

# **HOOD COUNTY APPRAISAL DISTRICT**

## **Employee Handbook**

Adopted by the  
Hood County Appraisal District  
Board of Directors  
September 18, 2008

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME	1
II.	OBJECTIVES	2
III.	USE OF THE HANDBOOK	3
IV.	GENERAL PERSONNEL INFORMATION	4
A.	Recruiting and Hiring	4
1.	Recruitment	4
2.	Filing of Application	4
3.	Hiring Process	4
4.	Nepotism	4
5.	Non-Fraternization Policy	5
B.	Categories of Employees	5
1.	Regular Full Time Employees	5
2.	Part-time Employees	6
3.	Temporary Employees	6
4.	Probationary Employees	6
C.	At-Will Employment	6
D.	Revision of Policies and Procedures	7
E.	Proof of Employment Eligibility	7
F.	Equal Employment Opportunity	7
G.	General Complaint Procedure	8
H.	Harassment	8
1.	Sexual Harassment	8
I.	Complaint Procedure for Sexual Harassment	10
J.	Probationary/Orientation Period	11
K.	Development and Advancement	12
1.	Promotions	12
2.	Transfers	12
3.	Layoffs	12
4.	Demotions	12
V.	DISTRICT GUIDELINES	13
A.	Dress Code Policy	13
B.	Safety	16
C.	Telephone Usage	16
D.	Travel Expense	17

E.	Acceptance of Gifts	17
F.	Political Activity	17
G.	News Media/Press Releases	17
H.	Purchasing	18
I.	Vehicle Insurance	18
J.	Break Area	18
K.	Smoking	18
L.	Changes in Your Personnel Records	18
M.	Employee Grievances	19
VI.	ATTENDANCE AND TIME OFF	19
A.	Time Sheets	19
B.	Attendance	19
C.	No Fault Absence Control Policy	20
D.	Hours of Work	20
E.	Tardiness	20
F.	Vacations	21
G.	Holidays	22
H.	Sick Leave	22
I.	Family and Medical Leave	23
1.	General	23
2.	Reasons for Leave	23
3.	Compensation During Leave	24
4.	Intermittent or Reduced Schedule Leave	24
5.	Notification and Reporting Requirements	24
6.	Medical Certification of Leave	25
7.	Benefits Coverage During Leave	26
8.	Restoration to Employment Following Leave	26
J.	Maternity Leave	27
K.	Paternity Leave	27
L.	Personal Leaves of Absence	27
M.	Military Leaves of Absence	28
N.	Emergency/Bereavement Leave	28
O.	Jury Duty	28
VII.	COMPENSATION	29
A.	Paydays	29
B.	Vehicle Expense and Mileage Reimbursement	29
C.	Payroll Deductions	29
D.	Overtime	30
E.	Salary Increases	30

VIII.	EMPLOYEE BENEFITS	31
	A. Health Insurance	31
	B. Workers' Compensation	31
	C. Retirement	31
IX.	STANDARDS OF CONDUCT	32
	A. Evaluations	35
	B. Discipline	36
	C. Substance Abuse/Drug-Free Workplace Policy	36
	D. Weapons and Other Contraband	37
X.	RESIGNATION OR TERMINATION	37
	A. Resignation	37
	B. Termination	37
	C. Termination Pay and Notices	38

## **I. INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME**

To Our New Employees:

Welcome to the Hood County Appraisal District (hereinafter referred to as “the District”). We are glad to have you as a member of our team, and we want to help you get off to a good start to what we hope will be a pleasant and satisfying experience.

As you learn more about the District, property appraisal, and property tax collections, we believe you will find it a promising field for the utilization and development of your knowledge, skills, and talents.

The following policies are a working guide for the administration and employees of the District. These policies cannot be so precise as to describe every employment situation that may occur at present or in future circumstances. Instead, it is the intent of these policies to bring about the highest possible degree of understanding, cooperation, efficiency and good will on a day-to-day basis among employees of the District.

The Board of Directors of the District (hereinafter referred to as “the Board”) intends to promote a personnel administration program that equals or exceeds that of comparable entities with similar political-economic-social attributes. In return, the District will attempt to employ and retain those persons best qualified on the basis of merit and fitness to carry out the service program of the District. The provisions of these policies are to be followed, tested and reviewed periodically for any required changes. The Board of Directors may add, delete or change any of these policies at any time they deem appropriate.

Again, Welcome! I look forward to our working together.

As of September 2008

---

Chief Appraiser  
Hood County Appraisal District

## II. OBJECTIVES

The fundamental objectives to be achieved by these policies are:

1. To promote good and uniform personnel practices and administration in the management of the District's human resources.
2. To develop a program of advancement which will provide career opportunities within the District and encourage each employee to render his/her best service.
3. To insure equal employment opportunity to all applicants and employees at the District.
4. To provide equitable compensation based upon individual merit commensurate with the person's experience, duties and responsibilities of the position.
5. To promote high employee morale by the fair administration of these policies.

As an employee of the District, you are a public employee with a responsibility to the citizens of the District. The quality of service provided by the District to its citizens depends upon the quality of its employees. Your conduct on the job and the way you perform your duties are both subject to public scrutiny. Contacts which you may have with citizens are often the only basis on which the District is judged. Therefore, you owe it to yourself and the District to serve the public to the best of your ability in a courteous and responsible manner. Attitude and deportment of District employees should at all times be such as to promote the good will and favorable attitude of the public toward the District's programs and policies. Failure to conduct one's self in a cheerful, friendly, and businesslike manner may be grounds for disciplinary action or dismissal.

### III. USE OF THE HANDBOOK

The Employee Handbook is provided for your use as a general guideline and a summary of the District's policies, work rules and benefits. Included is an explanation of what is expected of you as an employee and what you can expect from the District as an employer. Employees are required to familiarize themselves with the materials contained in the handbook. The District reserves the right to amend, supplement or rescind any provision(s) of the handbook, including those provisions regarding employee benefit programs, as it deems appropriate. Likewise, no Department Manager or employee of the District can alter or change any term or condition of an employee's employment, as enumerated in this handbook without the express consent of the Chief Appraiser. While this handbook may be published and maintained on the District's intranet site, the most recent printed form of the handbook will be the "official version" in which decisions and judgments will be made regarding any official action.

Please keep this manual readily available, and when updated pages are distributed to you, immediately read and appropriately insert them, so that your handbook is kept current. Any additions, deletions or changes in the policies or benefits described in this handbook shall become effective immediately upon distribution to the employees, unless otherwise stated. This handbook is applicable to all District employees. To ensure access to all employees at all times, this handbook may be published on the District's intranet site.

**THIS EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK IS NOT A CONTRACT BETWEEN THE DISTRICT AND ANY APPLICANT FOR EMPLOYMENT OR ANY EMPLOYEE, AND IT SHOULD NOT BE CONSTRUED AS SUCH. RATHER, THIS HANDBOOK IS AN ADVISORY GUIDE AND DESCRIBES THE PROCEDURES THE DISTRICT WILL ATTEMPT TO FOLLOW IN MOST CASES. THE DISTRICT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO VARY FROM THESE PROCEDURES WHEN NEEDED AND TO IGNORE THEM COMPLETELY, IN COMPELLING SITUATIONS, AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHIEF APPRAISER.**

## **IV. GENERAL PERSONNEL INFORMATION**

### **A. Recruiting and Hiring**

#### **1. Recruitment**

The Chief Appraiser, Deputy Chief Appraiser, or Department Manager may do the initial interviewing and screening of suitable and eligible applicants. The Administrative Assistant/Human Resource Manager will maintain a file of the applications. The final employment decision will be made by the Chief Appraiser who will select the applicant which in his/her judgment is the best for the position.

#### **2. Filing of Application**

Any person shall be considered for employment that has filed an application or resume with the Hood County Appraisal District. Employees interested in changing positions within the District may submit, in writing, a letter of application indicating their interest to be considered for an open position.

#### **3. Hiring Process**

Applicants must meet all qualifications for the position before being considered. The District will consider all applicants for any open positions; however, the District may not interview all applicants for any of the open positions. Applicants considered best for any open positions may be called for an interview with the Chief Appraiser, Deputy Chief Appraiser or Department Manager. Applicants may also be called back for a second interview if it is deemed necessary to fill the open position. The final employment decision will be made by the Chief Appraiser who will select the applicant which, in his/her judgment, is the best for the position.

#### **4. Nepotism**

No one shall be employed in violation of the nepotism statutes of the State of Texas. The District strictly prohibits dating or marriage among its employees. Further, no relative (spouse, child, brother, sister, parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, nephew, or niece, by blood or marriage) of a member of the District's Board or the Chief Appraiser may be employed by the District.

When any two existing employees either become relatives or are currently related, as defined by this policy, and when one or both employees are performing unsatisfactorily because of their relationship, one of them may be required to terminate his/her employment. The Chief Appraiser will determine whose retention is in the best interests of the District. Such termination may occur within 30 days of the date unsatisfactory performance is determined.

#### 5. Non-Fraternization Policy

The District recognizes the potential for conflicts of interest, favoritism, exploitation, or bias when a consensual romantic or sexual relationship exists between a person of superior rank or position and an employee of junior or subordinate position. Accordingly, no manager shall be permitted to date or otherwise engage in any romantic or sexual relationship with any employee whose position is subordinate to that manager. As used in this section, "manager" is defined as any person, whether paid or unpaid, in the position to hire, retain, make employment or compensation decisions, vote on any employment or compensation decisions including matters involving the District's budget, or control the work of any employee involved. The term "manager" as defined in this section includes members of the Board of Directors. An "employee" as defined in the section is a person who is responsible to the manager directly or through the chain of command.

### **B. Categories of Employees**

#### 1. Regular Full Time Employees

Hourly or salaried employees who work at least thirty-five (35) or more hours per week, fifty-two (52) weeks per year, and who have successfully completed the probationary period. These employees are eligible for employment benefits as provided by the District and described later in this manual. (Approved and appropriate use of vacation or sick leave time is counted as part of the fifty-two weeks.) Employment categorized as "regular full time" does not constitute or create a contractual agreement between the District and the employee and it should not be interpreted as creating any contractual rights or limiting the District's rights.

#### 2. Part-time Employees

An employee who fills an hourly wage position and is required to work less than thirty-five (35) hours per week and less than fifty-two (52) weeks per year is not required to complete the District's probationary period due to the nature of the employment and position being considered short term. Termination of the employee or the employee's position shall be at the discretion of the District. These employees are not eligible for benefits with the exception of workers' compensation insurance.

### 3. Temporary Employees

An employee who is hired for a specific period of time, or not on a permanent basis as indicated at the time of employment, to perform a specific task as determined by the District. Termination of the employee or the employee's position shall be at the discretion of the District. These employees are not required to complete the District's probationary period due to the nature of the employment and position being considered short term. These employees are not eligible for benefits with the exception of workers' compensation insurance.

### 4. Probationary Employees

An employee who is being considered for regular full time employment but who has not completed the probationary period of employment with the District as described in this Handbook below. The probationary period is used as a trial period for purposes of evaluation. Employees are eligible for benefits as listed in the following sections of this manual.

## **C. At-Will Employment**

Your employment with the District is voluntarily entered into, and you are free to resign at any time, with or without reason. Similarly, the District is free at any time to terminate your employment, with or without reason or advance notice.

While we hope our relationship will be long and mutually beneficial, it should be recognized that neither we nor you have entered into any contract of employment, expressed or implied. Therefore, our relationship is one of voluntary employment "at-will".

This handbook is not a contract of employment. The terms, language and/or interpretation of this handbook can be changed at any time, without notice, at the sole discretion of the District.

#### **D. Revision of Policies and Procedures**

The District, through its Board of Directors, reserves the right to amend or delete any of the policies and procedures contained in this handbook, as well as all of its policies and practices, at any time. The Administrative Assistant/Human Resource Manager will advise you of changes in the current Employee Handbook. No one other than the Chief Appraiser has the authority to alter, amend or modify the provisions of this handbook. No one other than the Chief Appraiser has the authority to interpret or clarify the provisions of this handbook. Any statement, agreement or promise that contradicts or alters this handbook must be in writing and signed by the Chief Appraiser. Interpretation of the policies, rules and regulations contained in this handbook is limited to writings signed by the Chief Appraiser.

#### **E. Proof of Employment Eligibility**

All individuals selected for employment will be required to present documents establishing both employment authorization and identity, in compliance with the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. Failure by an employee to produce genuine and sufficient documents within the time period required by law will result in ineligibility for continued employment.

#### **F. Equal Employment Opportunity**

The District is an Equal Opportunity Employer, and it is committed to providing a work environment free of discrimination on the basis of race, color, age, religion, national origin, sex, or disability (physical or mental). This policy applies to all aspects of employment including, but not limited to, hiring, training, promotions, transfers, discipline/counseling, compensation, benefit plans, employer-employee relations, and terminations.

It is the policy of the District to recruit, employ, compensate, and promote employees solely on the basis of qualifications, merit, and competency. It is the policy of the District to deal with applicants and employees fairly and without discrimination because of age, race, sex, disability, marital status, or religion.

## **G. General Complaint Procedure**

Any employee with questions or concerns about any discrimination is strongly encouraged to bring these to the attention of the Chief Appraiser. Any employee who believes that he or she has been subjected to discriminatory treatment should make a written complaint and submit it to the Chief Appraiser. All issues raised by you will be addressed and investigated as confidentially as possible under the circumstances, and without any retaliation or reprisal. Anyone found to be engaging in any type of unlawful discrimination will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Complaints of discrimination by the Chief Appraiser are to be brought to the attention of any member of the Board.

## **H. Harassment**

The District strictly prohibits any harassment of any employee by fellow employees, by members of management, or by non-employees on account of an employee's race, color, age, religion, national origin, sex, or disability (physical or mental). Thus, the use of racial and ethnic slurs, "jokes", name-calling, derogatory statements, swearing, or any other acts of harassment regarding any individual's age, race, gender, religion, nationality, or disability are strictly prohibited.

### **1. Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment will **not** be tolerated under any circumstances. It is the policy of the District to strictly prohibit any conduct which constitutes sexual harassment, and to discipline any employee who has committed such conduct.

Sexual harassment is defined as unsolicited, unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal, graphic or physical conduct of a sexual nature (including sexually explicit language, jokes, etc.) where: (1) submission to such conduct is either an express or implied term or condition of employment; (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as a basis for an employment decision affecting the harassed person; or (3) the conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an affected person's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. Sexual harassment may include explicit or implied sexual propositions, sexual innuendo, suggestive comments, sexually oriented "kidding"

or “teasing”, practical jokes, jokes about gender-specific traits, foul or obscene language or gestures, displays of foul or obscene printed or visual material, and physical conduct, such as patting, pinching, or brushing against another’s body. This conduct is strictly prohibited.

It is the policy of the District to strictly prohibit any conduct which constitutes sexual harassment, and to discipline any employee who has committed such conduct.

Sexual harassment is defined as unsolicited, unwanted, sexual advances, request for sexual favors and any other conduct of a sexual nature (including sexually explicit language, jokes, etc.) when:

- a. The employee must submit to the offensive conduct as an explicit or implicit condition of employment.
- b. The employee rejects advances and risks losing a job, promotion privileges, or benefits; whereas, the employee who submits gains favors and advantages.
- c. The employee’s job performance is interfered with as a result of the offensive behavior or the work atmosphere becomes hostile or intimidating.

It is the responsibility of management to create an atmosphere free of sexual harassment. It is the responsibility of each employee to respect the rights of fellow employees. For the purpose of interpretation and application of this policy, the following examples of sexual harassment are set forth:

- a. overt physical: the employee is subjected to actual touching or objectionable contact.
- b. overt non-physical: the employee is approached with the suggestion of sexual relations, coupled with stated or suggested adverse consequences that would result from rejection of the advances.
- c. subtle: the employee is approached in a more subtle manner, with the suggestion that “friendly” employees will have more opportunities for advancement, etc.

The above are only examples of the type of conduct which would support a finding that sexual harassment has occurred.

Sexual harassment that occurs as either category one, overt physical, or category two, overt non-physical, shall be construed as gross misconduct. Any employee who is found to have exercised these forms of sexual harassment is subject to immediate termination, as is appropriate.

Sexual harassment that takes the forms possible in category three, subtle, may result in reprimand or formal disciplinary procedures, depending upon the conditions of the incident. Depending on the circumstances, such conduct could subject an employee to termination.

An employee who has a complaint concerning sexual harassment should file a written complaint with the Chief Appraiser immediately, or as soon as practicable, to ensure prompt, appropriate action is taken in accordance with the complaint procedure outlines below.

Vendors, contract employees and others employed by businesses doing business with and/or for the District who are found to have violated this policy subject themselves to termination of their services and/or other appropriate action.

## **I. Complaint Procedure for Sexual Harassment**

Any employee who feels that he or she has encountered, experienced, or witnessed sexual harassment should immediately report the incident(s) to the Chief Appraiser in writing. The District forbids retaliation against anyone who has reported alleged sexual harassment. The Chief Appraiser (or the Board, when appropriate) will process all complaints of sexual harassment and will be responsible for coordinating all investigations.

The Chief Appraiser (or the Board) will make a determination of whether a reasonable basis exists to believe that sexual harassment has occurred. If such reasonable basis exists, the Chief Appraiser will take appropriate action. To the extent practicable, the District will keep complaints of sexual harassment and the terms of the resolution of the complaint confidential.

## **J. Probationary Period**

You have been employed because it was felt that you possess certain qualities which will make you a useful and efficient member of the District team. Employees selected to a full-time regular position will serve a probationary period of six months. Employment shall not be made final until satisfactory completion of the probationary period. During this time, Administration and Department Managers will explain what the District requires of the employee, help the employee learn his/her job, and will provide counsel as necessary. The probationary period will be used as a trial period to determine whether the employee has the ability, attitude, self-discipline, and motivation to be punctual and to perform his/her duties satisfactorily. During this time your employment status will be a probationary employee.

Probationary employees are typically evaluated by their Department Managers or the Chief Appraiser at the midway point and immediately prior to the completion of the probationary period. However, the passage of time does not guarantee successful completion of the probationary period. The District's failure to conduct a formal evaluation on or within six months does not waive or alter the at-will relationship between you and the District. The probationary period may be extended for a reasonable period of time as may be deemed necessary by your Department Manager or Chief Appraiser, to provide for further evaluation.

In any event, employees must be affirmatively informed, either verbally or in writing, of the successful completion of the probationary period and of a change in their employment status. Only those employees who meet acceptable standards during their probationary periods shall be retained. Department Managers shall review all probationary evaluations with the Chief Appraiser. At any time during the probationary period the Department Manager may evaluate the probationary employee's performance in writing and recommend a discharge.

If at any time during the probationary period you or the District are not pleased for any reason with your association with the District, or you have not adapted to the work of the District, either you or the District may end the employment relationship without cause and without affecting your employment record.

If a probationary employee is absent from work for medical or personal reasons during the probationary period, and the employee does not have any earned sick leave, he/she will not be paid for the time he/she is absent and his/her paycheck will be reduced accordingly in accordance with the law. Probationary employees should be aware that excessive absences, for any reason, may result in his/her discharge.

## **K. Development and Advancement**

### **1. Promotions**

It shall be the policy of the District to provide promotional opportunities wherever possible to current District employees. The Administrative Assistant/Human Resource Manager will maintain updated personnel records on all employees and submit them to the Chief Appraiser for consideration as candidates for promotions when an appropriate opening occurs. All promotions will be based on merit, qualifications, attitude, and fitness for the position, and will be approved by the Chief Appraiser. In the event you are promoted or transferred to a different department or are required to learn additional or new skills, you may be subjected to a ninety (90) day probationary period in the new department.

### **2. Transfers**

A transfer is the assignment of an employee from one position to another which does not include a promotion. A transfer may be made by the Chief Appraiser at any time in the best interest of the District.

### **3. Layoffs**

The Chief Appraiser may lay off an employee when necessary because of changes in duties or organization or lack of work or funds. When employees are to be laid off, employees will be retained on the basis of their demonstrated job performance and value to the District as determined by the Chief Appraiser. Layoffs made to meet a reduced staffing level will not be considered as a disciplinary action. The District will give regular full time employees who are being laid off either a two week's notice or two week's pay in lieu of notice.

### **4. Demotions**

The Chief Appraiser may demote an employee when such demotion will promote the efficiency of the District. When a demotion occurs, it will result in a salary reduction commensurate with the new duties and responsibilities. No employee will be demoted to a position for which he or she does not meet the necessary minimum qualifications.

## **V. DISTRICT GUIDELINES**

### **A. Dress Code Policy**

The District requires employees to always appear for work in attire that is professional and suitable for the work setting, keeping in mind personal safety and the impression made on the taxpayers and visitors of the District. This may vary slightly from time to time depending on the nature of the work, exposure to the general public, customers, and the environment.

This policy is intended to describe guidelines on what is considered appropriate dress for the workplace. These guidelines are not intended to be all-inclusive, but rather should help set the general parameters for appropriate attire, thereby allowing employees to exercise their own good judgment and common sense about items not specifically addressed. Our appearance should always reflect what is appropriate for our job, work setting, and personal safety.

Employees must practice good personal hygiene. All clothing must be clean, not faded and free from tears or rips. Clothing should be worn in the appropriate size. Hair must be clean and neat. If hair is colored, it must be a color that is a normal, naturally occurring hair color. If an employee chooses to wear colored contacts the contact lens color must be a color that is a normal, naturally occurring eye color.

All tattoos must be covered with clothing while at work. The only exceptions are small tattoos at the ankle.

Employees with piercings should limit their visibility to only two piercings in each ear. Piercings located on the face or head should not be worn. Piercings on other parts of the body should be covered at all times.

The Chief Appraiser will make all determinations of non-compliance. If it is determined an individual is not compliant with the dress code policy, disciplinary action will be taken, up to and including termination of employment for excessive abuse.

#### **1. Categories of Dress**

Three categories of dress have been identified, each of which may be considered appropriate dress under certain circumstances. These categories and examples of appropriate dress are as follows:

- a. Business Attire – Traditional business dress. The intent of business attire is to ensure that personnel are professionally dressed to meet with any segment of the public at special meetings, assemblies, speaking engagements, judicial proceedings or any other setting in which other professionals will be in attendance.
- b. Business Casual Attire – A conservative more casual dress. For men this would include dress slacks or twill pants, such as Dockers or khakis, collared dress shirts, polo-type knit shirts or sweaters. Jackets or ties are not required. For women this would include dress slacks, dress capris, twill style pants, or skirts, blouses, dressy tees, knit or polo-type shirts or sweaters. Footwear should be selected according to the type of work performed, keeping safety, comfort, and professional appearance in mind. Athletic shoes, tennis shoes, flip flops, casual sandals, work boots and hats are not permitted in office settings. Denim, or cloth resembling denim, of any color is not considered appropriate for this category. The intent of Business Casual Attire is to ensure that personnel are appropriately dressed to meet with the public and others in the office, at training seminars, general meetings, or other settings in which others will be similarly dressed.
- c. Casual Attire – Conservative casual attire, such as denim or khaki pants, polo-type shirts, or other types of collared shirts or sweaters (for men) denim or khaki pants or skirts, blouses, dressy tees, or sweaters (for women). Footwear should be selected according to the other attire categories and type of work performed, keeping safety, comfort, and professional appearance in mind. Athletic shoes, tennis shoes, and hats are not permitted in office settings. Hosiery/socks are not required.

## 2. Outside Field Work

Employees of the District, from time to time, work in different environments with different levels of interaction with the general public. While most of the job duties are performed indoors under air conditioned environments, others may be outside in hot or cold conditions. When employees are required to work outdoors for a majority of the day measuring buildings, performing appraisal field work or performing any other duties that may dirty or soil the clothing, Business Casual Attire or Casual Attire is appropriate. Hats may be worn while outdoors to protect from the sun or cold. Footwear should be selected according to the type of work performed, keeping safety, comfort, and professional appearance in mind. Sturdy shoes or work boots with good support are preferred. Athletic shoes, tennis shoes, flip flops or sandals are not permitted for outside appraisal field work.

## 3. Seminars / Training

Employees required to attend state certified courses or seminars should keep in mind they continue to represent the district while away from the office. Business Casual Attire or Casual Attire must be worn. Items listed in the “what not to wear” section should not be worn during this time.

## 4. What Not To Wear To Work

The following are examples of items considered inappropriate for any work situation. It is not meant to be all inclusive, but should serve to assist employees in determining appropriate attire and overall appearance.

Jeans with noticeable wear, holes, or distress marks; sweatpants, wind suits or workout attire; shorts above the knees; clothing that reveals inappropriate cleavage or undergarments, or is sheer, distracting or provocative; sweatshirts, t-shirts with slogans, sports insignia or other writing on them, halter tops or tank tops; athletic shoes, sneakers, casual sandals or flip flops; skirts/dresses that are excessively short or splits excessively high or spaghetti-strap dresses (tops with thin straps worn under another top or jacket may be okay); pants or leggings made primarily from spandex; or any other items that might be considered offensive, disruptive or immodest.

## **B. Safety**

All employees who are required to drive District or their own vehicles in the performance of their duties are required to demonstrate clear driving records before performing driving functions for the District. Employees shall provide verifiable proof of a clear driving record at least annually and upon request by a Department Manager or the Chief Appraiser. Further, employees who perform driving functions for the District at any time must, as soon as practicable, advise the Chief Appraiser of any Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) or Driving Under the Influence (DUI) conviction.

All employees of the District shall be safety conscious. All employees and Department Managers will report safety hazards, and practice accident prevention at all times.

### **C. Telephone Usage**

**Business Calls** - Telephones in the departments and offices of the District are for conducting the District's business. Long distance calls will not be made without prior approval of the Chief Appraiser. Collect calls will not be accepted without the approval of the Chief Appraiser.

**Personal Calls** - As a courtesy, the District grants employees the use of telephones on a very limited basis for personal calls during business hours. Infrequent and thoughtful use of the telephone for personal business will make it possible for the privilege to continue. Any personal call will be limited to three minutes. Abuse of personal phone calls will be determined by the Chief Appraiser or Department Manager and may result in disciplinary action.

**Cell Phones** - The use of employee owned cell phones should be kept to a minimum and used primarily during lunch or break periods. All cell phones should be silenced during the day and used out of view of the general public. Infrequent and thoughtful use of cell phones will make it possible for the privilege to continue. Abuse of cell phone usage will be determined by the Chief Appraiser or Department Manager and may result in disciplinary action.

**Incoming Calls** - When using the telephone, employees should greet the caller, identify the District, and be courteous and helpful at all times. Rudeness or inappropriate use of the telephone will reflect on the entire organization and will not be tolerated.

### **D. Travel Expense**

Travel outside of Hood County may be required of some employees for official District business, education, conferences or seminars. All requests for travel must be approved by the Chief Appraiser prior to departure. Employees will be paid for expenses incurred while traveling on behalf of the District with proper approval for items such as meals, lodging, public transportation, parking, etc. There will be no reimbursement for alcoholic beverages, long distance and local telephone calls, wireless or wired internet connection fees, in-room movies, room service, or any other non-necessary expense. Mileage outside of the county will be paid at the standard mileage rate established by the IRS and as approved by the Board of Directors. Employees may be paid a daily per diem, as established by the District, for meal allowances and expenses while traveling on behalf of the District. In the event meals will be provided by either the hotel or scheduled meetings, the daily per diem may be adjusted by those provided meals. If an employee pays for all pre-approved expenses out of their own pocket he/she will be reimbursed the expenses according to these guidelines only if he/she provides the necessary receipts verifying and substantiating the expenses.

**E. Acceptance of Gifts**

Gifts or any item of value will not be accepted from any party, unless acceptance of something of value is totally unrelated to the performance of duties as a District employee or its value is immaterial and can be shared by all employees. (e.g. food or candy)

**F. Political Activity**

While all employees are urged to exercise their rights as citizens and vote for the candidates of their choice, they are urged not to actively support or oppose candidates or issues while on duty. Politics on the job will not be tolerated!

**G. News Media/Press Releases**

Only the Chief Appraiser or his/her designated representative is authorized to issue official District statements to the news media.

**H. Purchasing**

Only the Chief Appraiser or his/her designated representative is authorized to obligate the District for the purchase of any goods or services.

**I. Vehicle Insurance**

All employees receiving monthly vehicle allowances for using their vehicles must be insured. These employees must have a liability policy for business use of an automobile reflecting the limits of liability as required by the State of Texas. This is a condition of employment with the District and a copy of the policy or other proof of liability insurance must be on file with the District.

**J. Break Area**

The District provides a break area for the use of employees. The break area is open from 8:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. Coffee and soft drinks are available, as well as a microwave and refrigerator. Employees may bring their lunches and eat in the break area. Every employee is expected to clean up after herself/himself. The failure to keep the break room free of personal litter and food may be cause for disciplinary action.

**K. Smoking**

Smoking is prohibited anywhere in the District office pursuant to City Ordinance 90-424.

**L. Changes in Your Personnel Records**

It is important to both you and the District that your personnel records are kept up to date. Please notify the Administrative Assistant/Human Resource Manager of any changes in your:

Name, marital status, number of dependents,  
address, telephone number, person to  
notify in case of accident or illness,  
Professional Educational activities, and  
Beneficiary(ies).

**M. EMPLOYEE GRIEVANCES**

All grievances between employees of the District shall be brought to the Chief Appraiser. The Chief Appraiser may consult with the Board of Directors or the District's attorney in resolving the matter. Disciplinary action may be taken against the offending employee as a result of the grievance.

If at any time an employee has a legitimate grievance against the Chief Appraiser, that employee shall bring the grievance to the Board of Directors to resolve the matter.

## **VI. ATTENDANCE AND TIME OFF**

### **A. Time Sheets**

All part-time and temporary employees are required to complete time sheets. Keeping an accurate attendance record is a necessity of business and the District expects you as an employee to monitor it closely. You are expected to ensure your time sheet accurately reflects your attendance. All time sheets shall be turned in to the Administrative Assistant/Human Resource Manager for payroll processing. Inaccurate or misleading information on your time sheet may constitute a falsification of employment records and is grounds for immediate dismissal.

### **B. Attendance**

The nature of most District work requires that it be completed on a daily basis. If you are absent or tardy, an extra burden is placed upon your Department Manager who must make necessary adjustments and arrangements. Your fellow employees also suffer as they must carry your share of the load while you are absent.

If it is necessary for you to be absent or tardy, arrangements should be made through you, not family or friends, with Administration as far in advance as possible. If illness or some other unexpected circumstance requires you to be absent or tardy, notify Administration prior to your scheduled starting time, if at all possible, but no later than fifteen minutes after your scheduled starting time.

If some urgent reason requires that you leave the building during business hours, discuss it with your Department Manager so that he/she may arrange to have your job covered.

You must complete an absence request form and submit it to your Department Manager for all absences.

### **C. No Fault Absence Control Policy**

The District has a strict no fault absence control policy. Excessive absences or tardiness for any reason will result in disciplinary action being taken against you, up to and including termination. Absences totaling more than three consecutive days may result in termination, excluding medically verifiable absences due to disability or covered under workers' compensation or accrued sick leave. In any event, any employee absent for any reason in excess of one hundred twenty (120) consecutive days of any one calendar year will be terminated. Further, any absences or tardiness in excess of your accrued days of leave during the year will be deducted from your paycheck.

### **D. Hours of Work**

The normal work week for the District is Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. with one hour for lunch. Working hours in some departments may vary from this schedule according to their work requirements or emergency contingencies. Adjustments to these hours of operation may be made by the Chief Appraiser in order to better serve the public. Offices will remain open during the noon hour and lunch periods may be staggered according to the requirements of the office and regulated by the Chief Appraiser. Rest periods other than mealtime are allowed but should be limited to fifteen minutes, once in the first half of the work shift before 11:00 a.m. and once in the afternoon before 4:00 p.m. Employees wishing to take rest periods during the day shall limit their lunch period to thirty minutes. Employees that elect to take a one hour lunch break will not be allowed a fifteen minute rest period. Rest periods are a privilege and not a right and are not to interfere with proper performance of the work. When space is available, rest periods are not to be taken in the work areas of other employees.

### **E. Tardiness**

All employees are expected to arrive at work on time. If an employee is late for work, he/she shall notify Administration immediately. Repeated tardiness at the start of each work day, returning from lunch or rest period (break) may subject an employee to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

**F. Vacations**

All employees are eligible to earn vacation leave with pay. The opportunity to earn vacation leave will begin once the employee successfully completes the first thirty (30) days of the probationary period. Upon completion of the first thirty days of the probationary period, an employee will begin to accrue vacation at the rate of 3.08 hours per pay period. The employee will continue to accrue vacation at this rate until the first January after the employee’s one year anniversary. All other employees, whose tenure is greater than one or more years, will earn their vacation time on January 1<sup>st</sup> of each year according to the following schedule:

<u>Time of Service</u>	<u>Eligible to Earn</u>
Year Two through Year Four:	Ten working days per year
Year Five through Year Nine:	Fifteen working days per year
Year Ten or More Years:	Twenty working days per year

Employees may use earned vacation leave if they have unused vacation time available. All vacation schedules must be approved by the Department Manager and Chief Appraiser. Whenever possible, vacation leaves will be scheduled to the convenience of the employee; however, vacations cannot interfere with the normal functioning of the District’s operations or workload. You are encouraged to submit your preferred vacation schedule to the Chief Appraiser’s office (through your Department Manager) as far in advance as possible. There will be no unearned vacation time granted to any employee.

Upon termination of employment, the District will pay for vacation time accrued only when an employee gives proper two weeks notice and leaves in good standing. Temporary and part time employees do not earn vacation benefits. No employee will be allowed to “cash in” their accrued or unused vacation time.

All employees are allowed to carry over unused/earned vacation time to the following year with each employee being able to accumulate a maximum amount of vacation time not to exceed the amount of time each employee is eligible to earn in a single year times 1.5.

**G. Holidays**

As a benefit to its employees, the District will usually observe the same holidays as established by the Hood County Commissioners Court. The Chief Appraiser may deviate from this holiday schedule, if necessary.

If any of the above holidays fall on a Saturday, then Friday will be a holiday; if they fall on a Sunday, then Monday will be a holiday. Only regular full time employees and probationary employees will be entitled to paid holidays. Holidays will not be charged against vacation time.

#### **H. Sick Leave**

As a benefit to its employees, the District shall allow all regular full time and probationary employees to earn a predetermined amount of paid time off for uses as sick leave.

For probationary employees, the opportunity to earn sick leave will begin once the employee successfully completes the first thirty (30) days of the probationary period. Upon completion of the first thirty days of the probationary period, an employee will begin to accrue sick leave at the rate of 3.08 hours per pay period. The employee will continue to accrue sick leave at this rate until the first January after the employee's one year anniversary, after which the employee will be awarded 10 days sick leave beginning on January 1<sup>st</sup> of each subsequent year. All other regular full-time employees, whose tenure is greater than one or more years, will receive their sick leave time on January 1<sup>st</sup> of each year according to the following schedule:

Year Two or More Years: Ten working days per year

Sick leave is provided to eligible employees to compensate them during times of illness. Abuse of sick leave time will not be considered acceptable behavior and disciplinary action may be taken for such abuse. All employees will be allowed to take unused sick leave during times of illness or trips to a physician; however, no employee will be allowed to take unearned sick leave. If an employee has exhausted all of their sick leave and vacation benefits and become ill and misses work, they will take the time off without pay. Excessive absences may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

At the end of a year the District may "buy back" unused sick leave from its employees. An employee with a positive balance of sick leave will be paid for their unused sick leave, at their current rate of pay; therefore establishing a zero balance of sick leave time for that employee until January 1<sup>st</sup> of the next year. An employee's ability to earn additional sick

leave time will be in accordance with the stipulations previously stated above.

No employee will receive compensation for unused sick leave upon termination of employment with the District.

Temporary and part time employees are not eligible to accrue or earn sick leave benefits.

## **I. Family and Medical Leave**

### *1. General*

Employees who have been employed for at least one year and for at least 1,250 hours during the preceding 12-month period are eligible for family and medical leave. Employees not eligible for family and medical leave may apply for an unpaid personal leave of absence.

### *2. Reasons for Leave*

All employees who meet the applicable time-of-service requirements may be granted a total of twelve weeks of unpaid family and medical leave per 12-month period (measured from the date of the commencement of the leave back twelve months) for the following reasons:

- (a) the birth of the employee's child and in order to care for the child;
- (b) the placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care;
- (c) to care for a spouse, child or parent who has a serious health condition; or
- (d) a serious health condition that renders the employee incapable of performing the functions of his job, including complications from pregnancy.

The entitlement to leave for the birth or placement of a child for adoption or foster care will expire twelve months from the date of the birth or placement of the child.

### *3. Compensation During Leave*

Family and medical leave will generally be unpaid leave, subject to the following exceptions:

- (a) If leave is requested for an employee's own serious health condition, the employee must use his paid sick leave and vacation time first.
- (b) If leave is requested for any of the other reasons listed above, an employee must use his paid sick leave and vacation time first. The remainder of the leave period will then consist of unpaid leave.

4. *Intermittent or Reduced Schedule Leave*

- (a) If medically necessary for a serious health condition of the employee or his or her spouse, child or parent, leave may be taken on an intermittent or reduced work schedule.
- (b) If leave is requested on an intermittent or reduced work schedule basis, however, the District may require the employee to transfer temporarily to an alternative position which better accommodates recurring periods of absence or a part-time schedule, provided that the position has equivalent pay and benefits.

5. *Notification and Reporting Requirements*

- (a) In all cases, an employee requesting leave must do so in writing and submit it to the Chief Appraiser. The request must state the reason for the leave, the duration of the leave, and the starting and ending dates of the leave.
- (b) When the need for leave is foreseeable, such as the birth or adoption of a child, or planned medical treatment, the employee must make the request not less than thirty days before the date leave is to begin and make efforts to schedule leave so as not to disrupt the District's operations.
- (c) If leave is not foreseeable, the employee must provide the District with notice as soon as practicable (generally meaning at least verbal notification to the

Department Manager or Administrative Assistant/Human Resource Manager within two business days of when the need for leave becomes known to the employee.)

- (d) The District will retain the right to designate any absences as time attributed to an employee's twelve week allotment of leave, whenever the District learns that the need for leave qualified as a "serious medical condition," as defined by the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993. In any event, the District will make the designation within three days of the time it learns of the qualifying status of the absence.
- (e) The employee is required to report periodically on his leave status and intention to return to work. An employee will be notified of the reporting requirements when the leave is approved. An employee who seeks to extend his family and/or medical leave, and is eligible to do so, must complete another Request for Family and Medical Leave of Absence Form and supply the supporting medical certification.

#### 6. *Medical Certification of Leave*

- (a) The District may require medical certification from a health care provider to support a claim for leave for an employee's own serious health condition or to care for a seriously ill child, spouse or parent.
- (b) In its discretion, the District may require a second medical opinion and periodic recertification at its own expense. If the first and second opinions differ, the District, at its own expense, may require the binding opinion of a third health care provider, approved jointly by the Chief Appraiser and the employee.
- (c) The District may require recertification while the employee is on leave, but not more than every thirty days, unless one of the following occurs: a) the employee requests a leave extension; (b) circumstances described by the employee's most recent medical certification have changed significantly; or c) the District receives information

which casts doubt upon the continuing validity of the employee's most recent certification.

7. *Benefits Coverage During Leave*

- (a) During a period of family or medical leave, an employee will be retained on the District's health plan under the same conditions that applied before leave commenced. To continue health coverage, the employee must continue to make any contributions that he made to the plan before taking leave. Failure of the employee to pay his share of the health insurance premium may result in loss of coverage.
- (b) In the event that an employee elects not to return to work upon completion of an approved family and/or medical leave of absence, the District may recover from the employee the cost of any payments it incurred to maintain the employee's coverage, unless the failure to return to work was for reasons beyond the employee's control. Benefit entitlement based upon length of service will be calculated as of the last paid work day prior to the date of the unpaid leave of absence.
- (c) Neither an employee's date of hire nor seniority will be affected by an authorized leave of absence under this policy.

8. *Restoration to Employment Following Leave*

- (a) An employee eligible for family and medical leave - with the exception of those employees designated as "key employees" - will be restored to his/her former position or to a position with equivalent pay, benefits, and other terms and conditions of employment. The District cannot guarantee that an employee will be returned to his original job. The determination of a "key-employee" or whether a position is an "equivalent position" will be made by the Chief Appraiser.
- (b) If leave is taken due to an employee's own illness, the employee must submit a release to return to work from a health care provider before or on the day the employee returns to work.

- (c) The employee must return to work on the first working day following the expiration of the employee's leave of absence.
- (d) If the employee fails to return to work within one day of the expiration of the leave of absence, the employee will be considered to have voluntarily resigned.

#### **J. Maternity Leave**

In establishing leave for maternity reasons, the policy of the District is to consider pregnancy as a condition which eventually requires the employee to be absent from the job because of incapacitation. As such, absence due to pregnancy and childbirth will be treated as any other temporary disability. A pregnant employee is expected to make her own decision, in consultation with her physician, as to when she will cease working. Accrued sick leave will be granted to cover time for physical examinations and periods of incapacitation including delivery and recuperation. If additional time is needed for a period of adjustment, or time to make arrangements for child care, an additional three weeks without pay will be added after all accrued leave has been exhausted. Additional leave may be granted without pay by the Chief Appraiser. In summary, employees with illnesses or disabilities arising from pregnancy or maternity shall be entitled to the same benefits and subject to the same rules and regulations and policies as employees with any other type of temporary illness or disability.

#### **K. Paternity Leave**

Employees needing to take leave for a period of adjustment for a newborn or to make arrangements for child care may request up to three weeks leave without pay if no vacation or family and medical leave is available.

#### **L. Personal Leaves of Absence**

An unpaid personal leave of absence for up to three days may be requested by full-time employees who have completed the probationary period of employment for any valid or compelling circumstances, including absence due to attendance at educational programs of the employee's own choosing, which will require the employee to be absent from the job during normal work hours. Personal leaves of absence should be

requested thirty days in advance (except in emergencies). A written request for a leave without pay detailing reasons and anticipated duration, signed by the employee, shall be submitted to the Chief Appraiser prior to approval of any absence. Vacation time must be exhausted prior to the starting date of the leave. A personal leave of absence must be approved by the Chief Appraiser; and will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Employees on unpaid leave of absence will not be paid for holidays occurring during the leave, nor will they accrue sick leave or vacation time during the leave.

#### **M. Military Leaves of Absence**

Employees, who are members of the state military forces or of the reserve components of the armed forces of the United States, will be permitted up to 15 working days military training leave each calendar year without any loss of salary, vacation time, or sick leave. The fifteen days need not be consecutive and may be applied to all working days when the employee is engaged in training. Request for military training leave must be submitted in advance to the Chief Appraiser as soon as practical. An employee called to active duty by the President or the Governor of Texas will be granted a two-week leave with pay, any additional time needed will be time taken without pay. However, should the employee be called to extended leave, the District will have a position available of equal status upon the employee's return.

#### **N. Emergency/Bereavement Leave**

An allowance of three working days with pay may be extended to an employee if there is a death in the immediate family. Immediate family shall be defined as an employee's spouse, child, parent, parents-in-law, brother, sister, grandparent, brother-in-law, or sister-in-law. The Chief Appraiser may grant an employee leave to attend a funeral of other than immediate family, or to serve as a pallbearer.

#### **O. Jury Duty**

If you receive a summons for jury service, the Chief Appraiser should be promptly notified so he/she can make arrangements for your absence. While serving on jury duty, you will receive your regular pay, and you may also keep whatever pay you receive for jury service. You must bring your jury summons/jury duty card to work as proof of your jury duty, attach it to your absence request form and submit it for the work

week you performed jury duty. The time you miss from work is not charged against your accumulated leave. If you are dismissed early from jury service, even on a daily basis, you are expected to return to your job.

## **VII. COMPENSATION**

### **A. Paydays**

Paydays are on Thursday and are on a bi-weekly schedule.

It is typically the District's policy that no advances on wages will be made. However, in extenuating circumstances, requests for an advance on wages must be made to the Chief Appraiser.

### **B. Vehicle Expense and Mileage Reimbursement**

For personally owned automobiles used on District business the following guidelines will be used:

**Monthly vehicle allowance** - In order for the District to meet its stated goals, some of the employees will have to use their own vehicles to perform their duties. Appraisers of the District who regularly use their own vehicles in conducting the District's business will be paid a flat monthly rate on a bi-weekly basis. The amount will be fixed regardless of mileage used while within the District, and will be within the limits of the approved budget. Employees drawing a monthly car allowance will be reimbursed at a per mile rate only when conducting District business outside of the District's boundaries. Employees drawing a monthly car allowance will not be reimbursed at a per mile rate while conducting District business.

**Employees not drawing a monthly vehicle allowance** - These employees will be reimbursed at the standard mileage rate as established by the IRS when using their vehicle on approved District business.

### **C. Payroll Deductions**

Deductions will be made from your pay check each pay period for those items required by law or Board Policy and those which you authorize. Normal deductions include federal income tax, retirement contributions, social security, and group insurance. Your check stub serves as a regular statement of your earnings and deductions.

## **D. Overtime**

As a matter of policy, the District pays straight hourly wages to regular employees and expects you to perform your duties during normal working hours. Each employee's pay scale is based on a forty hour work week and not on a daily basis; therefore approved overtime (pay at time-and-one-half) is paid for additional hours worked over forty hours in one week. From time to time, the nature of your job may require you to work overtime at times. All overtime worked must have advance approval of the Chief Appraiser. Compensatory time off for hours worked over forty hours must be arranged with the Chief Appraiser. Compensatory time will be calculated on the basis of one hour of overtime worked for one-and-one-half hour of compensatory time.

Employees who are eligible to earn compensatory time are required to use earned compensatory time before December 31. Employees who do not take their unused compensatory time by December 31 will forfeit that compensatory time.

The overtime or compensatory time rate is paid only for hours actually worked. Thus, if you work thirty-six (36) hours and have an eight (8) hour holiday for a total of forty-four (44) hours in the work week, you will not be paid time-and-one-half for the hours over forty (40) because you did not actually work more than forty hours.

An employee must obtain approval in advance from the Chief Appraiser prior to working overtime. Working overtime or compensatory time without approval may result in no overtime pay or compensatory time given.

## **E. Salary Increases**

The District's budget is prepared on a calendar year basis; therefore, salary increases for employees will be considered annually to become effective on the first full pay period after January 1 of the budget year. Increases each year are not automatic and will depend on the budget, approved by the Board of Directors, and will be based on merit.

## **VIII. EMPLOYEE BENEFITS**

### **A. Health Insurance**

The District provides, as a benefit to its employees, medical health insurance, dental insurance and a pre-established amount of life insurance to all eligible employees.

Insurance is provided for all regular full time employees by a reputable health care provider at no cost to the employee. The health insurance policy covers hospitalization and medical expenses as set forth in the coverage documents of the health insurance agreement. Health insurance coverage is also available for an employee's dependents at the employee's expense. Probationary employees will be eligible for insurance coverage in the the next month following completion of the first thirty days of the probationary period, and acceptance by the insurance provider, at no cost to the employee. The effective date of coverage shall be determined and confirmed by the insurance provider.

The District will not be responsible for providing medical advice or treatment. All employees are responsible for their individual health care matters. Any and all insurance claims will be the sole responsibility of the employee and should be resolved by the employee through coordination with the insurance agency and the health care provider. The District assumes no liability or responsibility for unpaid insurance claims or individual employee's health care expenses.

Temporary and part time employees are not eligible for health insurance benefits.

### **B. Workers' Compensation**

All employees are automatically covered under the Workers' Compensation Insurance Act. The act entitles an injured employee to be compensated for lost time due to an on the job injury. Employees must report injuries to the Chief Appraiser immediately. Sick leave is not charged to employees under this section.

### **C. Retirement**

The District provides retirement benefits for regular full time employees. The District's retirement plan is a deferred contribution

retirement plan. The retirement plan is provided through Nationwide Retirement Solutions and is available to employees following completion of the first thirty days of the probationary period. Actual deductions from payroll and deposits into the retirement accounts will be made pending the completion of the retirement account set up by the retirement plan administrator. During the remaining portion of the employee's probationary period, the employee shall contribute five (5) percent of their bi-weekly salary. Once the employee completes the probationary period the District shall contribute six (6) percent of the employee's bi-weekly salary. The employee may contribute more than the required five (5) percent; however, the total contribution for the employee and employer may not exceed the maximum yearly amount established by the Internal Revenue Service.

While the District does provide retirement benefits to its regular full-time employees and encourages all of its employees to save for retirement purposes, we do not provide financial advice or assistance with the managing of your retirement funds. Financial decisions regarding your future financial needs are solely yours to make. The District's retirement plan administrator does provide some financial advice and can assist employees with certain financial decisions. The District will not be responsible or liable for losses in retirement or investment funds.

## **IX. STANDARDS OF CONDUCT**

In the interest of maintaining good working conditions, employees are expected to observe the District's Rules of Conduct. Although cause is not necessary for termination, violation of any of the policies and rules stated in this handbook could result in termination. Less severe disciplinary action may also be imposed for the offenses and violations set forth below. In setting forth these rules, the District does so as a guide. The listing of these rules below in no way will limit the imposition of disciplinary action, up to and including termination, for acts by employees which violate the normal and reasonable standards of workplace conduct as determined by the Chief Appraiser.

In making a decision as to whether an employee should be disciplined for violation of rules, and in determining the extent of such discipline, the Chief Appraiser will take into consideration all of the circumstances involved, and may take into consideration as well the employee's overall work record with the District.

1. Falsification of any records, including employment records.
2. Disclosing confidential information to unauthorized persons.

3. Excessive tardiness or absences, regardless of the reason.
4. Absence without notification or satisfactory reason.
5. Neglect or inattention to defined job responsibilities and assignments.
6. The unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession, sale or use of a controlled substance(s) during working hours, on the job, and/or on District property.
7. Reporting to work under the influence of alcohol or consuming alcohol during work hours on the job.
8. Abuse, waste or destruction of District equipment, supplies, goods or any other property of the District, of a fellow employee or of a member of the public.
9. Leaving an assigned work area or District premises during working hours without notice to and permission of the Department Manager or Chief Appraiser.
10. Creating or contributing to unhealthy, unsanitary or hazardous conditions which would cause harm to the employee, fellow employees or members of the public.
11. Possession of firearms, explosives, knives or other weapons on District premises or in the performance of assigned duties.
12. Violation of any of the District's personnel policies.
13. Violating safety rules or common safety practices.
14. Indulging in disorderly conduct, using profane or abusive language to fellow employees, Department Managers, or members of the public on District property or in District vehicles.
15. Fighting, threatening, intimidating, attempting bodily harm or injury, or interfering with a fellow employee, Department Manager or customers on District property.
16. Insubordination or refusal of an employee to follow instructions or to perform designated work.
17. Theft, dishonesty or unauthorized removal of a taxpayer's, the District's or a fellow employee's property.

18. Conviction of a felony or other crime involving moral turpitude.
19. Failure to report the conviction of any crime (a felony or other crime involving moral turpitude and excluding minor traffic offenses) or suspension of the employee's driver's license within 7 days of entry of the conviction.
20. Unsatisfactory performance of duties.
21. Failure or refusal to cooperate with fellow employees and Department Managers.
22. Carelessness, or negligence which could result in the destruction or damage of property belonging to the District, members of the public, or fellow employees, or which endangers life or property.
23. Discourteous conduct toward members of the public, employees, Department Managers or other persons.
24. Unauthorized use or removal of the District's supplies or equipment.
25. Making false, vicious or malicious statements concerning a fellow employee, Department Manager, member of the public, the District or its services.
26. Illegal or unauthorized entrance onto District property or District vehicles.
27. Failure to comply with the District dress code.
28. Not observing and adhering to proper, established chain of command channels and/or communication. (Chain of command is established by the current organizational chart).
29. Insubordination. Willful failure or refusal to perform assigned work or fully comply with instructions or orders as requested by Department Manager or other members of management.
30. Incompetence. Inefficiency, inability, or unwillingness to perform assigned work satisfactorily or carry out the duties of the position.
31. Disturbance. Fighting, using profane or threatening language; horseplay; causing injury to fellow employees through deliberate action or gross negligence; spreading false reports; or otherwise

disrupting harmonious relationships between employees, taxing entities, or the general public, such as making sharp or abrupt comments or displaying prejudice that might affect the cordiality of his/her contacts with same.

32. Indifference toward work. Inefficiency, loafing, carelessness, failure to remain at work, performing personal business during working hours, abuse of lunch or rest periods, sleeping or being inattentive during working hours, interfering with the work of others, mistreatment of the public or other employees, or leaving work without permission.
33. Abuse of the District's sick leave policy.
34. Sabotage. Deliberate damage or destruction of District equipment or property; altering, removing or destroying District records; avocation of or participation in unlawful trespass or seizure of District property, encouraging or engaging in slowdowns, sit-ins, strikes or any other concerted effort to limit or restrict employees from working.
35. Failure to adhere to the State of Texas Code of Ethics or the Board of Tax Professional Examiners Code of Ethics.
36. Accepting gifts, rewards, compensation or other forms of remuneration from any outside source for the performance of the employee's regular duties.

Decisions to terminate an employee can and often do occur to promote the efficiency of the District. In determining whether such action will promote the efficiency of the District, the Chief Appraiser shall make his/her determination on the basis of whether the conduct of the individual may reasonably be expected to interfere with or prevent effective performance by the District of its overall duties and responsibilities.

#### **A. Evaluations**

All employees will be evaluated once a year at a minimum. Managers may evaluate employees at any period deemed appropriate. The evaluation shall be written on forms prescribed by the Chief Appraiser. The employee will be provided a copy of his/her written evaluation upon request. The person conducting the evaluation shall retain a copy and will furnish the Human Resource Manager a copy to be included in the employee's personnel file. The major goal of the evaluation process will be the professional improvement of the employee.

The evaluator shall use the evaluation to record performance and/or specify procedures for improvement.

## **B. Discipline**

All employees of the District are expected to be mature professional adults. In the event that a Manager must discipline an employee, fairness is most important. Categories of discipline, depending on the severity and/or repetition of the infraction, are typically as follows:

1. Verbal Reprimand (will be noted in personnel file)
2. Written Reprimand (will be noted in personnel file)
3. Termination

The District reserves the right to skip levels of discipline and proceed to any step deemed appropriate for the conduct or infraction involved.

Transfers and layoffs are not to be used for disciplinary action against any employee. Demotions to a probationary status may be used as disciplinary action. All disciplinary action shall be documented and filed immediately with the Chief Appraiser. Managers will document all disciplinary action taken. Employees being disciplined will also receive a copy of the action taken when requested. The employee shall be notified of the conduct by the immediate Department Manager, and shall be given the opportunity to respond thereto. The Manager or Chief Appraiser shall then notify the employee of the type of discipline and its effective date.

## **C. Substance Abuse/Drug-Free Workplace Policy**

The objective of the District's substance abuse policy is to provide a safe and healthy workplace for all employees, prevent accidents, and comply with Section 7.10 of the Texas Workers' Compensation Act.

The use, possession, sale, transfer and/or purchase of drugs by employees at any time on District premises or while on District business are prohibited. The illegal use of any drug is prohibited. The consumption of alcohol during working hours is strictly prohibited. Employees must not report for duty or be on District premises while under the influence of or have in their possession any illegal drug or alcohol. The presence of any illegal drug or alcohol in the body of any employee on District premises, or

while performing work for the District away from its premises, is a violation of this policy.

The District reserves the right to require drug/alcohol testing of any employee as a condition for employment or continued employment. An employee's refusal to take a drug test, if requested under these circumstances, will result in termination of employment.

#### **D. Weapons and Other Contraband**

District employees are prohibited from carrying any type of firearm or concealed handgun in District vehicles (whether owned or leased) or at any District facility (whether owned or leased), or at any other location while acting in the course and scope of employment. This prohibition also applies to individuals who possess a license to carry a concealed handgun under the authority of Texas Concealed Handgun Permit Law.

For the purpose of this subsection, the expression "in the course and scope of employment" includes: when performing duties on behalf of the District, when performing property inspections or interviews or making deliveries or other activities on behalf of the District, or during required travel within the District's boundaries.

Any violation of this policy may result in reprimand or formal disciplinary procedures including termination of employment.

### **X. RESIGNATION OR TERMINATION**

#### **A. Resignation**

To resign in good standing, an employee must notify the Chief Appraiser in writing at least ten working days prior to the effective date of termination. An employee may resign in good standing without the ten days notice if such notice is waived by the Chief Appraiser.

#### **B. Termination**

Termination can and often means an involuntary dismissal by the District.

### **C. Termination Pay and Notices**

When a temporary employee or an employee who has not completed a probationary period is terminated for any reason, he/she shall be entitled only to wages earned. Regular full-time employees leaving the employment of the District voluntarily shall receive all wages due and an amount equivalent to earned vacation leave, if any, only if the employee meets the requirements set forth in Section VI Part F of this handbook. Terminated employees are not entitled to termination or severance pay.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I acknowledge receipt of the Employee Handbook of the Hood County Appraisal District and understand that it is my responsibility to read and become familiar with the policies, procedures, rules and regulations contained therein. I understand that this handbook and all of the District's policies and practices are subject to change, modification or amendment by the District's Board of Directors at any time without advance notice and any rule, regulation or policy in this handbook is subject to both state and federal law. If any policy, rule or regulation is in conflict with state or federal law, the state or federal law will have superiority. I also acknowledge that this handbook is **not** an employment contract and that nothing in the handbook should be interpreted as creating any contractual rights or limiting the District's rights. I understand and agree that my employment relationship is "**at-will**" and that, therefore, my employment can be terminated at any time by either me or the company, without any notice and without any cause. I further recognize and agree that no one except the Chief Appraiser of the District has any authority or right to change my at-will status and that the only manner in which it can be changed is by a written employment contract executed by the Chief Appraiser.

I acknowledge that I will comply with all of the policies, procedures, rules and regulations contained in this handbook or other publications and that my future employment with the District is subject to and contingent upon my compliance with these policies, procedures, rules and regulations.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

## AUTHORIZATION FOR PAYROLL DEDUCTIONS

Through my signature below, I hereby specifically and expressly authorize to deduct from any of my paychecks (including any final paycheck) any of the following amounts or sums:

- A. Any amounts I may have borrowed from the District and which I have not repaid when such amounts were due or at the time of my separation from the District.
- B. Any amounts that may have been advanced to me by the District.
- C. Any amounts or wages that may have been unintentionally overpaid to me.
- D. The amounts corresponding to the replacement cost of any equipment, supplies, tools, or other assets of the District, which I have removed from its premises and which I have intentionally failed to return to the District upon its request.
- E. Any other amounts which, independently from this deduction authorization, I have authorized to be deducted from my paycheck.

**THE ABOVE IS AGREED TO AND ACKNOWLEDGED BY;**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee's Signature

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Employee's Name

Employee's Signature Witnessed By:

\_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

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

**HOOD COUNTY APPRAISAL DISTRICT**  
**Application for Family or Medical Leave**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Start Date of Anticipated Leave: \_\_\_\_\_

Expected Date of Return to Work: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for Leave (Explain) \_\_\_\_\_

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

**NOTE:** A leave request based on an employee's serious health condition or the serious health condition of an employee's spouse, child or parent must be accompanied by a verifying medical certification from a physician.

I hereby authorize Hood County Appraisal District to contact my physician to verify the reason for my requested leave or for any other information concerning my requested family and medical leave.

I understand that failure to return to work at the end of my leave period may be treated as a resignation unless an extension has been agreed upon and approved in writing by Hood County Appraisal District.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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

APPROVED BY:

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

## HOOD COUNTY APPRAISAL DISTRICT

### Medical Certification (Employee's Own Serious Illness)

1. Employee's Name: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Patient's Name: \_\_\_\_\_
3. The attached sheet describes what is meant by a "serious health condition" under the Family and Medical Leave Act. Does the patient's condition<sup>1</sup> qualify under any of the categories described? If so, please check the applicable category:  
  
(1)\_\_\_\_\_ (2)\_\_\_\_\_ (3)\_\_\_\_\_ (4)\_\_\_\_\_ (5)\_\_\_\_\_  
(6)\_\_\_\_\_ or, None of the above \_\_\_\_\_
4. Describe the **medical facts** which support your certification, including a brief statement as to how the medical facts meet the criteria of these categories:  
  
  - 5a. State the approximate **date** the condition commenced, and the possible **duration** of the condition (and also the probable duration of the patient's present incapacity<sup>2</sup> if different):
  - 5b. Will it be necessary for the employee to take work only **intermittently or to work on a less than full schedule** as a result of the condition (including for treatment described in Item 6 below):  
  
If yes, give the probable duration.
  - 5c. If the condition is a **chronic condition** (condition #4) or pregnancy, state whether the patient is presently **incapacitated** and the like duration and frequency of **episodes of incapacity**.
  - 6a. If additional **treatments** will be required for the condition, provide an estimate of the probable number of such treatments.

---

<sup>1</sup>Here and elsewhere on this form, the information sought relates **only** to the condition for which the employee is taking FMLA leave.

<sup>2</sup>"**Incapacity**," for purpose of FMLA, is defined to mean inability to work, attend school or perform other regular daily activities due to the serious health condition, treatment therefor, or recovery there from.

If the patient will be absent from work or other daily **activities** because of **treatment on an intermittent or part-time** basis, also provide an estimate of the

probable number and interval between such treatments, actual or estimated dates of treatment if known, and period required for recovery, if any:

6b. If any of these treatments will be provided by **another provider of health services** (e.g., physical therapist), please state the nature of the treatments:

6c. If **regimen of continuing treatment** by the patient is required under your supervision, provide a general description of such regimen (e.g. prescription drugs, physical therapy requiring special equipment):

7a. If medical leave is required for the employee's **absence from work** because of the **employee's own condition** (including absences due to pregnancy or a chronic condition), is the **employee unable to perform** work of any kind?

7b. If able to perform some work, is the employee **unable to perform any one or more of the essential functions of the employee's job** (the employee or the employer should supply you with information about the job functions)?

If yes, please list the essential functions the employee is unable to perform.

7c. If neither a. nor b. applies, is it necessary for the employee to be **absent from work for treatment**?

8a. If leave is required to **care for a family member** of the employee with serious health condition, **does the patient require assistance** for basic medical or personal needs or safety, or for transportation?

8b. If no, would the employee's presence to provide **psychological comfort** be beneficial to the patient or assist in the patient's recovery?

8c. If the patient will need care only **intermittently** or on a part-time basis, please indicate the probable duration of this need:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Health Care Provider

\_\_\_\_\_  
Type of Practice

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Address)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Telephone Number)

**TO BE COMPLETED BY THE EMPLOYEE NEEDING FAMILY LEAVE TO CARE FOR A FAMILY MEMBER:**

State the care you will provide and an estimate of the period during which care will be provided, including a schedule if leave is to be taken intermittently or if it will be necessary for you to work less than a full schedule:

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## SERIOUS HEALTH CONDITION

A “**Serious Health Condition**” means an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or medical condition that involves one of the following:

1. Hospital Care

**Inpatient care** (i.e., an overnight stay) in a hospital, hospice or residential medical care facility, including any period of incapacity<sup>3</sup> or subsequent treatment in connection with or consequent to such inpatient care.

2. Absence Plus Treatment

(a) A period of incapacity of **more than three consecutive calendar days** (including any subsequent treatment or period of incapacity relating to the same condition), that also involves:

(1) **Treatment**<sup>4</sup> two or more times by a health care provider, by a nurse or physician’s assistant under direct supervision of a health care provider, or by a provider of health care services (e.g., physical therapist) under orders of, or on referral by, a health care provider;

or

(2) **Treatment** by a health care provider on **at least one occasion** which results in a **regimen of continuing treatments** under the supervision of the health care provider.

3. Pregnancy

Any period of incapacity due to **pregnancy**, or for **prenatal care**.

---

<sup>3</sup>“Incapacity” for purpose of FMLA, is defined to mean inability to work, attend school or perform other regular daily activities due to the serious health condition, treatment therefor, or recovery therefrom.

<sup>4</sup>“Treatment” includes examinations to determine if a serious health condition exists and evaluations of the condition. Treatment does not include routine physical examinations, eye examinations, or dental examinations.

<sup>5</sup>“A regimen of continuing treatment” includes, for example, a course of prescription medication (e.g., an antibiotic) or therapy requiring special equipment to resolve or alleviate the health condition. “A regimen of treatment” does not include the taking of over-the counter medications such as aspirin, antihistamines, or salves; or bed-rest, drinking fluids, exercise, and other similar activities that can be initiated without a visit to a health care provider.

4. Chronic Conditions Requiring Treatment

A **chronic condition** which:

(1) Requires **periodic visits** for treatment by a health care provider, or by a nurse or physician's assistant under direct supervision of a health care provider:

(2) Continues over an **extended period of time** (including recurring episodes of a single underlying condition);

and

(3) May cause **episodic** rather than a continuing period of incapacity (e.g. asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, etc.).

5. Permanent/Long-term Conditions Requiring Supervision

A period of **incapacity** which is **permanent or long term** due to a condition for which treatment may not be effective. The employee or family member must be **under the continuing supervision of, but need not be receiving active treatment by, a health care provider**. Examples include Alzheimer's, a severe stroke, or the terminal stages of a disease.

6. Multiple Treatments (Non-Chronic Conditions)

A period of absence to **receive multiple treatments** (including any period of recovery therefrom) by a health care provider or by a provider of health care services under orders of, or on referral by, a health care provider, either for **restorative surgery** after an accident or other injury, or for a condition that would **likely result in a period of "incapacity"** of more than three consecutive calendar days in the absence of medical intervention or treatment, such as cancer (chemotherapy, radiation, etc.), severe arthritis (physical therapy), or kidney disease (dialysis).