as set forth in the Fair Labor Standards Act, whichever is applicable, to determine the "exempt" status employees.

Employees classified as exempt will not maintain a timesheet unless they are reporting the use of sick/personal, annual, or holiday leave (floating holiday) in increments of full days/shifts.

Exempt employees in this category will use recorded comp-time utilizing the same request and approval process established for annual / sick / holiday leave until the balance is exhausted and such recorded comp-time will be utilized before use of annual or sick leave.

In the event of voluntary or involuntary termination as an employee of Stokes County, exempt personnel shall not be eligible for monetary reimbursement for recorded or un-recorded comp-time.

*Upon appointment, each employee shall be notified of his/her exempt/non-exempt status.*

### **Law Enforcement Personnel**

According to the Fair Labor Standards Act, non-exempt law enforcement personnel fall under the 207(K) exemption which requires employers to compensate at an overtime rate for hours worked in excess of 171 hours in a 28 day period. Law enforcement personnel that are classified as non-exempt by the County normally work a "fluctuating" work schedule within the 28 day work period that ranges from 168 to 171 hours. In the event the employee is required to physically work in excess of 171 hours in the work period, compensatory time will be awarded at a rate of one and one-half hours for each hour physically worked in excess of 171 in the 28 day work period.

### **EMS Personnel**

EMS personnel work a 218.25 hour work schedule per month. This class of employee earns time-and-one-half cash compensation for each hour of overtime physically worked in excess of forty (40) hours in a seven (7) day work week.

### **Communications Personnel**

Communications personnel work a 218.25 hour work schedule per month. This class of employee earns time-and-one-half cash compensation for each hour of overtime physically worked in excess of forty (40) hours in a seven (7) day work week.

## **Employment Procedures, Requirements, Incentives, Performance Evaluations**

### **Employment Offer**

Once the Department Head has selected a candidate for employment, the Department Head will calculate the salary according to the Salary Computation policy (pg.28) and present the salary recommendation along with supporting documentation to the Human Resources Director for review. It will be the responsibility of the Department Head to verify dates of service with prior employers and determine if previous employment is relevant to the job. The Human Resources Director will review the salary recommendation with the Finance Director. Once the salary recommendation has been verified by the Human Resources Director and the Finance Director, the salary recommendation will be presented to the County Manager for final approval. Once the County Manager has approved the candidate, if applicable, along with the salary recommendation, the Human Resources Director will forward this information to the Department Head. Once the Department Head has received approval notification from the Human Resources Director, the Department Head will send the candidate an offer of employment letter for confirmation. The candidate will not be allowed to start employment with Stokes County until the Job Description Acknowledgment Form has been signed by the candidate and returned to the Human Resources Department. (See pg. 61)

### **Appointments**

It is the County's policy to create career opportunities for its employees when possible. Therefore, when a current employee applying for a vacant position possesses the best qualifications of all applicants, that applicant shall be appointed to the vacant position. Departments subject to the North Carolina Office of State Human Resources must verify that the employee is fully qualified for the position before such appointment.

Once a Department Head realizes a vacancy within the department, he/she shall notify the Human Resources Director or County Manager. The vacancy will be advertised within existing County departments for a period of one week. County Manager has the authority to waive the one week internal posting for positions with mandatory requirements (for example – nurses, social workers, etc.). Should non-qualified applicants apply, the vacancy shall be advertised on the County website for a period of no less than two (2) weeks. A longer and more widely circulated vacancy advertisement may be approved by the Human Resources Director or the County Manager.

Before any commitment is made to the applicant, the Department Head, not subject to the State Personnel Act, shall forward an appointment recommendation and reasons for selecting the particular request to interview the recommended applicant, to the Human Resources Director or County Manager. The Human Resources Director or County Manager, may request to interview the recommended applicants himself/herself. After investigating the qualifications and experience of the recommended applicant, the Human Resources Director or the County Manager, shall approve or reject the appointment. After approval the Department Head may extend a conditional offer of employment to the selected applicant. Employment shall be contingent upon an acceptable physical examination, drug test, driver's license and criminal history report.

It is the policy of Stokes County to provide a safe and secure working environment for all employees. Criminal convictions against an applicant for employment may have an impact upon qualifications for employment and will be considered in hiring decisions. Accordingly, candidates who have been requested to interview for a County position shall be required to submit a certified copy off a criminal record check for all counties which they have lived for the previous five (5) years. Criminal record check shall be submitted two (2) business days prior to the scheduled interview date before any offer of employment. Applicants shall be required to answer completely and accurately questions on their application with regard to previous criminal convictions. Failure to do so will subject the applicant to not being hired.

An applicant for employment will be rejected if the criminal record check reveals conviction of a crime that indicates that employee (1) poses a threat to the physical safety of County personnel, or (2) does not have the integrity or honesty to fulfill his or her duties as a County employee. Conviction of a crime, as used in this policy, includes the entry of (1) a plea of guilty, no contest, or the equivalent; or (2) a verdict of guilty in a court of law or military tribunal.

If the county considers an applicant's criminal record in making a decision adverse to an applicant, the County Manager shall make written findings with regard to the reason therefore.

The appointment by the Sheriff or Register of Deeds of a relative by blood or marriage or nearer kinship than first cousin, of a person who has been convicted of a crime involving moral turpitude is subject to approval by the Board of County Commissioners as required by **G.S. 153A-103**. The Board of County Commissioners shall advertise for, interview, appoint, and evaluate the positions of County Manager, Clerk to the Board, County Attorney, Tax Administrator, and Finance Officer.

It shall be the following policy of Stokes County, excluding the Sheriff and Register of Deeds, relating to the hiring of relatives:

- a. Members of an immediate family shall not be employed at the same time if such employment would result in an employee directly or indirectly supervising a member of the immediate family.
- b. This policy shall not be retroactive, and no action will be taken concerning those members of the same family employed in conflict with (a) above prior to the adoption of this policy.
- c. Immediate family is defined for the purpose of this section as spouse, mother, father, guardian, children, sister, brother, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, grandparents, grandchildren, plus the various combinations of half, step, in-law, and adopted relations that can be derived from those names.

#### **Physical Examinations**

Each selected applicant for County employment in a permanent position shall, as a condition of employment, submit to a physical examination at no cost to the applicant. The Department shall schedule the applicant to be examined within 14 days or as soon as possible after the applicant begins his/her duties. The physician of the County's choice shall be used to perform the examination.

A physical examination is completed to determine whether the selected applicant is physically capable of satisfactorily performing the duties of the position and without endangering the safety of himself/herself or others. Should the results of the physical examination indicate the applicant is unable to satisfactorily perform the duties of the position and without endangering the safety of himself/herself or others, the applicant shall not fill the position.

Any employee of the County may be required to submit a physical examination if the Supervisor deems the employee unable to satisfactorily perform the duties of the position, and without endangering the safety of himself/herself or others. Should the results of the physical examination indicate the applicant is unable to satisfactorily perform the duties of the position and without endangering the safety of himself/herself or others, the employee may be transferred to a position suitable to his/her qualifications and capabilities, retired, or be terminated.

In all cases, the cost of required physical examinations shall be paid for by the County, and the results of the examination shall be kept confidential.

*Permanent employees are encouraged, but not required, to undergo regular physical examinations.*

### **Recruitment Incentives**

It is the County's policy to recruit the best qualified, most experienced personnel possible. Therefore, applicants hired within 6 months of their separation from other government agencies participating in the North Carolina Local/State/Federal Government Employees Retirement System shall be allowed to transfer a maximum of five years of their accrued years of service. This benefit applies only to those formally employed in local government or related agencies, and previously enrolled in the Local and State Employees' Retirement System, including employees previously employed by Stokes County.

## **Employee Benefits**

The provisions of this article shall not apply to temporary employees with the exception of Workers' Compensation, Retirement, and Supplemental Retirement, as they are governed by State or Federal Law.

### **Holidays**

The County observes twelve (12) holidays, plus other days which the County Board of Commissioners may so designate.

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Birthday
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Veteran's Day
- Thanksgiving (2)
- Christmas (2)

- Employees are given one (1) Floating Holiday each year, employees must be employed by December 1<sup>st</sup> in order to be eligible for the Floating Holiday. The Floating Holiday must be taken by December 31<sup>st</sup> of each year.

**\*\*Effective 2022 Stokes County will follow the North Carolina State Holiday Schedule and do away with the floating Holiday.\*\***

When a holiday falls on a Saturday, the preceding Friday shall be observed. When a holiday falls on a Sunday, the following Monday shall be observed.

If the Department Head or County Manager determines that it is necessary for an employees to work on a holiday, compensatory hours shall be awarded for the hours worked. Employees who are subject to work holidays because the department continues to operate as usual shall receive an accrual of holiday hours which will be taken at the direction of the Department Head and prior use of all other leave time. These departments are: Sheriff's Department, Emergency Communications, Jail, and EMS. Solid Waste employees who must work on holidays will accrue compensatory time. Accumulated holiday hours are compensable if the employee terminates. Employees will be required to use accrued holiday hours before using any other type of leave with the exception of the "Floating Holiday".

Holiday pay will be granted only when an employee works the day before and the day after the holiday, or has a sufficient earned leave balance to use. (The use of "day before" and "day after" represents the entire scheduled workday before and after the holiday.)

Permanent, part-time employees earn holiday pay only when the holiday falls on a regular scheduled workday and only earn the number of hours normally scheduled.

### **Annual Leave (Vacation)**

The County provides annual leave benefits to all part/full time permanent County Employees. However, only employees that have attained permanent employee status may request to take annual leave. Employees that have not attained permanent employee status will not be allowed to take annual leave unless authorized by their Department Head or the County Manager.

To take annual leave, an authorized employee should first make a request to their supervisor at least three working days in advance of the date they wish to start their leave period and receive approval from their supervisor before taking the requested annual leave. Approval/denial of annual leave request is based on the needs of the employer. Department Heads are authorized to extend the minimum 3-working day advance notice as needed for the proper operation of their department.

The rate at which annual leave is accrued is based on years of service. The following scale demonstrates the annual leave granted to an employee who works 37.50 hours per week.

<b>Years of Employment</b>	<b>Earned Annual Leave</b>
0-2 years	10 days
2-5 years	12 days
5-10	15 days
10-15 years	18 days
15-20 years	21 days
20 or more years	24 days

All other work schedules will be accrued and calculated in a proportional manner.

At the end of a calendar year, all annual leave accrued and available to an employee that exceeds the maximum carry-over limit for their position will automatically be converted to sick leave. The annual leave carry-over limits are as follows:

37.50 hour workweek employees	180 hours
40 hour workweek employees	192.60 hours
Law Enforcement/Jail employees	216 hours
EMS employees	240 hours

Employees retiring, resigning, or terminated from County Service shall be paid for accrued annual leave at the wage rate in effect for the employee at the time of separation as long as required resignation notice is given. A minimum of two (2) weeks' notice is required for all resigning, non-exempt employees. A minimum of three (3) weeks' notice is required for all employees resigning, exempt personnel.

Employees are cautioned not to retain excess accumulation of annual leave late in the calendar year due to the necessity to keep all county functions in operation.

An employee who transfers from one county department to another shall retain any accumulated vacation leave.

Employees that have access or supervisory control over cash money, checks, certified checks, bank drafts, financial records, or other types of incoming revenue must take at least one consecutive week (5 consecutive workdays) per calendar year using either annual, holiday, or comp. time leave.

Non-exempt employees shall record/accrue and use Vacation/Holiday/Sick & Personal/Compensatory Leave in 15 minutes increments. Exempt employees shall record the use of Vacation/Holiday/Sick & Personal/Compensatory Leave in increments of full-day/shift.

### **Sick Leave and Personal Leave**

One of the most valuable benefits available to a permanent employee is sick leave and personal leave with pay. Sick/Personal leave is earned at the rate of twelve (12) days per year for the basic workweek. Use of sick/personal leave is permitted during the initial probationary employment period with the County. The rate for all other work schedules will be accrued and calculated in a proportional manner. (See Stokes County Leave Accrual Schedule pg.58)

***Sick Leave may be used as follows:*** Personal sickness, bodily injury, physical or dental examinations or treatment, exposure to a contagious disease when continued work may jeopardize the health of others, and incapacity due to pregnancy or childbirth.

***Personal Leave may be used as follows:*** Illness in the employee's family (includes mother, father, legal guardian, grandmother, grandfather, spouse or child) which requires the care of the employee, or the funeral of a member of the employee's immediate family (see above with the addition of brother, sister, mother-in-law, and father-in-law).

Department Heads or the County Manager may require a physician's certificate as to the nature of an employee's illness and as to his/her physical capacity to resume duties for each occasion on which he/she uses sick leave. Failure to produce a physician's certificate as requested shall be considered just cause for disciplinary action.

Employees who retire, resign in good standing, or are dismissed from employment because of a reduction in force, and are reinstated in a permanent status within five (5) years shall be credited with their previously accumulated sick/personal leave if this leave has not been "cashed in" through the Local Government Employees Retirement System, or transferred for use by the employee to another employer. No employee shall be paid for accumulated sick/personal leave upon termination.

Sick/Personal leave shall be cumulative with no limit on maximum accumulation. An employee who transfers from one County department to another shall retain any accumulated sick leave.

Notification of the desire to use Sick/Personal leave shall be submitted to the employee's supervisor according to each individual departments' guidelines. If department does not establish specific guidelines, employees must notify the supervisor no later than two hours after the beginning of the scheduled workday.

Employees using more than five consecutive sick days will be considered out on Family Medical Leave (FMLA).

Sick/Personal leave is intended for use only under specific conditions as set forth in this policy. Upon retirement from the County, an employee's unused sick leave is allowed as creditable service for members of the NC Local Government Employees Retirement System. One month of credit is allowed for each twenty (20) days of unused sick leave when the employee retires, and an additional month for any part of twenty (20) days left over.

#### **Authorized Absence with Pay**

An employee may be excused with pay at the discretion of the supervisor as follows:

1. To serve on Jury Duty.
2. For leave required for annual training as a member of the organized military reserves. Such leave shall not exceed two (2) calendar weeks in a calendar year. The County shall pay the difference between the employee's County pay and the military base pay during the two (2) week period.

Temporary employees are not eligible for military leave benefits.

#### **Authorized Absence without Pay (leave of Absence)**

Request for authorized absences without pay may be granted for a maximum of two (2) weeks. First, the employee will request leave via their Department Head in memorandum form. The Department Head shall forward the request with his/her recommendation to the County Manager. The County Manager shall approve or disapprove the request. Authorization for absences less than one day/shift per pay period, may be granted by the Department Head, not to exceed more than one absence per pay period. Absences during probationary period must be approved by the County Manager.

No leave without pay shall be granted if the employee has an unused balance of accrued leave hours that may not be used. Additionally, time spent on personal leave without pay will not apply toward credited service and does not accrue employee benefits.

#### **Family Medical Leave (FMLA)**

In compliance with FMLA (Family Medical Leave Act) Stokes County provides up to twelve (12) weeks of *job protected* leave without pay during any twelve (12) month period for one or more of the circumstances listed below. In addition, your group health and dental benefits will be maintained for the duration of the leave. (If both husband and wife request leave, they are limited to a total of twelve (12) weeks of leave between them within a twelve (12) month period.)

- Birth of a child of the employee, to care for the child;
- Placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care;
- A serious health condition of the employee's spouse, child, or parent that requires the care of the employee;
- A serious health condition of the employee that makes the employee unable to perform the functions of his/her job. (A serious health condition is defined as an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves hospitalization or continuing treatment by a doctor.)

It is the County's policy to require any employee to use their paid leave benefits (vacation, sick/personal, compensatory or holiday) before being without pay.

Any employee who takes Family Medical Leave is guaranteed the right to either return to the same position he/she left when the leave began, or to an equivalent position with the same pay and benefits.

While an employee is taking Family Medical Leave, the employee's group health/dental benefits will continue to be paid by the County for the duration of the leave. However, if the employee fails to return to work, the employee will be required to repay the premiums paid by the County while taking Family or Medical Leave unless approved by the County Manager.

If the employee requests intermittent leave or a reduced time schedule that is foreseeable due to a planned medical treatment, the employee is required to give at least thirty (30) days' notice before the leave is to begin. In cases where 30 days notice is not possible, the employee is to provide notice as soon as practicable. The notice should contain the reason for the need to use Family Medical Leave, the date the leave is to begin and end, and the timetable leave is needed (full or reduced time schedule).



The supervisor should forward the notice to the Human Resources Director who will review it for approval and notify the employee in writing of their determination. Family and Medical Leave Notice Forms available. (See pg. 60)

If an employee is using leave for a serious medical condition of the employee or a family member, a physician's statement must be provided containing the following information as soon as practicable after identifying the supervisor of the need to take leave:

1. The date the serious health condition began;
2. The probable duration of the condition;
3. The appropriate medical facts known by the physician regarding the condition;
4. A certificate containing a statement that the employee is needed to provide care if the leave concerns care for a family member;
5. A certificate containing a statement that the employee is unable to perform the functions of his/her position if the leave request is due to the employee's own serious health condition;
6. If the leave is for planned medical treatment and the employee wants a reduced time schedule, a certificate stating the dates when the treatment is to begin and the duration of the treatment;
7. For an intermittent leave request because of a serious medical condition of the employee or a member of the family – the certificate must state the medical necessity for the intermittent leave and how long the leave will be needed.

If an employee is using leave for their own serious medical condition, a physician's statement must be provided prior to returning to work stating the physician is authorizing or releasing the employee to return to work.

#### **Intermittent FMLA**

If an employee's entitlement to leave is for a serious health condition, when medically necessary, medical leave may be taken on an intermittent or reduced time schedule (a reduced workday or workweek.)

Stokes County reserves the right in cases of medical hardship, at the discretion of the County Manager, to waive the requirement of the employee to repay the health insurance premiums paid by the County while the employee was taking Family Medical Leave in the event the employee does not return to work due to illness.

#### **Sick & Compensatory Time Donation**

Permanent, part/full time employees who have been approved for continuous Family Medical Leave may receive donations of sick leave and compensatory time from permanent, part/full time employees in cases where the employee has exhausted all available leave. This policy provides an opportunity for employees to voluntarily assist another employee affected by a medical condition that requires a leave of absence from duty for a prolonged period of time resulting in a loss of income due to lack of accumulated leave. Sick and compensatory donation will carry the following guidelines:

1. Both the employee(s) making the donation and the employee(s) receiving the donation shall be permanent, part/full time employees.

2. To be eligible to receive donated time, the employee must have or will exhaust all leave accumulations prior to cessation of family Medical Leave.
3. This policy shall not preclude or enhance the absence thresholds stipulated in the Stokes County Family Medical Leave policy.
4. Each approved medical condition shall stand alone and donated leave not used for each approved incident shall be returned to the donor(s).
5. This policy shall cover the transfer of unused, accumulated sick time and compensatory time only.
6. Leave transferred under this policy will be available for use on a current basis or may be retroactive for up to thirty (30) calendar days to substitute for leave without pay already granted to the leave recipient.
7. An employee may donate no less than one day/shift or no more than three hundred (300) hours to the leave recipient.
8. Hours donated must be in full hours and may not be fractions of hours.
9. Donated leave may not exceed 50% of the donor's total accumulated sick or compensatory hours
10. The donor must present an "Application to Donate Accrued Leave" to his/her Department Head which is approved by the Human Resources Director.

### **Worker's Compensation**

An employee must report a job related injury to their supervisor immediately or as soon as possible, regardless of the severity. Failure to report said incident shall result in forfeiture of rights to benefits. The Stokes County Employee Incident Report Form shall be completed. The Supervisor is responsible for investigating the incident, completing a Supervisor Employee Incident Report, and forwarding all pertinent documentation to Human Resources as soon as possible. Employees with minor injuries will go to LifeBrite Community Hospital of Stokes. Employees with emergency incidents will go to a hospital best suited for that incident. Any employee absent from duty because of a sickness or disability covered by the North Carolina Workers' Compensation Act may receive Worker's Compensation benefits. The Worker's Compensation Act requires a disability of seven calendar days before Worker's Compensation benefits begin. The employee will be paid directly from the Worker's Comp insurance agency. All of the employee's medical bills shall be paid and the employee will receive compensation set by the North Carolina Worker's Compensation Commission until the employee is able to return to work.

While employees are out of work on workers' compensation, per the North Carolina Local Government Retirement System, neither the County nor the employee may contribute to the Retirement System. The time out on workers' compensation does not count towards years of service for retirement eligibility. Please contact the NC Local Government Retirement System if interested in information about purchasing time lost. [www.MyNCRetirement.com](http://www.MyNCRetirement.com)

Employees are still responsible for payment of all personal premiums that are deducted from their pay checks such as insurance, disability, supplemental benefits, etc. If the employee is on leave without pay status, they must forward payment for these premiums no later than the first day of each month while on leave. Any employee eligible for wage compensation through Workers' Compensation benefits may use their accumulated leave to replace the difference in their normal weekly salary and comparable

rate, but in no case may the employee receive compensation in excess of 100% of their normal weekly salary.

When an employee returns to work under specific restrictions the Department Head must work with the Risk Manager to provide modified duties for the employee. If the accommodations cannot be met within that department, the Department Head should notify Human Resources to locate another department where the accommodations may be met. The light duty accommodation last until the employee is released by the doctor or the restrictions become permanent. If the restrictions become permanent and the employee cannot perform their job duties, the employee may be transferred into a vacant position anywhere within the County that he/she meets the qualifications and can perform the job duties. If there are no vacant positions available that the employees qualifies for and could perform the job duties, they will be released from employment with the County after ninety (90) days.

**Notes:**

- On-the-job injuries are covered by Workers' Compensation. Off-the-job injuries are covered by the employee's medical insurance.
- While employees are out of work on workers' compensation they do not receive accruals from Stokes County Government.

**Light Duty Program**

It is the policy of Stokes County to provide and establish procedures for uniform response and handling of a County-wide Light Duty/Return to Work Program for employees with work-related injuries and illnesses who are unable, temporarily, to return to their permanent job classification. Light duty work shall be provided to employees who have incurred temporary or permanent injuries in conformance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. (ADA)

**Basic Requirements**

Employees may be assigned to light duty assignments when temporarily unable to perform their normal work due to industrial injury or illness, provided the following requirements are met:

- The assignment shall fulfill a meaningful job function(s) within limitations set by the treating physician.
- The assignment shall not create a new job, but may incorporate or modify a present position on a temporary basis.
- The assignments shall be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Employees shall be compensated at their regular salary. An employee who declines a light duty position which meets the treating physician's requirements shall be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination in accordance with the Stokes County Personnel Policy.

**Health and Dental Insurance**

The County of Stokes shall offer group health and dental insurance to all full-time, permanent County employees. The County shall pay the full premium of the individual employee's hospital, surgical, and medical group health insurance along with dental insurance upon approval each budget year. Additional coverage for the employee's family, spouse or child shall be paid by the employee through payroll

deduction. County Commissioners shall be eligible for coverage and paid for by the County upon approval each budget year, provided the insurance plan allows such eligibility.

Employee health and dental insurance benefits become effective the first of the month following the date of employment. Employee health and dental insurance benefits end on the last day worked when the employee terminates employment with the County.

#### **(COBRA) Health Benefits**

It is the policy of the County to comply with the provisions of the Consolidated Omnibus Reconciliation Act (COBRA). COBRA requires that employers sponsoring group health and dental coverage offer participants and their qualified beneficiaries the opportunity for a temporary extension of coverage at group rates in certain instances where coverage under the plan would otherwise end because of certain qualifying events. COBRA benefits are administered by the County's health insurance provider

The County offers continuation of health and dental insurance benefits for the employee and his/her dependents effective the following day after the date of termination. This benefit is available under the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 (COBRA) and the Tax Reform Act of 1986. To receive this benefit, under COBRA regulation, the employee must elect to do so within sixty (60) days from the date of termination, or other qualifying event, by completing and submitting a "continuation of coverage" application. Furthermore, the employee is responsible for paying the premium. Payment amount will be at the group rate for the coverage elected plus two percent (2%) for administrative handling. The coverage elected by the employee may be continued for a period of eighteen (18) months or thirty-six (36) months, whichever is applicable under COBRA.

#### **Breastfeeding Support**

To support employees in providing their child with their own mother's milk, Stokes County will strive to allow breastfeeding employees to express milk while at work under the guidelines listed below:

1. Any employee who wishes to express milk in the workplace shall make a request to her supervisor so that appropriate accommodations can be arranged.
2. Breastfeeding employees shall be allowed a flexible schedule for nursing or pumping. The time allowed will not exceed the normal time allowed for lunch and breaks. For time beyond normal lunch and breaks, sick/annual leave will be used. Employees required to use holiday/compensatory time before any other time, will be required to follow the County requirements.
3. A confidential area will be provided where the breastfeeding mother can nurse or express breast milk to be stored for later use.
4. Breastfeeding mothers will be allowed to store breast milk if properly stored and labeled in a County refrigerator if available, otherwise, employees will be responsible to provide their own refrigeration such as a cooler for storing breast milk. Stokes County will not be responsible for the mother's stored milk in a county refrigerator.

### **Tuition Reimbursement Program**

The provisions to this section do not apply to temporary employees.

Stokes County shall provide up to a maximum of \$500.00 per employee per fiscal year for the reimbursement of tuition cost for courses of study taken on the employee's own time at accredited learning institutions.

The following stipulations may apply:

1. Reimbursement shall be made only for course work completed at the accredited public, business, trade school, community college, college or university. Only semester or quarter-length courses are eligible. No workshops, seminars or conferences are eligible.
2. Applications for reimbursement shall be approved by the department head only for course work related to the employee's job area, or for course work allowing an employee to take on some greater task within his/her agency.
3. Upon application for reimbursement, the employee shall pledge a minimum of six (6) months service to the County after completion of the course or graduation from the chosen curriculum.

All applications for tuition reimbursement will be approved by the County Manager.

### **Credit Union**

All employees of the County are eligible to join the North Carolina Local Government Employees' Credit Union. Employees under the State Personnel Act are eligible to join the North Carolina Local Government Employees' Credit Union. The Credit Union offers full service banking to its members while offering very competitive rates and charges. Employees are encouraged to take advantage of the services of the Credit Union.

All employees of the County are eligible to participate in payroll direct deposit to any banking or credit institution.

### **Retirees' Health Insurance**

Employees retiring from employment with Stokes County shall be allowed to retain health insurance coverage (no dental) through the Stokes County Health Insurance Group Plan provided the employee is a member of and retires under the rules set forth by the NCLGERS and has worked his/her final **ten (10) years** prior to retirement with Stokes County. A retiring employee must follow both guidelines to be eligible for retiree health insurance coverage:

<b>Minimum Years of Service</b>	<b>Minimum Stokes County Service</b>	<b>County Contributions</b>	<b>Employee Contribution</b>
25 years +	20 years +	100%	0%
25 years +	10 years +	50%	50%
20 years +	10 years +	0%	100%
Less than 20 years	Less than 10 years	No coverage	No coverage

1. Retiring employees with less than 20 years of service in the Retirement System or less than 10 years of service with Stokes County shall not be eligible for retiree health insurance coverage with Stokes County. Sick leave transferred to the Retirement System, does not count toward minimum years of service.

2. Retired employees shall be dropped from Stokes County health insurance upon reaching the age of 65. No dependents will be allowed to remain on the coverage if the employee's coverage has been terminated.
3. Any coverage paid less than 100% by the County shall be assessed a 2% administrative fee.
4. Under no circumstances shall the County pay more than the individual premium. Coverage beyond the individual employee shall be totally the responsibility of the retired employee.
5. Retiring employees must elect to take or reject this coverage before their last day of work before their retirement date.
6. Retired employees paying any portion of their coverage or dependent coverage must be paid no later than the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month prior to coverage. For example, you must pay your March premium no later than February 25<sup>th</sup>.
7. Late payments are subject to immediate insurance cancellations.
8. Coverage may change depending on the County's insurance carrier. Coverage, cost, and insurance carriers are determined yearly.

## Retirement

Employees of Stokes County are enrolled in the North Carolina Local Government Employee's Retirement System (NCLGERS). The employee shall contribute a percentage of his/her salary, which shall be deducted from the employee's paycheck each pay period according to requirements set forth by the NCLGERS. The County shall contribute an employer's share, which is based on the calculations prepared by an actuary. (Different provisions in the NCLGERS apply to Law Enforcement Personnel. For more information on the retirement system, reference the retirement system handbook at [www.MyNCRetirement.com](http://www.MyNCRetirement.com).)

The employee may retire from government service with unreduced benefits after:

1. You reach age 65 and complete 5 years of creditable service, or
2. You reach age 60 and complete 25 years of creditable service, or
3. You complete 30 years of creditable service at any age.

Law Enforcement personnel may be eligible to retire with an additional retirement benefit provided by the County called the "Separation Allowance". To qualify for this benefit, the following guidelines apply:

1. Either accrue 30 years of creditable service, regardless of age, or have attained 55 years of age with a minimum of 5 years of creditable service.
2. Complete a minimum of 5 years of continuous service as a law enforcement officer immediately preceding retirement.

**Amount of Allowance:** The annual allowance to an eligible retired law enforcement officer, which is payable monthly, is equal to 0.85% of his/her annual base rate of compensation multiplied by his/her total creditable service.

**Cessation of Allowance:** The Separation Allowance for law enforcement officer's payable at retirement ceases at age 62, at death, or upon re-employment by a State department, agency, or institution.

**Contributions:** All law enforcement officers who are members of the North Carolina Governmental Employee's Retirement System are covered and no member contributions are required. The full cost of the allowance is paid by Stokes County.

## **Supplemental Retirement Programs**

The County offers three (3) supplemental retirement programs - the 401K Plan, the Deferred Compensation Program (457) and the North Carolina Deferred Compensation Plan (457). The County shall contribute 1% of the employee's base pay period salary (law enforcement officers do not apply) to the 401(k) Plan if the employee matches the 1% contribution. Employees may contribute to either, or both plans through payroll deduction, and contributions can be deducted pretax or after tax basis. The employee may contribute more than 1% to the 401(k) Plan, but the County will only match 1%.

Law enforcement officers are provided a contribution by the County into the 401K Plan at a rate of five percent (5%) of the employee's gross pay per pay period. This benefit is provided whether or not the employee contributes to the Plan. To qualify for this benefit, the employee must be: 1) a certified law enforcement officer with the power of arrest, and perform these duties for the majority of the time on the job, and 2) be a member of the NCLGERS.

## **Leave of Absences**

### **Jury Leave**

Employees summoned to duty either as a juror or witness shall notify his/her supervisor immediately. Employees shall be granted leave with regular pay for the period served. No charge shall be made against the employee's annual leave and the employee shall retain any juror's pay received.

Should an employee appear as a plaintiff, defendant, or volunteer to appear as a witness in court (other than at the request or behalf of Stokes County), the absence from work must be approved by employee's supervisor. Either annual leave, compensatory leave, holiday leave or leave without pay may be used for the aforementioned court appearance. Sick/personal leave cannot be used for this purpose.

### **Military Leave**

Permanent employees entering active duty with any branch of the United States Armed Forces are entitled to re-employment rights under the law. An employee who is entering military service is granted a leave of absence without pay for up to the maximum period of time during which re-employment is available under Federal Law. The employee must apply for re-employment within ninety (90) calendar days after release from active duty to be placed in a former job, if available, or to one of equal pay and status, unless there has been a change in circumstances which would make it impractical.

Employees must present their Department Head with a copy of their orders prior to their departure on leave, unless precluded by military necessity or circumstances that make notice unreasonable or impossible. Upon the presentation of an order to active duty, the Department Head will place the employee on Military Leave.

A permanent employee who is a member of a Reserve Unit or National Guard Unit, and who is called to active duty of not less than three (3) consecutive months may apply for re-employment within thirty one (31) calendar days following release from active duty or be reinstated.

If the compensation received while on Military Leave is less than the salary that would have been earned during this same period as an active employee, the employee shall receive the difference not to exceed his/her normal salary.

Employees who are called to active duty will be allowed to accrue the following leave as if the employee was still working:

- General employees will accrue vacation and sick leave.
- Sheriff's Department, EMS, Jail, and Communications employees will accrue vacation, sick, and holiday leave.

Employees covered by the County health and dental plans prior to leaving for the uniformed services are entitled to continue the "employee only" portion of their health and dental insurance benefits if so desired. Coverage for family members is still at the expense of the employee to be paid monthly to the County prior to the first day of the coverage month.

Employees working in "temporary" positions are not eligible for military leave benefits.

#### **Medical Leave without Pay**

An employee may be granted a leave of absence from work due to an approved leave as allowed under the Family Medical Leave Act without pay for up to six (6) months after the latter of 12 approved weeks of Family Medical Leave or the exhaustion of earned accumulated leave time. The employee must provide the County with sufficient medical information regarding the need for the extended leave. Medical leave without pay must be approved by the County Manager. Employee will be granted medical leave without pay in two month increments, not to exceed six months. An employee on approved medical leave without pay shall not accrue vacation, sick, or holiday leave and will be responsible of timely paying the employee portion of any insurance premiums. Failure to pay premiums within 30 days of the due date will result in termination of insurance coverage. Failure to return to work at the end of the granted leave will be considered a voluntary resignation.

#### **Funeral Leave**

Employees may request one day, or shift of paid leave because of a death in the immediate family. Any additional time off will be charged to accrued sick leave or vacation leave if such leave is available. Sick leave may be used for death in the employee's immediate family but may not exceed three (3) days for any one occurrence, except by special permission from the Department Head.

*For purposes of funeral leave "immediate family" includes a parent, spouse or child.*

#### **Parental School Leave**

North Carolina General Statute 95-28.3 requires employers to provide up to four (4) hours leave each year from assigned work time for an eligible employee to attend or otherwise be involved in their child's school. This policy may allow leave for school enrollment, parent/teacher conferences, meeting with



school staff for behavior problems, classroom activities, monitoring certain educational programs, school awards and assembly's, and volunteering at school functions. Per the statute, school is defined as any public school, private church school, church of religious charter, or nonpublic school described in parts 1 and 2 of Article 39 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes that regularly provides a course of grade instruction, preschool, and childcare facility as defined by NCGS 110-86(3)

- **Eligible Employee** – Parent, guardian, or someone who is otherwise a child's legal representative.
- **School** – Includes public and private childcare, pre-school, elementary and high schools.
- **Eligible Year** – July 1 through June 30 (fiscal year and normal year for most schools).
- **Eligible Time** – Up to a total of four (4) hours earned Parental School Leave with pay per year from assigned work time. The four (4) hours do not have to be taken all at once, but may be used in 15 minute periods.

Unless there is an emergency request from the child's school the employee is expected to request this leave in writing at least 48 hours prior to time desired. The Department Head and the employee must mutually agree upon Parental Leave Time.

#### **Administrative Leave**

The County Manager, for purposes considered to be in the public interest, in case of civil disturbances, severe weather conditions, internal investigations, or in such other circumstances as good judgement and common practice would dictate may authorize Administrative Leave with or without pay.

### **Supplemental Benefits**

The County offers supplemental benefits to full-time employees. These policies are optional to each employee and the premiums for each employee's selection are paid by the employee through payroll deduction. The County makes no contribution for these benefits.

Supplemental Benefits included but not limited to:

1. AFLAC
2. AFLAC Unreimbursed Medical/Day Care
3. Community Eye Care
4. Whole Life Insurance
5. Disability Policy
6. Life Insurance
7. Bankers Fidelity

\*Part time employees can participate in the AFLAC program, but payments will be the responsibility of the part time employee and will not be allowed to be payroll deducted.

#### **Flexible Benefits Plan**

Section 125 of the Internal Revenue Code allows the County to offer a plan to employees where certain expenses of the employee may be deducted from their salary on a pre-tax basis. The County offers this plan as Stokes County Flexible Benefits Plan. Qualified expenses in the plan are: health and dental insurance premiums, supplemental benefit premiums (disability, intensive care, and cancer benefits policies), dependent child care expenses, and unreimbursed medical expenses. This benefit will be

offered to each employee when they start work, and once a year thereafter on the anniversary of the Plan – July 1. Unless there is a family status change in the employee’s family during the year, these are the only times the benefit is offered to participants.

## **Time and Attendance Record**

### **Non Exempt Employees**

Non-exempt employees are required to complete a Time and Attendance Record documenting the time worked each day of the pay period. The County provides an electronic attendance record for employees. It is the responsibility of each employee to punch in and out each day in the Attendance Enterprise Software. The Attendance Software allows with departments who do not have computer access/internet capability to be auto punch; therefore the department head/supervisor can require the employee to submit a paper document to verify the time worked. This electronic attendance record is an official record of the time and attendance of each employee, and requires an employee and department head/supervisor to approve the attendance record electronically. Any misstatement or falsification of hours worked is grounds for disciplinary action.

### **Exempt Employees**

Exempt employees will only complete a Time and Attendance Record using the electronic Attendance Record System for the purpose of documenting the use of leave (annual, sick/personal, holiday or compensatory time).

### **Leave Request**

Nonexempt and exempt employees who have access to computer/internet should request any leave (vacation, sick/personal, holiday or compensatory time) with the Attendance Software. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to approve/deny/change the request in order to document time taken on the Attendance Record.

## **On Call Policy**

### **Purpose:**

The on-call program insures that the after hour’s needs of the County are met in a reliable and timely way. The following Stokes County Departments will participate in the on-call program:

- Fire Marshal’s Office
- Sheriff’s Office (DVO’s)
- Information Technology
- Public Building Maintenance
- Vehicle Maintenance
- Animal Control

*\*The Health Department and Department of Social Services please refer to your department guidelines for On-call Procedures\**

**Definitions:**

**On-Call** is compensation for an employee who must remain available to be called back to work on short notice if the need arises.

**On-Call** is compensation for an employee who has left the work site and is requested to respond (either by returning to work or by responding by telephone or computer) on short notice to an emergency work situation in order to avoid significant service disruption; or to avoid placing employees or the public in unsafe situations; or to provide department specific needs to the requesting agency, citizen, or county manager.

Exempt and non-Exempt employees will be required to participate in the on-call program. Compensation will only be awarded to non-exempt employees in compliance with FSLA standards.

**Compensation:**

Each participant in the on-call program will be paid a flat rate as described below:

- Monday – Monday Rate = \$200.00
- Daily rate = \$28.57
- Hourly Rate = \$1.19

**Record Keeping:**

All Non-Exempt employees participating in the on-call program will be required to complete the on-call documentation form and submit it to their department head for review and approval. Department heads will sign off on the documentation form and keep a copy in the personnel file for each employee participating in the program and forward the original to Finance Department for scheduled pay dates.

## **Emergency Call-Back Policy**

**Definition**

Emergency Callback – is when an employee has left the work site and is requested to respond (either by going back to work or responding via telephone or computer) on short notice to an emergency situation at work for any of the following reasons:

- Avoid significant service disruption
- Avoid placing employees, or the public in unsafe situations
- Protect and/or provide emergency services to property or equipment
- Respond to emergencies with staff, clients, or residents

The following Stokes County Departments will participate in the Emergency Call-Back program:

- Finance
- Emergency Communications
- EMS
- Emergency Management
- Fire Marshall's Office
- Planning & Inspections

- Health Department
- Department of Social Services
- Public Building Maintenance
- Animal Control
- Sheriff's Office
- Solid Waste

### **Compensation**

In emergency situations, non-exempt employees will be compensated at the overtime rate of time-and-one-half for hours worked in excess of (40) forty hours per week and double time for hours worked on holidays. Exempt employees (including Department Heads) required to work extended hours during an emergency situation, the county shall compensate for hours worked over and above the regular workweek at the regular hourly rate or as compensatory time.

### **Employee Travel and Reimbursement**

The County provides vehicles for use by the employees to conduct County business. Personal use of a County vehicle is prohibited except in a minimal amount. (Example of minimal personal use: a stop for lunch between two business appointments.) No passenger is allowed in a county vehicle unless he/she is a County employee, the passenger is being transported as a direct function of the department, the passenger is a colleague traveling with the employee to some educational or business related function, or the passenger is in distress and the employee is acting as a "good Samaritan." Each employee that operates a County vehicle is cautioned to always obey all traffic laws of the State of North Carolina. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action. Any employee involved in an accident while operating a County vehicle should immediately notify his/her Supervisor. The accident shall be subject to review by the Safety Review Board. The findings of the Safety Review Board may result in disciplinary action.

*If an employee is provided with a county vehicle for travel purposes related to their job and the employee chooses to drive their own vehicle; the county will not reimburse the employee for the mileage.*

### **Operation of a County Motor Vehicle**

County vehicles are easily identified and are seen by many citizens. How we operate County vehicles can have a positive or negative impact on citizen perceptions. By courteous, considerate driving habits, and by applying the principles of defensive driving to avoid accidents, we seek to promote safety and a positive public image. To achieve this goal, the following safety procedures have been established:

### **Safety Checks**

Each employee shall be responsible for a safety check each day of any vehicle or mobile equipment he/she is assigned to drive.

Safety checks shall include:

- |                       |                   |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| • All gauges          | Windshield wipers |
| • Lights              | Tires             |
| • Horn                | Clutch            |
| • Brakes/brake fluid  | Service Date      |
| • Directional Signals | Motor Oil         |

Brakes may be tested by putting the vehicle in gear and applying the brakes to bring it to a stop.

### **Other Stipulations**

1. Position all adjustments (seat, seat belt, mirrors) before operating.
2. Drivers of County vehicles must possess a valid Driver's License
3. An employee is not absolved from civil or criminal liability simply because the employee is operating a County vehicle.
4. Only materials and equipment necessary to further the performance of official duties will be transported on or in County vehicles.
5. Avoid the use of strong prescription medication before operating a County vehicle. The use of illegal drugs or alcohol while operating a County vehicle may lead to termination of employment.
6. All persons driving or riding in a County vehicle must wear a seat belt.
7. No more than 2 people shall be allowed to ride in the front seat of any County vehicle.
8. Never leave the vehicle unattended with the engine running.
9. Remove keys and lock doors when the vehicle is unattended.
10. Drivers are cautioned to be particularly careful and alert when operating a County vehicle around children.
11. Stay within the posted speed limit.
12. Do not assume the right-of-way. Use caution.
13. Avoid tailgating.
14. Signal turning intentions at least 100 feet from the turn. Signal lane changes and directional changes.
15. Use lights during periods of fog, storms, and darkness.
16. When backing a vehicle, make sure the way is clear. Back up slowly and cautiously. If another employee is present, he/she should aid in directing the backing procedure.
17. When parking a vehicle, use caution. If parking on a downgrade, turn the front wheels toward the curb and set the parking brake. Avoid parking the vehicle facing traffic.
18. When fueling the vehicle, turn off the ignition, keep the nozzle against the edge of the filler pipe, avoid spilling fuel, and never smoke when fueling a vehicle.
19. There should be **NO** use of a hand-held mobile communication device/cell phone to engage in a call, send/read/write a text message, or engage in any other use while operating a county vehicle. Calls using hands-free devices are permitted, as are GPS units affixed to the vehicle.

20. If a County employee is provided with a County vehicle for travel purposes related to their job and the employee chooses to drive their own vehicle; the County will not reimburse the employee for mileage.

### **Personal Vehicle**

The practice of using one's personal vehicle to conduct County business is discouraged, but occasionally the need arises to do so. In this case, the employee should request authorization from his/her supervisor prior to using the personal vehicle, and may request reimbursement for the number of miles traveled. A record should be kept of the date, place traveled, and the number of miles traveled for each time an employee uses his/her personal vehicle. The employee shall be reimbursed by the County, with the Supervisor's approval, at a rate per mile approved by the Stokes County Board of Commissioners. (Mileage reimbursement rates will be approved during the budget process by the Board of Commissioners.)

### **Out of County Travel**

From time to time, the need arises for an employee to travel out of the County to conduct County business, or to attend training or information functions. The following lists regulations regarding out-of-county travel:

#### **Day Trip (Training/Seminars/Informational Meetings)**

- Employee shall request pre-approval to travel from the Department Head and the County Manager unless travel is in the normal scope of the employee's job duties.
- The Department Head shall attempt to provide a County vehicle for the employee's use if practical and possible to do so.
- Meal reimbursement for out of town travel will be reimbursed per the County's Out-of-Town Travel and Reimbursement Procedure Policy. (Meal reimbursement rates will be approved during the budget process by the Board of County Commissioners.)
- Only lunch reimbursement per the County's Out-of-Town Travel and Reimbursement Procedure Policy will be allowed unless an exception is made by the County Manager.

#### **Overnight Trip**

- Employee shall request pre-approval to travel from the Department Head and the County Manager.
- The Department Head shall attempt to provide a County vehicle for the employee's use if practical and possible to do so.
- Lodging accommodations shall be provided.
- Meal reimbursement for out of town travel will be reimbursed per the County's Out-of-Town Travel and Reimbursement Procedure Policy. (Meal reimbursement rates will be approved during the budget process by the Board of County Commissioners.)
- The most cost favorable and practical mode of transportation shall be used.
- Other customary expenses, such as parking (when free parking is not available), and taxi fees shall be reimbursed upon presentation of a valid receipt.

### **Accompanying Spouse**

- Should the spouse of an employee accompany him/her on an overnight trip, the county shall only pay for those costs associated directly with the employee. (For example: If the cost of a single hotel room is \$50 and the cost for two people is \$60, the county will pay only the \$50.)
- The spouse of an employee shall not accompany the employee in a County vehicle.
- The employee will not be reimbursed for use of personal vehicle.

### **Uniforms**

Some employees are required to wear a uniform on the job. The County shall provide these employees with the appropriate uniforms and necessary equipment at no cost to the employee. Any department with work taking place outside of the office will be provided with county logoed apparel. The property issued shall remain the property of the County and the employee is responsible for returning all property issued if the employee terminates employment with the County. Should the employee fail to return the County-issued property, the County shall use all means at its disposal, including legal action, to regain the property or the value of the property monetarily.

Each Department Head shall be responsible for maintaining a record of the property issued for the personal use of the employee, and the collection of the property should the employee terminate employment with the County. If the Department Head is unsuccessful in collecting the property at termination, the County Manager shall be notified as soon as possible in writing, detailing the property not collected with an estimated value of the property.

***The Sheriff shall have the discretion to provide a non-uniform clothing allowance for special needs of the department.***

### **Professional Dress Code**

County employees are expected to represent the County to its citizens in an exemplary manner both in conduct and appearance. The attire worn by county employees is to be clean, neat, and in keeping with the nature of the duties performed. Employees should wear “business casual” attire or county issued uniforms. Inappropriate clothing for the workplace includes, but is not limited to the following: clothing with offensive or inappropriate designs or stamps, torn or ripped clothing, sweat suits, sweat shirts, shorts, halter-tops, miniskirts, shirts with spaghetti straps, and observable underclothing.

Hair should be clean and neatly arranged. Clean personal hygiene habits must be maintained to minimize body odor unless prohibited by sincerely held religious beliefs. In addition, strong-smelling perfumes, cologne and body lotions are discouraged.

All employees should keep in mind that their clothing should be suitable to their work environment. For example, employees who routinely interact with the public will want to project a professional image at all times. Employees who work out in the field and are subject to unknown conditions should expect to wear more casual attire.

The immediate supervisor will be responsible for ensuring that the policy is followed and that employees are dressed appropriately for the workplace. It will be the responsibility of the supervisor to talk to the employee if the policy is not being followed. If this does not solve the problem, the Department Head, the Human Resources Director or County Manager will be asked to intervene.

Stokes County reserves the right to advise any employee at any time that his or her grooming, attire or appearance is unacceptable.

Employees will be allowed to have “dress down days” on Fridays, following the guidelines related to inappropriate clothing as previously stated in this section.

***The County Manager shall be responsible for the administration of the provisions of this personnel resolution.***



## Stokes County Leave Accrual Schedule

### Annual Leave

Years of Employment	Workweek Schedule (Hrs.)	Year (Days)	Pay Period (Hrs.)	Max End of Year Carryover (Hrs.)
0 to 2 Years	37.5	10	5.77	180
	40	10	6.17	180
	45	10	6.92	180
	50	10	7.69	200
2 to 5 Years	37.5	12	6.92	180
	40	12	7.41	192.6
	45	12	8.31	216
	50	12	9.23	240
5 to 10 Years	37.5	15	8.69	180
	40	15	9.3	192.6
	45	15	10.43	216
	50	15	11.54	240
10 to 15 Years	37.5	18	10.39	180
	40	18	11.11	192.6
	45	18	12.46	216
	50	18	13.85	240
15 to 20 Years	37.5	21	12.12	180
	40	21	12.96	192.6
	45	21	14.54	216
	50	21	16.11	240
20 Years +	37.5	24	13.85	180
	40	24	14.81	192.6
	45	24	16.61	216
	50	24	18.38	240

### Sick Leave/Holiday Leave

Years of Employment	Workweek Schedule	Sick Leave - Year	Sick Leave - Pay Period	Holiday - Year	Holiday Per Day
Any number	37.5	12 days	6.92 hrs.	12 Days	7.5 hrs.
			8.30 hrs.		9 hrs.
			9.22 hrs.		10 hrs.

**Stokes County  
Compensatory Time Agreement**

**Name:**

**Department:**

**Position:**

**Employment Date:**

According to the Fair Labor Standards Act, non-exempt employees shall be compensated for overtime hours worked at a rate of one and one-half hours for each hour physically worked in excess of 40 hours per week. Non-exempt Law Enforcement employees shall be compensated for overtime hours worked at a rate of one and one-half hours for each hour physically worked in excess of 171 hours in a 28 day period.

You are hereby informed that Stokes County classifies your position as “non-exempt,” which entitles you to overtime compensation at a rate of one-and-one-half hours.

**STOKES COUNTY ELECTS TO AWARD COMPENSATORY HOURS IN LIEU OF CASH FOR OVERTIME HOURS WORKED.**

This agreement is your acknowledgment of understanding that the County shall award compensatory hours instead of cash payment for overtime hours worked. You have the opportunity to agree or disagree with this method of overtime reimbursement. Agreement to compensatory hours is not a condition of employment. However, disagreement to this method of overtime reimbursement will disqualify you from working overtime.

**Agreement**

I have read and understand that my position is considered a “non-exempt” position. I agree that any overtime hours worked will be compensated by awarding compensatory hours off.

\_\_\_\_\_ Employee Signature/Date

**Disagreement**

I have read and understand that my position is considered a “non-exempt” position. I disagree to compensatory hours off as an acceptable method of overtime payment.

\_\_\_\_\_ Employee Signature/Date

**Stokes County  
Family and Medical Leave Request**

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
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<b>Department:</b>	<b>Employment Date:</b>
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**Full/Part Time (Circle):**      Full-Time                      Part-Time

Check the item listed below that applies to this request.

- ☐ Birth of a child of the employee to care for the child.
- ☐ Placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care
- ☐ A serious health condition of the employee's spouse, child, or parent that requires the care of the employee.
- ☐ A serious health condition of the employee that makes the employee unable to perform the functions of his/her job.

<b>Explanation of Leave Request</b>	
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**Timetable for Leave Requested (Estimate if necessary):**

<b>Date Leave Begins:</b>	<b>Date Leave Ends:</b>
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Schedule Requested (Circle):      Continuous                      Intermittent                      Reduced Time

\*\*\*\*\*

By signing this request for Family or Medical Leave, the employee agrees that if he/she fails to return to work at the end of the leave, he/she shall repay Stokes County for the cost of the health insurance premiums the County paid for the employee while out on Family or Medical Leave.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Human Resources Director Comments:**

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Human Resources Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



Stokes County  
PO Box 20  
Danbury, NC 27016  
Phone (336) 593-2811

### **JOB DESCRIPTION ACKNOWLEDGMENT FORM**

This is to certify that I have been given the opportunity to review my job description entitled \_\_\_\_\_. This description is intended to indicate the kinds of tasks and levels or work difficulty that will be required of positions that will be given this title and shall not be construed as declaring what the specific duties and responsibilities of any particular position shall be. I understand that my job may change on a temporary or regular basis according to the needs of my location or department. If I have any questions about job duties not specified in this description that I am asked to perform, I should discuss them with my immediate supervisor or a member of the Human Resources staff.

I have discussed any questions I may have had about this job description prior to signing this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee Name (please print)

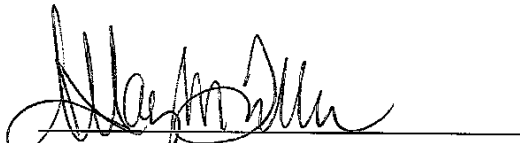
\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness Name (please print)

## Effective Date

This Stokes County Personnel Policy Handbook was revised on March 15, 2021 and was duly passed by unanimous vote of the Stokes County Board of Commissioners on the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of March, 2021.

  
Andy Nickelston, Chairman  
Gayle Tucker, Human Resources Director