Walton County Board of County Commissioners

Human Resources Policy Manual

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Section I
Human Resources Introduction

Guiding Principles

Florida Law requires all Walton County Board of County Commissioners' employees to take an Oath of Loyalty as a condition of employment. It is illegal for the Walton County Board of County Commissioners, hereinafter referred to as the "Walton County BCC", to issue a paycheck to any employee who has not signed a loyalty oath.

The Walton County BCC, believing it to be in the public interest and of most benefit to the employees of the Walton County BCC, has an established policy:

- That fair and equitable treatment of all employees shall be maintained in all areas of personnel matters.
- That the administration of Walton County BCC services shall be conducted with integrity and concern for the individual employee.
- That the public interest shall be best served by having a personnel system that recognizes individual worth and applies objective and equitable policies, procedures, and practices.
- That the Walton County BCC, or their designee, shall review the qualifications of everyone submitting an application for employment and extend offers of employment that is in the best interest of Walton County.
- That the Walton County BCC encourages, when feasible, the advancement and training of present employees to prepare for furtherance of career and personal goals.
- The Walton County BCC and all within their employment shall comply with all state and federal EEO statutes and regulations.
- The purpose of this manual is to set forth policies and guidelines relative to employee benefits and procedures under the Walton County BCC. It provides employees with sufficient understanding of their privileges and benefits, as well as their duties and responsibilities.

These policies are intended to cover most human resources problems and actions which may arise. Those not specifically covered shall be interpreted by the Director of Human Resources (HR) with the guidance of County Administration. Such interpretations shall be in keeping with the intent of these policies. If any chapter, section or other portion of these policies or procedures is found to be invalid by a duly constituted authority, it shall not affect the validity of the balance of these policies and procedures.

Nothing contained in these policies, or in any other materials or information distributed by Walton County BCC, creates a contract of employment, guarantee of continued employment or benefits between any employee and the Walton County BCC. All employees who do not have a written employment contract with the Walton County BCC for a specific, fixed term of employment are employed at will, for an indefinite period.

Revisions

Policy revisions, changes, or terminations may be initiated by any County Commissioner, County Administration, or any department director and shall become effective upon adoption by the Walton County BCC.

Americans with Disabilities Act Statement

It is the intent of Walton County BCC to comply with the mandates of the Americans with Disabilities Act as amended in 2008. In that regard, qualified individuals with disabilities are encouraged to apply for positions and the Walton County BCC shall reasonably accommodate such individuals, both in any pre-employment testing and/or with respect to the job which they apply. In circumstances where a disabled individual is the most qualified for a position, with or without a reasonable accommodation, that individual shall be selected. It is primarily the responsibility of the disabled applicants and employees to call to the Walton County BCC's attention any need for a reasonable accommodation in testing or with respect to the position the individual seeks or holds.

Employees who believe they have not been afforded their rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act as amended in 2008 may file a complaint by contacting the HR Department.

While the Walton County BCC cannot make all requested accommodations, it shall work with the employees to define reasonable terms and supply such terms to the employee. If the employee cannot perform the essential functions with the requested accommodation, the employee may be separated from the Walton County BCC.

Breastfeeding Accommodation

We recognize the needs of new mothers and provide a reasonable unpaid break time for employees needed to express breast milk for their nursing child for up to one year from the child's date of birth. We provide private office space that shall shield the employee from view and shall be wholly free from coworker or public intrusion. If such a need arises, simply contact the Department of Human Resources (referred to as HR Department) and necessary breaks and corresponding office space shall be provided.

Religious Expression

The Walton County BCC works diligently to respect the recognized religious beliefs of its entire workforce. As such, it welcomes any requests for accommodation because of recognized beliefs that do not create an undue hardship on the Walton County BCC's ability to properly fulfill its mission. An employee merely needs to codify the request for religious accommodation and present it to the employees' supervisor or to the HR Department for consideration and corresponding action. Examples of accommodation include using paid leave or leave without pay, allowing an exception to the dress and appearance code which does not impact safety or uniform requirements, or for other aspects of employment.

Code of Ethics

All Walton County BCC employees shall be aware of, and comply with Section 112:311*, Florida Statutes (6)* which currently provides in part: "It is declared to be the policy of the state that public officers and employees, state and local, are agents of the people and hold their positions for the benefit of the public. They are bound to uphold the Constitution of the United States and the State Constitution and to perform efficiently and faithfully their duties under the laws of the federal, state, and local governments. Such officers and employees are bound to observe, in their official acts, the highest standards of ethics consistent with this code and the advisory opinions rendered with respect hereto regardless of personal considerations, recognizing that promoting the public interest and maintaining the respect of the people in their government must be of foremost concern."

Employees shall not, either directly or indirectly, use their official position within the Walton County BCC or information obtained in connection with their employment for private gain, for themselves or others.

Employees shall not accept any gift, favor, or service from any member of the public, including but not limited to Christmas and/or birthday gifts in an amount that exceeds an estimated value of $25.00. Employees shall not accept any gift, favor, or service with the understanding that it was provided to him/her to obtain special treatment. Elected and appointed officials of the Walton County BCC are subject to the state of Florida Statute for acceptance of gifts.

No employee shall make any false statement, certification, or recommendation of any employment under any provision of these policies, or in any manner, commit or attempt to commit any fraud preventing the impartial execution of the provisions of these policies, regarding employment, promotion, or transfer.

Conflict of interest rules shall be in accordance with the established laws of the state of Florida. No Walton County BCC employee shall transact any business in their official capacity with any business entity of which that employee is an officer, agent, or member, or in which they hold a material interest. If an employee is uncertain as to whether they may be in violation of this policy, clarification may be obtained from the HR Department. Walton County BCC Administration may at any time require a statement of disclosure from any employee if they have reason to believe that said employee may be in violation of this policy. The HR Department shall be responsible for investigating any alleged incident of conflict of interest and when needed, the Walton County BCC's legal counsel may interpret Sections 112.311-112.326*, Florida Statutes*. If a violation of this policy is found, disciplinary action, up to and including termination of their employment may be initiated.

Employees shall not conduct personal business while in a Walton County BCC uniform while on duty.

Employees shall not consume or be under the influence of alcoholic beverages while on duty or while in a Walton County BCC uniform, nor shall they use, be under the influence of, consume or possess illegal substances while on duty, in a Walton County BCC uniform or while on Walton County BCC property at any time. It is the intent of the Walton County BCC to create and maintain a drug-free workplace for all Walton County BCC employees, in accordance with the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988. (**See Policy 2.2 – Drug Free Workplace**).

Any violation of the provisions of this policy shall be subject to review and appropriate disciplinary action. If the employee has any doubt as to the application of the policy as it relates to their position,

the possible violations should be discussed with their department director, who shall either approve or forbid the activity, or refer the question to the HR Department.

All Walton County BCC employees must abide by a code of wholly ethical communications with peers, supervisors, employees, vendors, and citizens. Ethical communication enhances human worth and dignity by fostering truthfulness, fairness, responsibility, personal integrity, and respect for self and for others. As such, the following rules should be expressly followed to avoid violating such code:

- Communicate all concerns regarding another's behavior directly with the individual. Sharing such concerns with others that do not have a legitimate reason to know such concerns may quickly amount to gossip- one of the most damaging practices in any workplace.
- Avoid argumentative tones and comments. Employees should state their position clearly and factually in a normal tone, allowing the other individual an opportunity to share their position, and inviting open discussion regarding both such positions.
- Always act with integrity. It is critical that employees never engage in deceit, exaggeration, or express dishonesty when dealing with other individuals. While some communication may be extremely difficult to have, employees are always expected to provide them in a candid, but respectful, manner.
- Respect issues of confidentiality. Employees of the Walton County BCC may be faced with topics of great confidentiality at times and, as such, must avoid sharing any such information with anyone not intended to be part of such confidentiality. This procedure speaks only to issues of confidentiality related exclusively to the Walton County BCC's purpose and mission and should not be interpreted to include gossip, personal information, and other topics not related to Walton County itself.
- Any employee found violating any portion of this procedure may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of their employment.

Scope of Authority and Responsibility

No Walton County BCC Commissioner, acting on their own individual authority, shall hire, transfer, raise the pay of, demote or terminate the employment of any Walton County BCC employee other than their respective aides or executive assistants.

It is all Walton County BCC employees' responsibility to protect the Walton County BCC's trademarks and brand. Consistency in the use of our brand strengthens our value and our ability to be instantly recognized by our citizens and other stakeholders. Our logo shall only be used in strict accordance with this policy and the graphics requirements of the approved brand. Our logo shall not be altered or combined with any other mark or element. Our logo shall appear prominently on all official communication and marketing materials such as brochures, letterheads, and business cards.

Any use of the Walton County BCC logo, trademark or brand in print and electronic materials including email and social media shall conform to our brand requirements.

The Walton County BCC logo shall not be used on commercial merchandise except as expressly approved by County Administration. The Walton County BCC logo shall not be used in any way that states or implies endorsement of a commercial product or service, gives a false impression, is misleading, or could cause confusion regarding the Walton County BCC's relationship with any person or entity.

Neither the Walton County BCC name or logo shall be used in any manner that could adversely affect our image or standing in the community. Such proscribed uses include, but are not limited to, the use of our logo in connection with alcoholic beverages, cigarettes or other tobacco products, sexually oriented products or services, religious products, political parties or organizations, gaming or games of chance, and firearms.

The Walton County BCC expects their employees to respect all copyright and other intellectual property laws—for the protection of the county as well as the employees. Proper respect for the laws governing copyright, fair use of copyrighted material owned by others, trademarks, and other intellectual property, including our own logo, copyrights, trademarks, and brands is critical to continued employment.

Definitions

Appointment	The selection of an applicant to fill a vacant position.
At Will Employment	Employment which may be terminated at any time and for any or no reason and which does not create an enforceable expectancy of continued employment or a property right in any aspect of employment.
The Board	The legislative branch of the Walton County Government consisting of five elected Commissioners.
Board Appointments	The County Administrator, the County Attorney, and the Chief Financial Officer shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Walton County BCC.
Class	A specific group of positions which are so similar in duties and responsibilities that they justify common treatment in selection, compensation, and other employment processes and the same descriptive title may be used to designate all positions in the same class regardless of the department in which they are located.
Classification Plan	A document which formally describes the concepts, rules and regulations, and class specifications utilized in the classification and reclassification of County positions.
Continuous Employment	Employment which is uninterrupted except for authorized leave of absences or suspensions.
Conviction	Situation where employee is adjudicated guilty of a crime, pleads guilty to a crime or where adjudication is withheld by a court, but sentence is imposed (even if sentence is suspended).
County Administration	Employees of the Walton County BCC responsible for the administration of county operations including the County Administrator & Deputy County Administrator(s).
County Administrator	Person appointed by the Walton County BCC to be responsible for the administration of all County departments and for the proper administration of all affairs within the jurisdiction of the Walton County BCC.
Department Director	Employee with the responsibility for the operations of an entire county Department.
Employee	An individual employed by the Board of County Commissioners of Walton County, Florida.

Exempt Employee	An employee classified as exempt in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act and who is ineligible for overtime compensation.
Full Time Employee	An employee who works a normal forty-hour work week and is hired for an indefinite period.
Grievance	A formal complaint made by an employee when they feel the application of a rule, policy or procedure has been applied unjustly, or when some condition of employment is believed to be unfair or unjust.
Immediate Family	For purposes of bereavement leave, immediate family shall include the employee's legal spouse, and the parents, grandparents, siblings, children and grandchildren of either the employee or the spouse.
Insubordination	The unwillingness or refusal to perform assigned work or deliberate failure to comply with written or verbal instructions from a proper supervisory authority, or disrespectful, insolent, or abusive language or action toward a supervisor.
Involuntary Termination	Dismissal from employment with Walton County for unsatisfactory service or misconduct.
May	The term "may" shall be interpreted as permissive.
Nonexempt Employee	An employee classified as nonexempt in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act and who is eligible for overtime compensation.
Part Time Employee	An employee who works less than a 30-hour work week and is hired for an indefinite period.
Pay Grade	A grouping of classes for compensation purposes based on responsibility, difficulty, and relative worth of the work as determined by consideration of all the factors bearing upon the proper payment and compensation for such services.
Pay Plan	A document which formally describes the procedures and the pay schedule for compensating employees for work performed.
Pay Schedule	An official table of rates and complete salary ranges for occupational classes within Walton County service.
Position Description	A written statement of the typical duties, responsibilities and qualification requirements of all jobs included in the same class.
Reclassification	The changing of a position description due to change in the duties and

	responsibilities of the position.
Regular Employee	An employee who has successfully completed their initial training period.
Seasonal Employee	An employee hired to fill a position related to a special project or program for a pre-defined period or for the duration of the project of program.
Shall	The term “shall” will be interpreted as mandatory.
Temporary Employee	An employee hired either full or part-time for a specified, limited period.
Training Period	The initial six-month period after an employee is hired or transfers to a new position.
Volunteer	Any person performing services for Walton County without receiving compensation or benefits for such services. Volunteers must comply with the conduct rules of these policies, but are not eligible for any compensation or benefits set forth in these policies.
Voluntary Termination	Dismissal from employment with Walton County for resignation, retirement, or death.
Walton County BCC	All employees of Board of County Commissioners for Walton County, Florida.

Policy 2.1 – General Conduct

It is the policy of the Walton County BCC that certain rules and regulations regarding employee behavior are necessary for efficient business operations and for the benefit and safety of all employees. Conduct that interferes with county operations, discredits the Walton County BCC, or is offensive to citizens or coworkers shall not be tolerated.

Employees are always expected to conduct themselves in a positive manner to promote the best interests of the Walton County BCC. Appropriate employee conduct includes:

- Treating all visitors and coworkers in a courteous manner.
- Refraining from behavior or conduct that is offensive, undesirable, or which is contrary to the Walton County BCC's best interests (including conduct outside of work while in clothing or vehicles that identify or imply the individual is or may be a Walton County BCC employee and may be on duty).
- Reporting to management suspicious, unethical, unsafe, or illegal conduct by coworkers or suppliers.
- Reporting to management any threatening or potentially violent behavior by coworkers.
- Cooperating with all Walton County BCC investigations.
- Complying with all Walton County BCC safety and security regulations.
- Wearing clothing appropriate for the work being performed.
- Performing assigned tasks efficiently and in accord with established quality standards.
- Reporting to work punctually as scheduled and being at the proper workstation, ready for work, at the assigned starting time.
- Giving proper advance notice whenever unable to work or report on time.
- Smoking only at times and in places not prohibited by Walton County BCC rules or local ordinances.
- Eating meals only during meal periods and only in the designated eating areas.
- Maintaining cleanliness and order in the workplace, work areas, and Walton County BCC owned vehicles.

The following conduct are examples of prohibited behavior or actions, and individuals engaged in such conduct shall be subject to discipline, up to and including termination:

- Engaging in threatening acts of workplace violence.
- Engaging in any form of sexual or other harassment.
- Reporting to work under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or narcotics or using, selling, dispensing, or possessing illegal drugs or narcotics on Walton County BCC premises.
- Disclosing trade secrets or confidential Walton County BCC information.
- Falsifying or altering any Walton County BCC record or report, such as an employment application, medical reports, production records, time records, expense accounts, absentee reports, or shipping and receiving records.

- Stealing, destroying, defacing, or misusing Walton County BCC property or another employee's or citizen's property.
- Misusing Walton County BCC communications systems, including electronic mail, computers, Internet access, and telephones.
- Refusing to follow management's instructions concerning a job-related matter or being insubordinate.
- Failing to wear assigned safety equipment or failing to abide by safety rules and policies.
- Soliciting or distributing in violation of Walton County BCC policies.
- Smoking where prohibited by local ordinance or Walton County BCC rules.
- Using profanity or abusive language.
- Sleeping on the job without authorization.
- Gambling, playing pranks or engaging in horseplay.
- Wearing improper attire or having an inappropriate personal appearance.
- Use, sale, distribution, or possession of alcoholic beverages or drugs on Walton County BCC premises, in a Walton County BCC uniform, or in a Walton County BCC owned vehicle.
- Assault or battery of a fellow employee or citizen.
- An employee's failure to report their misdemeanor or felony arrest to management.
- An employee's failure to report their suspended required license to management.

The above examples of impermissible behavior described above are not intended to be an all-inclusive list. At County Administration or the department director's discretion, any violation of the Walton County BCC's policies or any conduct considered inappropriate or unsatisfactory may subject the employee to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of their employment. The Walton County BCC reserves the right to determine the appropriate level of disciple and is not required to proceed through any specific series of action. Questions about this policy should be directed to the HR Department.

Policy 2.2 – Drug Free Workplace

The Walton County BCC is committed to maintaining a drug-free workplace. All employees are covered by the Federal Drug Free Workplace Act of 1988 and shall sign and acknowledge a *Drug Free Workplace Policy Agreement*. Employees are prohibited from being under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs during work hours and being under the influence of legal drugs to the extent that normal faculties are significantly impaired on the job. Employees are prohibited from manufacturing, using, possessing, or distributing illicit or controlled substances during work hours. Section 112.0455, *Florida Statute.*

Employees may be sent for drug testing as follows:

- Pre-employment if the position is a safety sensitive position
- When there is reasonable suspicion to believe that they are using or have used illegal drugs
- When there is a report of drug use, from a reliable and credible source
- When an employee is arrested for any drug related offense
- Post accident when there is any reported accident that causes personal injury, physical damage, or any accident involving a Walton County BCC vehicle or Walton County BCC owned equipment

Any employee who refuses to submit to a test for drugs or alcohol pursuant to this policy shall be presumed, in the absence of clear and convincing evidence to the contrary, to be under the influence and may forfeit eligibility for all Workers' Compensation medical and indemnity benefits and shall be terminated.

Employees who violate the Walton County BCC's Drug Free Workplace Policy by failing a drug test, being under the influence, using or distributing drugs on the job are subject to termination of employment. Candidates who violate the Walton County BCC's Drug Free Workplace Policy shall be excluded from employment with the Walton County BCC for one (1) year from date of termination.

Policy 2.3 – Outside Employment

Employment with the Walton County BCC shall take precedence over any outside or secondary employment. No employee shall engage in any outside employment or activity which interferes in any way with the full performance of job duties, or which reflects discredit on the Walton County BCC and its work force. Without specific written authorization, no employee is permitted to engage in outside employment during their typical working hours with the Walton County BCC or to use Walton County BCC equipment or resources for such outside employment. Notice of outside employment should be submitted to the HR Department for approval. No regular status employee may receive payment for services from any other public or private organization receiving Walton County BCC connected local, state and/or federal financial support.

Employees who desire to accept outside employment in addition to their regular Walton County BCC position should complete the **Outside Employment Approval Request** form and submit it to their department director for approval. The department director shall partner with the Director of HR to determine whether such employment conflicts with the duties and responsibilities of said Walton County BCC employee. If the department director and Director of HR determines there is no conflict with the duties and responsibilities of the Walton County BCC employee, then the employee may be allowed employment outside of the Walton County BCC as a secondary job.

All employees working outside of the Walton County BCC shall have a signed **Outside Employment Approval Request** form in their personnel file prior to accepting outside employment. Failure to notify the department director of outside employment prior to accepting may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of their employment.

Policy 2.4 – Employee Vehicle Use

Purpose

The purpose of the Employee Vehicle Policy is to establish guidelines and procedures for the responsible and safe use of Walton County BCC-owned vehicles. This policy aims to ensure vehicle operations align with safety standards, reduce risks, and protect both the employees and the Walton County BCC. It provides clarity on driver selection, vehicle usage, and the operation of Walton County BCC-owned vehicles, promoting efficiency and minimizing accidents.

Overview

The Office of Management and Budgets and the Fleet Management Division maintain all vehicle records for the Walton County BCC.

All County vehicles should be equipped with the following:

- An official County license plate
- A County identification number
- Vehicle registration paper
- A current insurance card

The Walton County BCC reserves the right to revoke an eligible driver's privilege to operate a Walton County BCC-owned vehicle. The Walton County BCC also reserves the right to limit an eligible driver's operation of a Walton County BCC-owned vehicle to business use only and/or to a specified operating area. Circumstances that might motivate such action would include, but not be limited to:

- Driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Moving violations
- Multiple preventable accidents
- Damage to the appearance or mechanics of the County vehicle due to driver neglect

Emergency Management Volunteers are permitted to operate Walton County BCC owned vehicles during official duties for the Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

All Walton County BCC-owned vehicles must be equipped with seat belts. Seat belts shall be worn by employees at all times when operating a vehicle.

At no time shall a non-employee passenger under the age of 18 be allowed to ride in Walton County BCC-owned vehicle. Walton County BCC Employees are not permitted to transport family members or other non-employees in a Walton County BCC-owned vehicle unless it is for a specific county-related purpose and prior approval has been granted by the department director.

Minimum Motor Vehicle Record (MVR) Standards

To be eligible to operate a Walton County BCC-owned vehicle, employees must maintain a satisfactory driving record in accordance with the following standards:

- No major traffic violations, including DUI, DWI, or reckless driving, within the past three (3) years

- No more than three (3) or more moving violations or two (2) or more at-fault accidents within the past three (3) years
- A valid and active driver's license, free from suspension or revocation
- No history of traffic-related offenses that indicate habitual or unsafe driving behavior

This standard applies to all applicants for employment which requires a driver's license. Failure to meet this standard is cause for excluding an applicant for hire.

Employees violating this standard will be required to attend a Walton County BCC approved defensive driving course. The employee must present evidence of completing a defensive driving program.

Preventable Accidents (PVA)

The Risk & Safety Manager will monitor preventable vehicular accidents and review incidents to develop and implement prevention strategies. If an employee is involved in a preventable accident, the Risk & Safety Manager will assess the situation and recommend further actions, including additional training or corrective measures.

Alcohol and Tobacco Use

The Walton County BCC prohibits the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or tobacco products while acting as a driver or as a passenger in a Walton County BCC-owned vehicle, or while operating any County apparatus.

Vehicle Cleanliness

Each department and employee is responsible for ensuring the cleanliness of the vehicle or motorized equipment assigned to them. Vehicles should be cleaned at regular intervals to maintain a presentable appearance, as they reflect the image of the county.

Preventative Maintenance

Operators are responsible for scheduling routine preventative maintenance for vehicles according to the fleet maintenance schedule or the manufacturer's recommendations.

Maintenance appointments should be arranged in coordination with fleet maintenance to minimize disruptions to operations.

Employee Responsibilities

Employees must notify their supervisor in writing immediately if they receive any moving traffic violations (during personal time or work time) and while operating a Walton County BCC-owned vehicle. This includes, but is not limited to, license suspensions, revocations, or any major adverse violations. Failing to notify promptly may result in disciplinary action.

Employees are responsible for paying any fines or penalties resulting from traffic citations received while operating a Walton County BCC-owned vehicle. Failure to comply with traffic laws while driving a Walton County BCC-owned vehicle may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Employees shall carry their driver's license on their person at all times when operating a Walton County BCC-owned vehicle. Failure to comply may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. If driving is a job requirement, loss of driving privileges may lead to termination.

24-Hour On-Call and Vehicle Use

At the discretion of the department director or County Administration, employees designated as on-call 24 hours may be permitted to take their Walton County BCC-owned vehicle from their work location to their home within Walton County at the end of their workday. Employees residing outside Walton County must receive written approval from their department director or County Administration to take a Walton County BCC-owned vehicle home outside of the county. All employees who drive a Walton County BCC-owned vehicle home must obtain written approval from both their department head and the Chief of Human Resources Officer (CHRO) using the **Vehicle Use Request (HR0220)** form.

Employees who are not designated for on-call 24 hour may park their Walton County BCC-owned vehicle at the nearest Walton County BCC-owned property at the end of their workday.
Employees are responsible for reporting any mechanical defects or malfunctions of Walton County BCC-owned vehicle to their department director or designated representative as soon as possible.

Employees are responsible for immediately reporting any damage incurred to a Walton County BCC-owned vehicle. If damage occurs while the employee is in charge of the Walton County BCC-owned vehicle, the employee may be required to pay the deductible amount for repairs.

In the event of an accident, the employee must notify law enforcement and their supervisor immediately. The supervisor must then notify the HR Department or the Risk & Safety Manager and ensure the post-accident drug testing procedures are followed. The employee must complete the necessary forms for workers' compensation as needed.

Department directors will make a written report of all Walton County BCC-owned vehicle accidents and submit to the HR Department or Risk & Safety Manager within three (3) business days.

Written reports of all Walton County BCC-owned vehicle accidents will be placed in the human resources file of the employee(s) involved.

Cell Phone and Distracted Driving Policy

The Walton County BCC promotes the safe use of cellular phones by encouraging drivers to ensure their wireless phone is not a distraction. It is even more important to pay attention to the road and make driving safety their priority; do not use a cellular phone when driving. Walton County BCC employees are not permitted to text or allow their wireless phone to distract them while operating a Walton County BCC-owned vehicle in accordance with section *316.305, F.S.,* Florida Ban on Texting While Driving Law.

Conclusion:

This policy is designed to promote the safe and responsible use of all Walton County BCC-owned vehicles. Employees are expected to adhere to all outlined guidelines and take responsibility for the operation of Walton County BCC-owned vehicles. By doing so, we ensure the safety of our workforce, preserve Walton County resources, and maintain a high standard of service to our community. Non-compliance with this policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of their employment.

Policy 2.5 – Dress Code

The purpose of the policy is to further ensure the safety and personal hygiene of each employee by reducing the risk of injury and/or illness through exposure as well as the issue of appropriate dress and grooming. Exceptions will be made for legitimate medical and/or religious reasons where appropriate.

No visible forms of jewelry may be worn in the facial area to include, but not limited to the nose, tongue, cheek, lip, and eyebrow.

Employees are required to conceal tattoos which could be sexually harassing, racially, religiously, or ethnically offensive.

The determination of specific, appropriate employee dress and personal appearance standards are the responsibility of the department director with guidance from the HR Department.

If uniforms are issued by the Walton County BCC, employees shall be required to wear the issued uniform. If an employee terminates employment, they are required to turn their county issued uniforms to their supervisor.

Employees not meeting the standards of this policy, or the departmental operating procedures may be subject to disciplinary action, which may include requiring the employee to leave the premises. Exempt employees shall be required to use available annual leave and nonexempt employees shall be required to use leave without pay for time missed because of failure to comply with the policy.

Dress Code for Meetings

Employees are expected to dress in a professional manner when attending meetings for official Walton County BCC business.

Dress Code for Travel

Employees are expected to use their best judgement when dressing for a travel day when attending conferences or training that require overnight travel.

Casual Days

At their discretion, department directors may allow employees to dress in a more casual fashion than is normally required. On these occasions, employees are still expected to present a neat appearance and are not permitted to wear clothing that is inappropriate for the workplace, including ripped or disheveled clothing, athletic wear, or similarly inappropriate clothing.

Any disputes concerning this policy shall be referred to the HR Department, which shall be responsible for determining if an employee's dress and appearance are appropriate, reasonable and in compliance with Walton County BCC policy.

Policy 2.6 – Conflict of Interest

No Walton County BCC employee or elected official shall have a direct or indirect financial, personal, business, or other interest that conflicts, or appears to conflict, with public duties and responsibilities or engage in financial, personal, business, or other transactions because of relying on information obtained through employment, section 112.311*, Florida Statutes,* provides penalties for conflict-of-interest violations. Any outside personal economic relationship which affords present or future financial benefits to an employee, their family, or to individuals with whom they have business or financial ties, may be considered a conflict of interest requiring an evaluation by the County Administrator, Chief Financial Officer, and/ or County Attorney. Walton County BCC employees and vendors are required to disclose any potential conflict to the Chief Financial Officer and/ or Clerk of Court.

Policy 2.7 – Personal Activities during Work Time

Personal activities must be accomplished before work, during lunch or after work, not while on Walton County BCC time, and not in Walton County BCC owned vehicles or using Walton County BCC owned property. If an employee has an emergency and needs to accomplish a personal task during their work shifts, the employee's supervisor is to be made aware of the situation and the employee shall be charged PTO for the time away from work per **Policy 7.5 – Paid Time Off**.

Policy 2.8 – Communication and Technology

Telephones, cellular phones, voice mail systems, fax machines, tablets, and computers, including electronic mail systems (e-mail) and Internet are provided for Walton County BCC business use and excessive personal, including use for outside employment, is prohibited.

Also prohibited is use of any of these systems to transmit or receive inappropriate messages, to access inappropriate information, or to harass or annoy another party. Inappropriate messages and information include but are not limited to, those that are for personal benefit and those involving discriminatory, hostile, suggestive, obscene, or otherwise unsuitable language and downloading of software onto the Walton County BCC's computers.

Internet Service/Access: The Walton County BCC believes in empowering their staff with the resources necessary to complete their work as well as grow in their current positions. Therefore, we do not limit employee access to the internet as there are many resources such as state and local government websites as well as research sites that provide valuable tools to the staff.

It is the responsibility of each individual employee to utilize these resources in an effective, ethical, and lawful manner. Improper use of these resources could result in the immediate termination of internet service for the employee by their supervisor or approving authority and the employee may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of their employment.

The IT Department monitors internet activity. Any improper use is reported to the employee's department director.

As an employee of a government organization, all messages, web pages, files, and other documents accessed using internet services are subject to public records requests.

Email: The Walton County BCC uses email to manage internal affairs and communications daily. These records are subject to public records disclosure unless explicitly exempt by law.

All email users are responsible for the content of the messages they send. Each message should be courteous, professional, businesslike, and written in language and tone acceptable for citizen review. Messages should never be transmitted that would create an atmosphere of discomfort for another person or that may be perceived as harassment.

Email Security: Users are responsible for the security and maintenance of their local area network password. To maintain security, passwords will be changed as prompted by network administrators. Users will not disclose their passwords to others or record/post their password where it can be viewed by others.

Email Access by Management: Management reserves the right to monitor and review all email content without the consent of the employee.

While emails generated for incidental personal purposes may not qualify as public record(s), Walton County BCC employees should not consider any email to be immune from review by management.

Personal Responsibility: Email, unless specifically exempted by Florida Statute, is a public record.

Retention of email is the responsibility of both the sender and the receiver. Email messages originating within the Walton County BCC are the responsibility of the originator. Therefore, email that is received from a sender within the Walton County BCC may be assumed to have been retained by the sender and may therefore be deleted. The receiver must retain email that originates outside the Walton County BCC and falls under the definition of a public record listed above. In addition, the receiver is responsible for assigning the appropriate retention tag to all email messages.

Retention: Each employee using the e-mail system is responsible for understanding this policy, applying the appropriate retention tag, and determining whether e-mail messages are personal, transitory, and/or public records. Each employee is responsible for the appropriate retention of e-mail.

Guidelines for the proper retention of documents as well as the destruction of documents are outlined by the Florida Department of State. Most of the records for the Walton County BCC fall under General Records Schedule GS11.

Message management: Senders and receivers are responsible for the periodic deletion of personal and transitory messages so that the e-mail system is not overburdened.

Privacy: E-mail users should have no expectation of privacy in the content of their e-mail. All e-mail, whether personal, transitory, or public record, is subject to inspection by the Walton County BCC Administration. Minor personal use is acceptable, but Walton County BCC e-mail systems shall not be used for private business.

Violations: Violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of their employment, in accordance with Walton County BCC policies.

- If someone demands a password, refer them to the IT Department.
- If an account or password is suspected to have been compromised, report the incident to the IT Department and immediately change all passwords.

Any employee found to have violated this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of their employment.

It is the policy of the Walton County BCC that nonexempt employees shall work only their schedule unless they are provided with specific, prior approval for a schedule change or overtime. Reading, sending, or otherwise working on emails during off work hours constitutes work and is strictly prohibited without such prior approval. Employees violating this policy are subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

Policy 2.9 – Social Media

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the proper use of Walton County BCC social sites, web-based marketing, and technologies by establishing guidelines for County owned social media and marketing tools.

This policy establishes the policy of the Walton County BCC concerning the use of "social media" as defined herein, which shall apply to all Walton County officers, employees, agents, volunteers, and contractors in making any communication through social media on behalf of the Walton County BCC or pertaining to Walton County business. Policies governing the creation and use of personal social media pages, sites, platforms, or profiles by Walton County BCC employees are also set out herein.

The Walton County BCC's website at www.co.walton.fl.us shall remain the primary and predominant Internet presence. The appropriate Walton County BCC uses of social media as tools fall generally into two categories:

- As channels for disseminating time-sensitive information as quickly as possible (example: emergency information)
- As marketing or outreach channels which increase the ability to broadcast messages and goals to the widest audience possible

"County Social Media Site" shall mean any social media that is established, endorsed, or funded by the Walton County BCC, its officers, employees, agents, volunteers, or contractors and used to conduct Walton County BCC business. The term County Social Media shall include and encompass Social Media sites established by individual members of the Walton County Board of County Commissioners and/or other public officials acting in an official or public capacity but shall not include personal Social Media sites of members of the Walton County Board of County Commissioners and other public officials.

"Social Media" shall mean and include blogs, websites, Facebook profiles/pages, Twitter feeds, Instagram feeds, NextDoor pages, LinkedIn pages, YouTube pages, and similar platforms available for the dissemination of information and viewing by the public.

Creation and use of Walton County Social Media Sites

- Only Walton County BCC employees who have been authorized in writing by their department directors or by County Administration may create a Walton County BCC Social Media Site or otherwise communicate via social media on behalf of the Walton County BCC.
- Except as provided herein, no Walton County BCC officer, agent, employee, volunteer, or contractor may create, manage, administer, or communicate through social media on behalf of the Walton County BCC or any of its departments.
- Once created, the Walton County BCC's Public Information Department must be added as a site administrator.

Designation of Page Administrator(s)

- Each Walton County BCC Social Media Site shall have at least one individual designated by the applicable department director or by County Administration, who shall be responsible for the administration, updating, and maintenance thereof (the "Page Administrator").

- Each Page Administrator shall be required to undergo training covering topics related to the administration of the Walton County BCC Social Media Site, including but not limited to this policy, state public records laws, and the First Amendment. Such training shall be administered by a legal professional from the Office of the County Attorney for the Walton County BCC or another qualified person.

Walton County Social Media Sites

- Postings on any official Walton County BCC social networking site must not violate any federal, state, or municipal laws. For example, they may not:
    - Reveal information about ongoing investigations
    - Discuss deliberative materials
    - Violate the regulatory process
    - Circumvent Public Records & Open Meetings Laws
    - Violate privacy, confidentiality, or copyright
    - Violate other legal issues that may not apply
- An authorized employee shall post the following on a Walton County BCC Social Media Site:
    - The Walton County BCC Department's name
    - Approved/official Walton County BCC logo or approved official secondary logos
    - A Walton County BCC e-mail address or Walton County BCC telephone number for contact purposes
    - Official department information, resources, calendars, events, and news.
- Walton County BCC Social Media Sites may not be used for the following:
    - To communicate political advertisements or electioneering communications concerning an issue, referendum, or other matters that may be subject to the vote of the electors, except for electioneering communications limited to solely factual information in accordance with Section 106.113, *Florida Statutes*
    - To communicate personal opinions unless approved in writing by County Administration
    - To communicate information unrelated to Walton County BCC actions or business, or any form of slanderous or unlawful information
- When using social networking sites, Walton County BCC postings will:
    - Use appropriate language and not use discriminatory slurs, personal insults, obscenity, profanity, rudeness or engage in any communication that is not acceptable in the county's workplace
    - Demonstrate proper consideration for others' privacy
    - Not post topics that are considered objectionable or inflammatory
    - Not comment on business partners, their competitors' practices, or services, or use such as part of content added to a site
    - Not post material that could be construed as promoting private commercial interests

- Employee, agent, volunteer, or contractors' personal e-mail addresses shall not be used when setting up Walton County BCC Social Media Sites. If necessary, the Walton County BCC's Information Technology (IT) Department will create a unique e-mail address for Social Media use. A Social Media site user ID and password may only be given to an employee, agent, volunteer, or contractor who has been authorized to use that department's social media page.

- At the discretion of the Page Administrator and County Administration, Walton County BCC Social Media Sites may be structured to allow for two-way communication between the Walton County BCC and the public. Where two-way communication is permitted, members of the public may be allowed to post comments and other content which relates to the general purpose and subject matter of the site. In the event a Page Administrator elects to allow for two-way communication, the strict terms of use below shall be posted on the Walton County BCC Social Media Site. Posting or communication from the public shall not be removed from any social media page or website allowing for same unless such material specifically violates the policies that apply to BCC postings. Any removed posts or public communication shall be maintained separately to address future issues.

An important goal of the Walton County BCC is to support the distribution of information to members of the public, and to do so with a level of transparency that encourages trust in government. The use of social media enhances the Walton County BCC's ability to do this, particularly through social networking sites. This page will be used for the distribution of Walton County government information. It is not intended to provide a forum for contact by the public regarding issues or questions they have regarding the Walton County BCC or its services. Members of the public who have specific questions or need assistance should contact the Walton County BCC directly via phone or email.

All comments, opinions, advice, statements, or other information contained in any posts or transmitted by any third party are the responsibility of the author of that message and not that of the Walton County BCC. The Walton County BCC will not be held responsible for the views of individuals who comment on The Walton County BCC's social media sites. It is not the intent of the Walton County BCC to provide a venue or forum for the expression and/or postings of unlimited comments, videos, or links simply for the convenience of the public.

Walton County BCC Social Media Sites are not monitored 24/7. The Walton County BCC reserves the right to monitor and remove any content at any time for any reason at its sole, subjective discretion. Comments, discussion posts, wall posts, and any other user-posted content that is deemed inappropriate by the Walton County BCC will be removed from the page. Advertisements posted for anything not sanctioned by The Walton County BCC will be deleted.

The Walton County BCC expects that users will not post materials that fall into the following categories, and will remove postings that are:

- Obscene, vulgar, sexually explicit, or otherwise offensive language/content, or links to such material
- Threats of any kind, particularly toward any other user or the Walton County BCC, its members, and employees
- The advocating of criminal acts or other illegal behavior
- Material that has the potential to compromise public safety or the safety of law enforcement personnel
- Remarks that disparage or discriminate against anyone based upon their sex, race, creed, religious views, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, etc.
- Remarks that may be considered libel, made toward any person or organization
- Anything that is clearly off the intended topic of discussion
- Information that is clearly inaccurate, unverified, and purposefully designed to mislead others

- Campaigning of any type, political or otherwise
- Links to other third-party sites or advertisements
- Any form of solicitation; and
- Any other language/material deemed inappropriate or offensive

All content on the Walton County BCC social media pages, to include user comments, is considered property of the Walton County BCC, and is subject to disclosure under the Florida's Public Records Act. Comments posted on Walton County BCC social media pages are not considered private and are available for viewing by anyone accessing said pages. We urge you to protect your privacy and not list any personal or sensitive information about yourself when commenting on a post. The Walton County BCC does not and cannot guarantee your privacy when using social media sites. Users should familiarize themselves with, and abide by, the terms and conditions set forth by the social media site when using the application.

If, in the opinion of the Walton County BCC monitors' judgment, an individual continually posts inappropriate material, the Walton County BCC may exercise its right to block that individual from posting content on any Walton County BCC social media site.

- Use of Walton County BCC Social Media Sites must not interfere with an employee's performance of their responsibilities or compromise the functionality of the department or county network.
- If available within the particular social media platform, profanity filters shall be enabled on each Walton County BCC Social Media Site.
- Page Administrators shall utilize their best efforts to direct any request for county assistance or action to the appropriate resource, including the Walton County BCC website, a county e-mail address or the county's customer service line.

Retention of Records

In accordance with Chapters 119 and 257, *Florida Statutes,* all communications made through social media regarding Walton County BCC business by county officers, agents, and employees, volunteers, or contractors and comments by the public on Walton County BCC Social Media Sites are public records and must be stored according to the retention schedule established by the Department of State.

Abuse of Walton County BCC Social Media Sites

Inappropriate use or abuse of Walton County BCC Social Media Sites may subject employees, agents, volunteers, or contractors to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of their employment.

Employee Use of Social Media Sites

The Walton County BCC takes no position on employees' decisions to participate in the use of social media networks. In general, employees who participate in social media are free to publish personal information without restriction by the Walton County BCC. However, employees must avoid posting information that could harm the Walton County BCC using the guidelines listed below:

- Walton County BCC officers, employees, agents, volunteers, and contractors may create and utilize personal, non-county social media sites subject to the following:
    - Each person is solely responsible for the content published on their personal social media site.
    - Use of personal social media sites must be restricted and scheduled so as not to infringe upon a Walton County BCC employee, agent, volunteer, or contractor's county duties and work productivity.
    - Use of personal Social Media sites on Walton County BCC equipment is prohibited.
    - Employees are prohibited from disclosing confidential Walton County BCC information on any social media network.
    - Employees are prohibited from making statements about the Walton County BCC, their co-workers, partners, or agents that could be considered unlawfully harassing, threatening or defamatory.
    - Employees are prohibited from sharing any communication that engages in personal or sexual harassment, unfounded accusations, or remarks that could contribute to a hostile work environment based on protected class (racial, sexual, religious, etc.) as well as any behavior not in accordance with the Walton County BCC's other policies and objectives.
    - Personal social media sites/pages shall not be represented as official Walton County BCC Social Media sites/pages.
    - The Walton County BCC's name, telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, and logos may not be posted on a personal social media site/page. However, an employee may list the Walton County BCC as their employer and/or use their Walton County BCC title for identification purposes. Walton County BCC employees that choose to identify themselves as such must affirmatively state in a conspicuous place and manner that the views expressed online do not represent the views of the Walton County BCC.
    - Communications on personal social media sites regarding Walton County BCC business or the duties and responsibilities of an elected official, employee, agent, volunteer, or contractor may be considered a public record under the definitions in Chapter 119*, Florida Statutes*. It is the sole responsibility of the officers, agents, employees, volunteers, and contractors who utilize personal social media sites to capture and save any communications received on the social media sites which relate to official Walton County BCC business and provide such communications to the public records custodian for the Walton County BCC so that such communications may be retained according to the retention schedule established by the Department of State.

Sunshine Law Requirements for Commissioners or Board Members Utilizing Walton County BCC or Personal Social Media

The Walton County BCC and members of other public boards, councils and public bodies who use the Walton County BCC Social Media Sites or personal social media sites must exercise caution to comply with Chapter 286, *Florida Statutes*. Pursuant to the requirements of Chapter 286, *Florida Statutes*, Members of the Board and other public boards, councils and bodies must not engage in an exchange or discussion of matters with other members of the same board, council, or public body via social media on matters that will foreseeably come before that board, council, or other public body.

Policy 2.10 – Workplace Harassment

It is the policy of the Walton County BCC to promote a productive work environment and the Walton County BCC shall not tolerate verbal or physical conduct by any employee that harasses, disrupts, or interferes with another employee's work performance or that creates an intimidating, offensive, or hostile environment.

- Employees are expected to maintain a productive work environment that is free from harassing or disruptive activity. No form of harassment shall be tolerated, including harassment for the following reasons: age, race, color, sex, gender expression or orientation, religion, national origin, marital status, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or any other protected status in accordance with the requirements of all federal, state, and local laws. Special attention should be paid to the prohibition of sexual harassment.
- Each department director and supervisor have a responsibility to keep the workplace free of any form of harassment, and in particular, sexual harassment. No department director or supervisor shall threaten or insinuate, either explicitly or implicitly, that an employee's refusal or willingness to submit to sexual advances shall affect the employee's terms or conditions of employment.
- Other sexually harassing or offensive conduct in the workplace, whether committed by department directors, supervisors, non-supervisory employees, or non-employees, is also prohibited. This conduct includes:

    - Unwanted physical contact or conduct of any kind, including sexual flirtations, touching, advances, or propositions.
    - Verbal harassment of a sexual nature, such as lewd comments, sexual jokes or references, and offensive personal references.
    - Demeaning, insulting, intimidating, or sexually suggestive comments about an individual.
    - The display in the workplace of demeaning, insulting, intimidating, or sexually suggestive objects, pictures, or photographs.
    - Demeaning, insulting, intimidating, or sexually suggestive written, recorded, or electronically transmitted messages (such as email, instant messaging, and Internet materials).

    Any of the above conduct, or other offensive conduct, directed at individuals because of their age, race, color, sex, gender identity, expression or orientation, religion, national origin, marital status, disability, pregnancy, or military status is also prohibited.

- Any employee who believes that a department director's, supervisor's, other employees, or non-employee's actions or words constitute unwelcome harassment has a responsibility to report or file a complaint about the situation as soon as possible. The report or complaint should be made to the employee's supervisor, the department director, or Director of HR if the complaint involves the department director or supervisor.
- Complaints of harassment shall be handled and investigated under the Walton County BCC's Dispute Resolution Policy (**Section XI – Dispute Resolution**) unless special procedures are considered appropriate. All complaints of harassment shall be investigated promptly and in an impartial and confidential manner as possible. Employees are required to cooperate in any investigation. A timely resolution of each complaint should be reached and communicated to all parties involved.

- Any employee, supervisor, or department director who is found to have violated **Policy 2.10 - Workplace Harassment** will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination of their employment. The Walton County BCC prohibits any form of retaliation against employees for bringing bona fide complaints or providing information about harassment.

Harassment is a form of offensive behavior in which a person targets another employee(s) relating to an individual's age, race, color, sex (including same-sex sexual harassment), religion, national origin, gender identity or expression, or sexual orientation, or disability. It constitutes discrimination and is illegal under federal, state, and local laws.

For the purposes of this policy, "sexual harassment" is defined, as in the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Guidelines, as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when, for example:

- submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment
- submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual
- such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 recognizes two types of sexual harassment: a) quid pro quo and b) hostile work environment. Sexual harassment may include a range of subtle and not-so-subtle behaviors and may involve individuals of the same or different gender. Depending on the circumstances, these behaviors may include unwanted sexual advances or requests for sexual favors; sexual jokes and innuendo; verbal abuse of a sexual nature; commentary about an individual's body, sexual prowess, or sexual deficiencies; leering, whistling, or touching; insulting or obscene comments or gestures; display in the workplace of sexually suggestive objects or pictures; and other physical, verbal, or visual conduct of a sexual nature.

This policy applies to all employees of the Walton County BCC working at all locations. All employees have an obligation to report sexual harassment—even if they are not the victim.

All workers, including supervisors and managers, shall be subject to discipline, up to and including termination of employment for any act of sexual harassment they commit.

Examples of Prohibited Conduct

Though sexual harassment encompasses a wide range of conduct, some examples of specifically prohibited conduct include the following:

- Physical assaults of a sexual nature, such as rape, sexual battery, molestation or attempts to commit these assaults, and intentional physical conduct that is sexual in nature, such as touching, pinching, patting, grabbing, brushing against another employee's body, or poking another employee's body.

- Unwelcome sexual advances, propositions, or other sexual comments, such as sexually oriented gestures, noises, remarks, jokes or comments about a person's sexuality or sexual experience.
- Preferential treatment or promises of preferential treatment to an employee for submitting to sexual conduct, including soliciting or attempting to solicit any employee to engage in sexual activity for compensation or reward.
- Subjecting, or threats of subjecting, an employee to unwelcome sexual attention or conduct or intentionally making performance of the employee's job more difficult because of that employee's sex.
- Sexual, discriminatory displays or publications anywhere in the workplace by our employees.
- Retaliation for sexual harassment complaints.

Responding to Violations of this Policy

If an employee believes that they have been subject to sexual harassment or any unwelcome sexual attention, they may address the situation directly and immediately to the harasser, if possible. If the inappropriate conduct does not cease, or if the employee is unable to or uncomfortable with addressing the alleged harasser directly, they should report the incident to their own supervisor or manager. If the inappropriate conduct does not cease, or if the employee is unable to or uncomfortable with addressing the situation with the supervisor or manager, they should report the incident to the Director of HR. If the Director of HR is not available or the employee is uncomfortable addressing the situation with the Director of HR, the employee may report the incident to the Walton County BCC Attorney.

It is important to report all concerns of sexual harassment or inappropriate sexual conduct to the Director of HR or a supervisor/manager as soon as possible. Management must be made aware of the situation so that it can conduct an immediate and impartial investigation and take appropriate action to remediate or prevent the prohibited conduct from continuing.

Employees who violate this policy are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of their employment. If an investigation results in a finding that this policy has been violated, the mandatory minimum discipline is a written reprimand. The discipline for very serious or repeat violations is termination of employment. Employees who violate this policy may also be subject to civil damages or criminal penalties.

All inquiries, complaints and investigations are treated discreetly. Information is revealed strictly on a need-to-know basis. Information contained in a formal complaint is closely contained. All information pertaining to a sexual harassment complaint or investigation is maintained by the Director of HR in secure files. The Director of HR can answer any questions relating to the procedures for handling information related to sexual harassment complaints and investigations to complainants and respondents.

Federal, state, and local laws prohibit punishing job applicants or employees for asserting their right to be free from discrimination, harassment, or inappropriate sexual conduct. Asserting these rights is called “protected activity,” and it can take many forms. For example, it is unlawful to retaliate against applicants or employees for:

- Filing or being a witness in a complaint, investigation, or lawsuit

- Communicating with a supervisor or manager about employment discrimination, including harassment
- Answering questions during an employer investigation of alleged harassment
- Refusing to follow orders that would result in discrimination
- Resisting sexual advances, or intervening to protect others
- Requesting accommodation of a disability or for a religious practice

Participating in a complaint process is protected from retaliation under all circumstances. Other acts to oppose discrimination are protected if the employee was acting on a reasonable belief that something in the workplace may violate federal, state, and/or local laws addressing the employment relationship, even if they did not use legal terminology to describe it or is ultimately incorrect about the issue, provided the employee has made complaint in good faith.

Engaging in protected activity, however, does not shield an employee from all discipline or discharge. Employers are free to discipline or terminate employees if motivated by non-retaliatory and non-discriminatory reasons that would otherwise result in such consequences.

Policy 2.11 – Nepotism/ Employment of Relatives

Section 112.3135, *Florida Statutes* severely restricts the employment of relatives (in the same political subdivision) of public officials. "Public Officials" is defined as including any employee with authority to make recommendations for the appointment, employment, etc. The statute definition of "relative" is as stated in section 112.3135*, Florida Statutes*. Compliance with the statute is mandatory and penalties are provided. The Walton County BCC confirms that all employees of the Walton County BCC shall comply with the statute in its employment practices.

Any Walton County BCC employee who exercises jurisdiction or control may not employ, promote, or advocate for employment or promotion of any individual who is a relative. An individual shall not be employed or promoted into a position within the Walton County BCC if such a position is made by a group in which a family relationship occurs. A family relationship includes father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, first cousin, nephew, niece, husband, wife, father-in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, stepfather, stepmother, stepson, stepdaughter, stepbrother, stepsister, half-brother, or half-sister.

Policy 2.12 – Workplace Personal Relationships

The Walton County BCC prohibits romantic or sexual relationships between management or other supervisory employee and their staff (an employee who reports directly or indirectly to that person) because such relationships tend to create compromising conflicts of interest or the appearance of such conflicts. In addition, such a relationship may give rise to the perception by others that there is favoritism or bias in employment decisions. Moreover, given the uneven balance of power within such relationships, consent by the staff member is suspect and may be viewed by others or, later, by the staff member as having been given as the result of coercion or intimidation. The atmosphere created by such appearances of bias, favoritism, intimidation or coercion or exploitation undermines the spirit of trust and mutual respect that is essential to a healthy work environment. This policy applies to all employees without regard to the gender of the individuals involved.

If any supervisory or management employee enters a consensual relationship that is romantic or sexual in nature with a member of their staff (an employee who reports directly or indirectly to them), or if one of the parties is in a supervisory capacity in the same department in which the other party works, the parties must notify the department director. Although the parties may feel that what they do during non-working hours is their business and not the business of the office, because of potential issues regarding "quid pro quo" harassment, this is a mandatory requirement. This requirement does not apply to employees who do not work in the same department or parties who do not supervise or otherwise have management responsibilities over others.

Once the relationship is made known to the department director, the department director with support from the Director of HR will review the situation considering all the facts (reporting relationship between the parties, effect on co-workers, job titles of the parties, etc.) and will determine whether one or both parties need to be moved to another job or department. That decision will be based on which move will be least disruptive to the organization.

If it is determined that one or both parties must be moved, but no other jobs are available for either party, one or both parties may be terminated.

Policy 2.13 – Tobacco Free Workplace

The Walton County BCC complies with the *Florida Clean Indoor Air Act (Florida Statute 386.201-386.2125)*. As a result, no employee, vendor, customer, or other person shall smoke including the use of e-cigarettes within our indoor working areas. Anyone intending to smoke must utilize the designated outdoor area during approved breaks.

Tobacco use is strictly prohibited within all county owned vehicles.

All infractions of such policy should be immediately reported to your supervisor. Any employee found violating such policy shall be disciplined, up to and including termination.

Employees may contact the HR Department for information regarding the effects of smoking and the availability of smoking cessation programs.

Policy 2.14 – Solicitation

Unrestricted solicitation on Walton County BCC owned or leased property interferes with the normal operations of the organization, is detrimental to discipline and efficiency on the part of employees, is annoying to the public and poses a threat to the organization's security.

No employee or other person may solicit or be solicited during working hours or in work areas.

No employee shall distribute literature to an employee in that employee's work area or during that employee's working hours.

The Walton County BCC maintains bulletin boards to communicate only official Walton County BCC information to employees and to post notices required by law. These bulletin boards are for the posting of Walton County BCC information and notices only, and only persons designated by the department director or County Administration may place notices on or take down material from the bulletin boards.

Policy 2.15 – Safety

It is the policy of the Walton County BCC to promote safety on the job. The health and wellbeing of our employees is foremost among our concerns. For this reason, employees shall follow common sense safety practices and correct or report any unsafe condition, defective tool, or equipment to their supervisor. Each employee is expected to assist the Walton County BCC in maintaining safe working conditions. Safety is a state of mind and requires constant vigilance and common sense. Safety is everyone's responsibility. Remember: SAFETY FIRST.

All accidents and incidents – including those which do not involve serious injury or those involving citizens – must be reported immediately to the employee's supervisor.

- Accident - an unintended and unplanned event that results in personal injury or property damage.
- Incident - an event that does not result in personal injury but may result in property damage that should be reported.

The employee may be required to submit to a post-accident substance test.

Hazardous and Toxic Materials

If an employee's position requires them to use hazardous or toxic materials, they are expected to comply with all federal, state, and local laws and regulations concerning their safe handling and disposal. Departments that use hazardous or toxic materials are required to have access to the Material Safety Data Sheets and all emergency numbers in case of an emergency or for information purposes. Employees shall familiarize themselves with proper handling and safety procedures. Any questions should be referred to the employee's supervisor, department director, the Training Manager, or the HR Department.

Workplace Injuries

The Walton County BCC strives to provide a workplace that is free from any known health or injury hazards. Employees can assist the Walton County BCC by bringing forward any health or safety concerns. Employees may speak with their supervisor, department director or the HR Department about any issues related to safety without fear of reprisal or retaliation. Employees may also receive periodic training on workplace safety and responsible handling of hazardous substances.

If an employee sustains a job-related injury or illness, it must immediately be reported to their supervisor or department director and the HR Department. This reporting requirement applies to all injuries, no matter how small or insignificant it may appear initially. The Walton County BCC wants to ensure that any injured employee receives prompt and appropriate medical attention. Additionally, the Walton County BCC complies with all federal and state regulatory standards regarding workplace injuries and illnesses. As such, we must make a timely record of any workplace injuries or illnesses. We also are responsible for workers' compensation insurance for employees which provides for medical coverage, disability coverage and loss of work time compensation due to a work-related injury.

Employees may report work-related injuries and illnesses without any concerns of adverse employment action or retaliation by the Walton County BCC.

Policy 2.16 – No Scavenging

The Walton County BCC is responsible for the operation of the Walton County Landfill. Once material has passed over the weigh scale it becomes property of the landfill and is subject to this policy.

All Walton County BCC employees are prohibited from:

- Scavenging, salvaging, receiving, or removing any material delivered to the landfill for disposal or recovery.
- Selling for personal gain any material received at the landfill that could be recovered and sold through the recycling program or otherwise used for the benefit of Walton County.
- Transporting for personal use, benefit, or sale of any salvaged or recovered material in a county vehicle.
- Placing salvaged material in a personal vehicle while that vehicle is located on county property.
- Entering the landfill after working hours, or while otherwise not on duty, to engage in salvaging.

Any Walton County BCC employee found in violation of this policy will be terminated from county employment and may be subject to criminal prosecution.

Policy 2.17 – Whistleblower and Retaliation

The Walton County BCC is committed to providing a workplace and citizen service arena in which there is open discussion of operations and practices. Accordingly, anyone who has reason to believe the Walton County BCC is violating or not complying with state or federal statutes, rules or regulations is encouraged to report the concern to their department leadership, County Administration, any County Commissioner, or the HR Department.

The report shall be investigated and even if determined not to be misconduct, fraud, or abuse, the individual making the report shall not be retaliated against. There shall be no punishment, retaliation, or any other type of discrimination for reporting problems.

No Retaliation

No employee who, in good faith, reports a violation of the Code of Ethics shall suffer harassment, retaliation, or adverse employment consequence. An employee who retaliates against someone who has reported a violation in good faith is subject to discipline up to and including termination of employment. This Whistleblower Policy is intended to encourage and enable employees and others to raise serious concerns within the Walton County BCC prior to seeking resolution outside the organization.

Reporting Violations

The Walton County BCC operates with an open-door policy and suggests that employees share their questions, concerns, suggestions, or complaints with someone who can address them properly. In most cases, an employee's management team is in the best position to address an area of concern. However, if an employee is not comfortable speaking with their management team or the employee is not satisfied with the response, the employee is encouraged to speak with the HR Department. The management team is required to report suspected violations of the code of conduct to County Administration, who has specific and exclusive responsibility to investigate all reported violations. For suspected fraud, or when an employee is not satisfied or is uncomfortable with following the organization's open-door policy, individuals should contact the Director of HR directly.

NOTE: Florida's "Whistle-blower's Act" provides protection against retaliatory action to those reporting information. See *F.S. 112.3187 to 112.31895* for detail.

Policy 2.18 – Employee Confidentiality Agreement

Confidentiality is a prime consideration at the Walton County BCC.

- Communication of personal information regarding any Walton County BCC business must be regarded as confidential. Any records including but not limited to such things as patient's medical records, telephone conversations, family history, diseases or illness, county finances, and other matters must never be communicated beyond the scope of professional and para-professional personnel who require such information.

- Information regarding the practice, policies, types of cases, internal problems, etc., should not be discussed with other employees, family members, personnel of other organizations, news media, or citizens except by those individuals who are directed to communicate such information at the appropriate times.

- This policy concerning confidentiality shall emphasize that any infringement will be considered a violation of this policy leading to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of their employment.

- Nothing in this policy prevents employees from following Chapter 119 and Chapter 286, *Florida Statues* or the Government in the Sunshine Manual.

Policy 2.19 – Gifts and Gratuities

Walton County BCC employees are prohibited from soliciting or accepting cash or gratuities of any amount from any person or entity doing business with the Walton County BCC. Additionally, unless specifically permitted by this policy, county employees are also prohibited from accepting all non-cash gifts, including materials, meals, services, travel, entertainment, attendance at a charitable or similar event as a guest at no cost or at unreasonably discounted prices from person or entities proposing to do or doing business with the Walton County BCC. The only exceptions to this policy are as follows:

- Holiday business gifts of value totaling less than twenty-five dollars ($25) in any single year that are for the shared departmental use or consumption
- Occasional meals in connection with actual business
- Awards or gifts provided by the Walton County BCC in express and open recognition of an employee's contributions

All unpermitted gifts must be immediately declined, returned, or discarded. Employees must report to their supervisors and the HR Department before the end of each month regarding all gifts received during the month. Employees found in violation of this policy will be subjected to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of their employment.

Policy 2.20 – Political Activity

The law does not prohibit a state or local officer or employee from voting as desired or from expressing an individual opinion on political subjects and candidates. The law also does not prohibit an employee from voluntarily engaging in political management or campaigning. What is prohibited generally is coercing other employees to engage in such activity, and improper use of official authority or influence.
An employee may not:

- Take any part in a political campaign while on duty
- Use their official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election or nomination for office
- Directly or indirectly coerce, attempt to coerce, command, or advise a state or local officer or employee to pay, lend, or contribute anything of value to a party, committee, organization, agency, or person for political purposes

Section 99.012, *Florida Statutes,* or its successor in function places some restrictions on certain county employees qualifying for public office. Walton County BCC employees not affected by F.S. 99.012, may seek any elected position (municipal, county, state or federal) without resigning or taking a leave of absence, providing campaigning does not interfere with their normal job performance.

The Walton County BCC does not permit solicitation or distribution by non-employees at any time on property owned or leased by the Walton County BCC. Additionally, the Walton County BCC prohibits solicitation and distribution by any employee or non-employee during work time. This includes all types of distribution and solicitation such as requests for charitable giving, endorsement of political campaigns, the sale of goods for the benefit of children or partners, and all other similar behaviors. Employees violating such expectations will be subjected to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Policy 2.21 – Disclosure of Arrest

All employees are required to self-report the following information to their immediate supervisor or the HR Department within forty-eight (48) hours:

- Any arrests or charges that are considered a felony or misdemeanor, other than a minor traffic violation
- Any conviction, finding of guilt, withholding of adjudication, commitment to a pretrial diversion program, or entering of a plea of guilty or Nolo Contendere for any criminal offense other than a minor traffic violation

For purposes of this policy a minor traffic violation is defined as a noncriminal violation that may require community service hours but is not punishable by incarceration and for which there is no right to trial by jury. Criminal traffic violations, including driving under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, are not minor and must be reported.

Anyone known to be violating a local, state, and/or federal law on Walton County BCC owned property or at a county-supported function will be subject to referral for prosecution to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

Any employee in violation of the reporting requirements of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of their employment.

Policy 2.22 – Driver's License

Employees driving on behalf of the Walton County BCC shall possess and maintain a valid driver's license. All new employees shall undergo a driver's license check through the state agency in which the driver's license was issued. The HR Department will verify all employees' driver's license a minimum of twice per year and all employees who are required to maintain a commercial driver's license once per month.

Employees are required to provide the HR Department with a current driver's license prior to the expiration of the driver's license within their file.

Employees shall immediately inform their immediate supervisor in the event the driver's license is denied, expired, suspended, revoked, or restricted. The immediate supervisor must then immediately contact the HR Department and restrict the employee from operating a county owned vehicle.

Any employee found in violation of this policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of their employment.

Policy 2.23 – Equipment Usage

The Walton County BCC has made a tremendous investment in our facilities and equipment to better serve the citizens of Walton County and to make our jobs easier. Equipment such as laptops, cell phones, projectors, MIFIs, etc., may be assigned to employees to facilitate their service to Walton County.

Except for the property/equipment specifically assigned to employees for such purposes, no other property or equipment may be removed from the premises without the permission of the Department Director or County Administration.

An employee's computer may be the most valuable item assigned to them. As well as being expensive to replace physically, your computer may contain valuable and sensitive data.

An employee shall not use the equipment assigned to them to conduct work for themselves or another entity.

Equipment assigned to employees is subject to monitoring. There should not be any expectation of privacy with respect to the use of such equipment. Additionally, employees may be asked to surrender the equipment with no notice for a variety of reasons including routine maintenance.

Employees are responsible for the safekeeping of any Walton County BCC owned equipment or property that is in their possession. Careless disregard for proper care and safekeeping may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of their employment.

Requirements for safeguarding equipment assigned to employees includes protecting it from theft. Some general guidelines are:

- Employees shall always remove equipment from a vehicle when the vehicle is parked in a public location such as a restaurant or hotel
- Never leave equipment in a vehicle overnight
- Do not remove any inventory or property marking tags
- Do not remove or disable any protective software
- Use strong passwords to protect the information stored on your computer
- Use an uninterruptible power supply, when possible, so that blackouts, brown-outs, and electricity spikes don't harm your equipment
- Do not place liquids, magnets, or hot items near your equipment
- If equipment assigned to you needs repair, report it to your supervisor immediately

An employee who has been provided Walton County BCC property or equipment such as tools, vehicles, materials, uniforms, etc., is expected to exercise reasonable care in the use and preservation of such equipment and to observe all safety precautions while carrying out the assigned work.

Walton County BCC property shall be used exclusively for the benefit of Walton County and in accordance with the directives of County Administration, department directors, and supervisors. Personal or other non-county use of Walton County BCC owned vehicles, materials, supplies, tools, or

any other county property is not permitted. Violations may result in prosecution, or other disciplinary action, up to and including termination of their employment.

All operators of Walton County BCC owned vehicles and equipment must hold a valid and appropriate license. Employees are required to inform their supervisors of any change of status in their license. Suspension or revocation of an employee's license may necessitate the demotion or discharge of an employee assigned to the operation of county owned vehicles and equipment (see **Policy 2.22 – Driver's License).**

Policy 2.24 – Civic Responsibilities

The Walton County BCC encourages each of our employees to accept their civic responsibilities. As a good corporate citizen, we are pleased to assist you in the performance of your civic duties.

Jury Duty

Any employee who is summoned for jury duty or subpoenaed as a witness when personal litigation is not involved, shall be granted leave time off with pay, upon presentation of a summons or subpoena. If an employee is called to jury duty, they are to notify their supervisor immediately so they can plan the department's work with as little disruption as possible. Employees who are released from jury service before the end of their regularly scheduled shift or who are not asked to serve on a jury panel are expected to call their supervisor as soon as possible and report to work if requested.

Any employee who is required to attend court as a witness or party due to personal litigation or criminal charges are not entitled to leave time off with pay and any time off approved by the department director is without pay unless the employee utilizes available PTO.

Voting

The Walton County BCC wants every employee to have the opportunity to vote in every election. Generally, there shall be sufficient time to vote either before or after an employee's scheduled shift. However, if the employee foresees a problem reaching the polls prior to them closing, they should notify their supervisor so that leave time off without pay can be granted.

Policy 2.25 – Social Events

The Walton County BCC culture seeks to be inclusive and permit all employees to participate in all social gatherings that occur within the workplace. Events such as birthday parties, retirement celebrations, and other like events represent opportunities to fellowship and further develop the culture of the Walton County BCC. As such, no employee shall initiate or organize a social gathering or function without inviting all employees to attend. Simultaneously, no employee should ever feel pressured to participate in such an activity and simply needs to express their lack of interest in such participation to those organizing such an event.

Policy 2.26 – Workplace Violence

The Walton County BCC strives to provide a safe and secure workplace for all employees. Threats, threatening behavior or acts of violence against employees, visitors, or other individuals by anyone on county property shall not be tolerated. These violations of policy shall be subjected to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment, and may lead to arrest and prosecution, as determined by the appropriate law enforcement agency.

Prohibited Conduct

The Walton County BCC shall not tolerate any type of workplace violence committed by or against employees. The following list of behaviors, while not all inclusive, provides examples of conduct that is prohibited:

- Causing physical injury to another person
- Making threatening remarks
- Stalking
- Use of e-mail to threaten, intimidate, or cause fear
- Aggressive or hostile behavior that creates a reasonable fear of injury to another person or subjects another individual to emotional distress
- Intentionally damaging employer property, property of another employee or property of any other person or entity
- Possession of any weapon, including a firearm, while on Walton County BCC property, in Walton County BCC owned, leased, or rented vehicle while performing Walton County BCC business. This prohibition shall not apply to anyone legally certified to carry weapons in the performance of their lawful duty or those employees who meet the private vehicle storage requirements of Section 790.251*, Florida Statues*. In keeping with the protections granted by the 2nd Amendment of the United States Constitution and Florida law, employees may carry concealed firearms on duty if properly licensed by the State of Florida or a Florida approved reciprocal state, and in strict compliance with provisions and restrictions set out in section 790.06, *Florida Statues*, reciprocal state's license regulations and any federal law or rule with the exception of employees whose job requires them to supervise state or county inmates. Employees may not leave any weapon in an unoccupied Walton County BCC vehicle.
- Committing acts motivated by, or related to, sexual harassment or domestic violence

Reporting and Investigating Threats or Incidents

- If the incident constitutes an emergency, CALL 9-1-1. After 9-1-1 is contacted, contact the department director or supervisor. In instances that are not emergency situations, contact a supervisor, manager, department director and/ or the HR Department.
- If possible, separate the parties involved in the altercation. If the parties cannot be separated, or if it would be dangerous to do so, CALL 9-1-1.
- The department director, together with the HR Department, will assess and investigate the incident and take appropriate action.
- In instances that involve emergency situations or criminal activity, the Director of HR along with guidance from County Administration, the Office of the County Attorney and the appropriate law enforcement agency will assess and, if advisable, investigation and prosecution.

Policy 2.27 – Professional Development

Memberships in Clubs and Civic Organizations

The Walton County BCC encourages employees to participate in the activities of certain community clubs and civic organizations.

Employees are encouraged to seek membership in community clubs and civic organizations where membership will promote the Walton County BCC's interests and enhance its image in the community. However, employees who participate in clubs or community organizations may not allow their activities to interfere with job performance, harm, or conflict with the Walton County BCC's interests.

The Walton County BCC may identify certain community organizations in which it wants to be represented and then designate the employees that it will sponsor for membership in them. Employees who are designated for membership act as Walton County BCC representatives in the organization and are expected to promote Walton County's interests.

Employee participation in club and civic organization activities may not be considered hours worked for pay purposes unless it is at the Walton County BCC's request or under its direction and control.

The Walton County BCC will normally consider the following factors when selecting organizations for representation and designating employees to sponsor for membership:

- The nature and purpose of the club or organization
- The potential benefit to Walton County, including the enhancement of the employee's leadership and organizational skills
- The cost to the Walton County BCC
- The extent to which the Walton County BCC is already represented in the club or organization
- The employee's job responsibilities, length of service, and overall qualifications for membership

The Walton County BCC may review periodically its representation in community organizations and its sponsorship of employees for membership and will make changes as it considers appropriate.

Trade and Professional Associations

The Walton County BCC encourages employees to participate in certain trade and professional associations.

Employees are encouraged to participate in trade and professional associations that promote the Walton County BCC goals, individual skills development, and professional recognition. However, employee participation in those associations must not conflict with the Walton County BCC's interests.

The Walton County BCC may identify certain trade and professional associations in which representation is desirable and then designate the employees that it will sponsor for membership. Employees who are designated for membership act as county representatives in the association and are expected to promote its interests and to participate accordingly.

Employee participation in trade and professional association activities may not be considered as hours worked for pay purposes for employees classified as nonexempt under the Fair Labor Standards Act unless participation is at the Walton County BCC's request or under its direction and control.

Department directors are responsible for coordinating representation in trade and professional associations. The following factors normally will be considered in selecting associations for representation and in designating employees to be sponsored for membership:

- The nature and purpose of the association
- The potential benefit to Walton County, including enhancement of Walton County's reputation and the development of the employee's leadership and organizational skills
- The cost to the Walton County BCC
- The extent to which the Walton County BCC is already represented in the association
- The employee's job responsibilities, length of service, and overall qualifications for membership

Department directors are responsible for planning, budgeting, and approving the expenses of their employees' participation in association activities. The Walton County BCC may pay or reimburse the approved expenses of employees sponsored for membership in trade and professional associations according to Florida Statutes.

Employees must have their department directors' advance approval before soliciting or accepting any official position in a trade or professional association. If the employee receives approval, the department director also should determine the extent of compensation that the employee will receive for association activities conducted during working time. Additionally, the department director should decide to the extent that the employee may be reimbursed for expenses incurred in performing official duties.

Employees are encouraged to contribute articles, present papers, and give talks to trade and professional associations. However, employees must obtain prior approval from County Administration and/ or the Office of the County Attorney for any communication that might represent the Walton County BCC's position or involve any information that is confidential.

Policy 2.28 – Rest Breaks and Meal Periods

Rest Breaks

Nonexempt employees (those covered by the minimum wage and overtime requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act) should receive, unless job conditions do not permit, a paid rest break of fifteen minutes at approximately the middle of every four hours of work not interrupted by a meal period.

Supervisors are responsible for scheduling the time for nonexempt employees' rest breaks and should consider the workload and the nature of the job performed. Whenever necessary, the frequency and time of rest periods may be changed.

Time spent on rest breaks of fifteen minutes or less shall be compensated as working time, and nonexempt employees are not required to show rest breaks on their time sheets. However, employees are expected to be punctual in starting and ending their breaks and may be disciplined for tardiness.

Rest breaks may be taken in designated non-work areas. Employees shall not leave the Walton County BCC's premises during rest breaks unless approved in advance by their department director.

Employees on rest breaks may not interfere with other employees who are continuing to work.

Meal Periods

Full-time employees who work shifts of eight (8) hours or greater are allowed a non-paid meal period near the middle of the workday. Scheduled meal periods should be no less than thirty (30) uninterrupted minutes and no greater than sixty (60) uninterrupted minutes.

Part-time employees scheduled to work more than five consecutive hours during any workday will receive a meal period of the same duration as full-time employees in their department.

Supervisors are responsible for balancing workloads and scheduling meal periods and should take into consideration the workload and the nature of the job performed. Whenever necessary, the duration and time of meal periods may be changed.

Employees required to work more than ten hours in any workday will be allowed a second meal period no later than six hours after returning from their first meal period.

Nonexempt employees (those covered by the minimum wage and overtime requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act) shall not be compensated for their meal periods unless they are required to work during their meal period. Nonexempt employees must record meal periods on their timesheets.

Employees on meal periods are not permitted to interfere with other employees who are continuing to work.

Policy 3.1 – Recruitment, Selection, & Appointment Purpose

The Walton County BCC is committed to recruiting, selecting, and retaining the highest caliber of employees to continue the mission of Walton County. The Recruitment, Selection, and Appointment Plan is designed as an effective and efficient method for talent acquisition and retention of employees in Walton County. The HR Department is tasked with the facilitation of all aspects of recruitment, selection, and appointment to the benefit of the hiring department and hiring manager.

Policy 3.2 – Equal Employment Opportunity

The Walton County BCC is committed to providing equal opportunity in all of our employment practices, including selection, hiring, promotion, transfer, and compensation to all employees and qualified applicants without regard to age, race, color, sex, gender expression or orientation, religion, national origin, marital status, gender identity or expression, or sexual orientation, disability, or any other protected status in accordance with the requirements of all federal, state, and local laws.

It is the policy of the Walton County BCC to provide equal employment opportunity without regard to race, color, disability, sex, national origin, political affiliation, religious action, or any other protected category. The Walton County BCC is fully committed to assuring equal opportunity and equal consideration to all applications and employees in personnel matters. This includes recruitment, screening, selection, hiring, training and development, compensation, evaluation, scheduling, job assignments, promotion, transfer, demotion, discipline, dismissal, and benefits.

Policy 3.3 – Reasonable Accommodation of Disabilities

In accordance with applicable law, the Walton County BCC shall provide reasonable accommodations upon request to otherwise qualified individuals with a legally recognizable disability, to the extent that the reasonable accommodation does not constitute an undue hardship to the Walton County BCC or pose a direct threat of substantial harm to the health or safety of the individual or anyone else. Individuals who believe they need reasonable accommodation should submit a request to the HR Department. The Walton County BCC reserves the right to request medical or other supporting documentation to the extent permitted by applicable law.

Policy 3.4 – Employment and Staffing

The HR Department shall be responsible for:

- Conducting recruitment programs for individual positions or groupings of positions within their agencies in accordance with Florida Statutes and applicable rules.
- Announcing positions, distributing employment applications, and accepting employment applications for positions in accordance with applicable rules.
- Selecting individuals for specific positions in accordance with applicable rules.
- Determining applicant eligibility in accordance with applicable rules.
- Documenting recruitment, eligibility determination, and selection activities in accordance with applicable rules.
- Giving preference in employment consideration to eligible veterans and spouses of veterans in accordance with Chapter 295, *Florida Statutes* and Florida Administrative Code Chapter 55A-7.
- Responding to general applicant inquiries and referring applicants to appropriate agencies and resources.

Department directors have the responsibility to determine whether an applicant is technically qualified for the open position and meets the other job-related criteria necessary to perform the job. The decision whether to hire the applicant is to be made by the department director, but must also have the approval of the Director of HR.

Policy 3.5 – Types of Employment

Board Appointments
The County Administrator, the County Attorney, and the Chief Financial Officer shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Walton County BCC. Individual Commissioner Aides shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of their respective commissioner. Such employees are eligible for all Walton County BCC benefits as set forth in the Human Resources Policy Manual. The County Administrator, the County Attorney, and the Chief Financial Officer shall be approved by the Board of County Commissioners and bound by the terms set forth in their executed contracts. Any additional board appointments shall be approved by the Board of County Commissioners at their discretion.

Regular Full-Time
An employee occupying a permanent, budgeted position that requires thirty (30) or more hours of work per week. Such employees are eligible for all Walton County BCC benefits as set forth in the Human Resources Policy Manual.

Part-Time
An employee occupying a permanent, budgeted position that requires less than thirty (30) hours of work per week. Such employees are not eligible for health insurance benefits but are eligible for certain other benefits as set forth in the Human Resources Policy Manual.

Temporary (with or without Benefits)
An employee hired to fill a full or part-time position related to a special project or program for a pre-defined period or for the duration of the project or program not to exceed six (6) consecutive months.

Seasonal
An employee hired to fill a part-time position related to a special project or program for a pre-defined period or for the duration of the project or program not to exceed six (6) consecutive months. Seasonal employees are not eligible for benefits.

Policy 3.6 – Competitive Process

It is the policy of the Walton County BCC to be an equal opportunity employer and to hire individuals based on their qualifications and ability to do the job. All positions which a department intends to fill may be announced either internally, externally, or both at the request of the department director and approval of the Director of HR.

Department directors and supervisors who need to fill a job opening or want to add a new job position should submit an employment requisition to HR Department for approval. All requisitions will be reviewed and approved by the Director of HR, but those for a new job position will be evaluated in greater detail and approved by County Administration.

The Walton County BCC may attempt to fill job openings above entry level by promoting from within if qualified internal applicants are available.

Any candidate for employment must fill out and sign an employment application to be considered for employment.

The HR Department will consider requests for accommodation for disabilities and religious beliefs and will determine what, if any, accommodation will be provided.

All applications are screened for qualifications. Only applicants determined to meet all minimum qualifications shall be considered for available job openings. These applicants shall be referred to the hiring manager by the HR Department.

The department director has the responsibility to determine whether an applicant is technically qualified for the open position and meets the other job-related criteria necessary to perform the job. The final decision whether to hire the applicant shall be made by the department director, but must also have the approval of the Director of HR. Starting rates of pay shall be in accordance with **Policy 5.3 – Starting Rate Policy** and **Policy 8.2 – Promotion Policy**.

Interviews shall be conducted in accordance with **Policy 3.7 – Interview Process Policy**. Applicants not chosen as a finalist will be notified via the method provided on the application. These applications will remain on file electronically in accordance with Florida Records Retention requirements.

Policy 3.7 – Interview Guidelines

All appointments shall be made based on merit by a competitive interview process, which may include, but not restricted to, any one or more of the following: oral interview, written test, performance test, evaluation of training and experience, education, length of time in present position, and any other applicable criteria which will fairly measure the relative abilities of individuals competing in examinations.

Reasonable accommodations will be provided in the interview process when requested by any job applicants who requests them.

A minimum of three (3) candidates and a maximum of six (6) candidates may be interviewed for each open FTE position. When interviewing for a department director or management position the hiring manager may select to interview a maximum of ten (10) candidates when two (2) levels of interviews are required.

The interview panel shall be comprised of three (3) or more members to include the position supervisor, department director or exempt-level department employee, and an exempt-level employee outside the hiring position's department. Prior approval by the Director of HR is required for all non-Walton County BCC employee panel members. A second interview may be required at the request of the interview panel, department director, Director of HR, or County Administration.

Following an interview, the HR Department will make available, upon request, the results in accordance with Chapter 119*, Florida Statutes*.

Any exception to this process shall be approved in advance by the Director of HR.

Policy 3.8 – Processing New Hires

Following a decision to hire the applicant, the HR Department will make a conditional offer of employment, which shall include any necessary contingencies or disclaimers. The HR Department will determine whether the applicant has the legal right to work in the United States and, where appropriate, conduct credit, personal reference, driving record, and criminal conviction checks. A prior conviction, taken by itself, will not necessarily disqualify an applicant. If the applicant accepts the offer and a medical examination is required, the HR Department shall arrange it.

If the background or any other subsequent investigation discloses any misrepresentation on the application form or information indicating that the individual is not suited for employment with the Walton County BCC, the applicant shall be refused employment or, if already employed, may be terminated. Any candidate who returns a positive drug screen shall be prohibited from employment with Walton County BCC for one (1) year from the date of the drug screen results.

The HR Department is responsible for orientation of new employees and the processing of their employment forms; the department director or supervisor is responsible for any necessary department specific job training.

Policy 3.9 – Background Checks

The Walton County BCC must be able to employ individuals that are trustworthy and able to properly interact with key organizational partners. Employees agree, by signing the acknowledgment provision verifying agreement to this handbook, that the Walton County BCC may conduct occasional criminal, employment, driving and educational backgrounds on employees as it deems necessary to conduct its operation in a profitable and legal manner. The Walton County BCC reserves the right to take any action it deems necessary to act upon the results of such ongoing screening.

Policy 3.10 – Training Period

All employees shall serve a training period often referred to as a probationary period before their status is considered permanent. The training period will be considered an integral part of the examination process and will be utilized for evaluation of an employee's performance and adaptability to the position, and for separating from employment an employee who does not meet the appointing authority's expectations. Any employee who separates prior to completion of their training period with the Walton County BCC shall not be eligible for a PTO payout at termination in accordance with **Policy 5.13 – PTO Pay Upon Termination of Employment**.

Training Period (Initial Employment)

When a person is initially employed to fill a position on a regular full-time or part-time basis, they shall be given a training period. This period shall be considered the "working test" portion of the employment process and they must pass this period of observation and evaluation successfully. The initial training period shall be six (6) months for all employees based on any continuous employment whether it is full-time or part-time.

Training Period (Extended)

An employee may be placed on an extended training period due to a disciplinary action or documented work performance deficiencies for a specified period at management's discretion. Any employee placed on an extended training period shall not be eligible to be paid any annual leave if termination occurs prior to the end of the extended training period.

Training Period (Promoted)

Employees who are promoted may serve a new training period of up to six (6) months. If at any time during the training period the employee does not satisfactorily perform to the standards of their new position, they may be subject to demotion to their previous position or termination.

Training Period (Demoted)

Any employee who is granted a voluntary demotion or who is involuntarily demoted due to performance deficiencies may serve a new training period of up to six (6) months. If at any time during the training period the employee does not satisfactorily perform to the standards of their new position, they may be subject to termination.

Reclassification

Employees who are affected by an upward or downward position reclassification may not have to serve a new training period.

Policy 3.11 – Temporary Employee

A temporary appointment may be made for a special project or other work of a temporary or transitory nature that will not exist beyond six (6) consecutive calendar months and is not renewable.

Temporary appointments may exceed six (6) months when needed to replace or supplement employees incapacitated by workers' compensation injuries.

A temporary appointment which exists for any part of a month is considered to be in existence for the entire month. At the point the temporary appointment has been identified as lasting longer than six (6) months Walton County will begin paying retirement in accordance with the *Florida Administrative Code Chapter 60S – 1.004.* The department in which the position works is responsible for requesting an additional FTE from the Board or terminating immediately.

Policy 3.12 – Veteran's Preference

As a public employer, the Walton County BCC is committed to providing preference to all veterans during hiring, retention, and promotion.

Chapter 295, *Florida Statutes* sets forth the requirements for public employers to provide preferences in employment, retention, and promotion to eligible veterans, spouses of veterans, and other veterans' preference eligible individuals. Individuals who qualify for this preference are as follows:

- A disabled veteran who has served on active duty in any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces, has received an honorable discharge, and has established the present existence of a service-connected disability that is compensable under public laws administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs; or who is receiving compensation, disability retirement benefits, or pension by reason of public laws administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and U.S. Department of Defense.
- The spouse of a person who has a total disability, permanent in nature, resulting from a service-connected disability and who, because of this disability, cannot qualify for employment, and the spouse of a person missing in action, captured in line of duty by a hostile force, or forcibly detained or interned in line of duty by a foreign government or power.
- A wartime veteran as defined in s. 1.01(14), who has served at least one day during a wartime period. Active duty for training may not be allowed for eligibility under this paragraph.
- The unremarried widow or widower of a veteran who died of a service-connected disability.
- The mother, father, legal guardian, or unremarried widow or widower of a member of the U.S. Armed Forces who died in the line of duty under combat-related conditions, as verified by the U.S. Department of Defense.
- A veteran as defined in s. 1.01(14), F.S. Active duty for training may not be allowed for eligibility under this paragraph.
- A current member of any reserve component of the U.S. Armed Forces or the Florida National Guard.

Veterans must have been honorably discharged as indicated on their DD214 to be eligible for preference. Eligible applicants who meet the requirements for the position are guaranteed preference at every step throughout the hiring process.

Applicants who wish to claim Veterans' Preference, must meet the following criteria at the time of application:

- Submit a copy of your DD-214, Certificate of Discharge or Separation from Active Duty, or other official documents (to include military discharge papers, or equivalent certification from the DVA listing military status, dates of service, and discharge type) issued by the branch of service.
- Possess the minimum qualifications necessary for the discharge of the duties involved. The rule defines "minimum qualifications" to mean a "specification" of the kinds of experience, training, education and/or licensure or certification that provides "appropriate job-related evidence that an applicant possesses the minimum required knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to the discharge of the duties involved."
- Certain positions are exempt from Veterans Preference as designated in *Section 110.205(2), F. S.*

Policy 3.13 – Contract Positions

Contract position applications are accepted year-round and are intended to fulfill short-term or sporadic needs of the Walton County BCC and are therefore hired based on applicant meeting qualifications. Contract positions may be hired using a competitive or non-competitive process of employment based on the recommendation of the department director and approval of the Director of HR.

Policy 3.14 – Federally Funded Positions

The Walton County BCC may employ individuals based on funds being available from the federal government. At the time these funds become unavailable the Walton County BCC may or may not terminate employment. Federally funded positions may be hired using a competitive or non-competitive process of employment based on the recommendation of the department director and approval of the Director of HR.

Policy 3.15 – Internship Positions

The Walton County BCC may allocate funding for a Walton County Internship Program to provide vocational and college students the opportunity to obtain practical work experience in a public sector environment. The intent of this program is to expose vocational, undergraduate, and graduate students to the inner workings of Walton County government and spark their interest in future career opportunities within the Walton County BCC. Unpaid interns are prohibited from operating Walton County BCC owned motor vehicles.

The Walton County BCC may use students and other similar applicants for flexible staffing purposes, as allowed by law. Minor applicants generally will be required to provide a certificate of age. The HR Department shall handle the assignment of students to special temporary or part-time jobs that are part of training programs.

Policy 3.16 – Volunteer Positions

The Walton County BCC fully encourages the use of volunteers to supplement the regular employee workforce. The Walton County BCC recognizes these individuals as contributing a valuable service to Walton County, while receiving a worthwhile and fulfilling experience. It is further recognized that the success of having a volunteer program is dependent on having the commitment and support of the Walton County BCC, each county department, and its management staff. Volunteers are prohibited from operating county owned motor vehicles unless approved prior by County Administration, the department director, and the Director of HR and the volunteer have completed all pre-employment screening processes.

Policy 3.17 – Personnel Records

The Walton County BCC shall utilize a personnel records system that is as complete, accurate, and functional as practicable within operational constraints. The HR Department is responsible for the maintenance and improvement of all the Walton County BCC's personnel records system.

The Walton County BCC respects the privacy of its employees and, in this regard, will keep all information in its personnel files confidential, to the limited extent permitted under Florida law. The personnel records of employees are public records and are open to inspection and copying by anyone who desires access to these files, as provided in Chapter 119, *Florida Statutes*. If you believe you qualify for an exemption from the Public Records Law, please contact the HR Department to have your records properly flagged.

The Walton County BCC shall not be liable, to any degree, for any incorrect withholding of deductions, erroneous designations of beneficiaries, or loss of employee benefits, if an employee has failed to notify the HR Department with accurate and current information for their personnel file.

After the initial establishment of the employee's personnel record by the HR Department, each department will be responsible for forwarding official employment records to the HR Department including all disciplinary actions.

Employment records shall be retained based on the General Records Schedule for State and Local Government Agencies as established by the Florida Department of State.

Each employee is responsible for notifying the HR Department to update information contained in their personnel file in order to maintain accurate employee information such as: name; current residential and/ or mailing address; current telephone number; emergency contact; dependents eligible for family insurance coverage and beneficiary designations; copies of required certificates, diplomas, transcripts, and other education records; payroll deduction authorizations; arrests and/ or convictions; driver's license status; any other pertinent information previously provided to the Walton County BCC.

Policy 4.1 – Purpose

The Walton County BCC shall maintain a classification plan applicable to all regular positions. The HR Department, with direction from County Administration, will be primarily responsible for administration of the plan. In administering the plan, the HR Department may conduct studies, review, and revise position descriptions, develop forms and procedures, and take other necessary and appropriate steps.

The HR Department shall periodically review each position or class of positions as to the work performed by the position or class, the level of difficulty, the degree of responsibility and the appropriate wage or salary to ensure that the classification plan remains current and uniform. When circumstances dictate, the HR Department should recommend to County Administration additions, deletions, changes, and reclassifications to the plan. County Administration is responsible for approving all changes to the Classification Plan.

The HR Department shall also be responsible for maintaining a record of those positions within the classification plan that are authorized to be filled.

The Classification Plan is the foundation upon which a comprehensive human resources program is built. The Classification Plan is used:

- As a guide in recruiting and examining candidates for employment
- To provide a systematic arrangement and inventory of positions
- To determine appropriate salary ranges
- To provide uniform terminology of jobs
- To aid in perfecting and revising organizational structure, clarifying lines of authority, and identifying responsibility

Policy 4.2 – Position Specifications

Each position specification lists the minimum requirements or qualifications needed to perform the job such as education, work experience, and other qualifications.

Position specifications are descriptive and explanatory and are not necessarily inclusive of all duties performed. They are designed to indicate the types of duties and level of responsibilities assigned to the position. Employees can be required to perform duties that are not included within their job description.

The HR Department shall maintain a master set of all approved position specifications which shall constitute the official Classification Plan.

Policy 4.3 – Position Titles and Descriptions

The position title and Position Control number of an official position shall be used to designate the position in all budget estimates, payrolls, and other official records, documents, vouchers, and communications in connection with all human resources processes.

Each position shall have a written description consisting of a statement describing the nature of the work, the essential duties and functions of the position, the required knowledge, skills, abilities, and qualifications including education, experience, and training required for the position.

Position descriptions are intended to be representative of the positions in the class and to provide illustrations of the responsibilities and duties of the position. Position descriptions should not be interpreted as restricting a supervisor from assigning other pertinent duties to an employee.

Policy 4.4 – Classification of New Positions

Department directors shall promptly notify the HR Department of the need for new positions and allow sufficient time for a review and recommendation concerning the request. To the extent feasible, actions that may result in the establishment of new positions may be processed as part of the normal budget cycle. Each department director is responsible for obtaining board approval for any additional FTEs.

Department directors proposing a new position shall provide the HR Department with a description of the duties, responsibilities, skills, knowledge, abilities, qualifications, and other information necessary to properly classify the position utilizing the **Position Questionnaire Request Form** provided by the HR Department.

The HR Department will review the request for a new position together with any other pertinent information along with County Administration. If they determine it to be in the Walton County BCC's best interests, the position shall be approved, and the HR Department will update to the Walton County BCC Classification Plan.

Policy 4.5 – Reclassification of Positions

The Director of HR shall recommend changing the classification of existing positions when it is determined that the position is incorrectly classified. Such action is called reclassification and must be reviewed and approved by County Administration. If an employee has facts that indicate that their position is improperly classified, the employee may request the Director of HR review the classification of the position, with the knowledge of their department director. Such a request shall be submitted in writing and shall contain a statement of justification. For this or any other type of request for reclassification from any source, the HR Department may investigate actual or suggested duties of the position and reclassify the position to the appropriate location within position control if warranted. Reclassification may occur as the result of the conditions described below.

- The position was incorrectly classified and there has been no substantial change in duties from those in effect when the position was originally categorized. If the position is occupied at the time of reclassification, the employee shall be entitled to serve therein and retain the corresponding status after the position is reclassified.

- There has been a substantial change in the duties and responsibilities associated with a position since it was classified to a particular grade. If the position is assigned a higher pay grade than the current position, such action is considered an upgrade for the position. If the position is occupied at the time of an upgrade, the incumbent may be reclassified, but does have to meet the minimum qualifications of the new position if they are changed. A salary adjustment may be granted in accordance with **Policy 5.6 – Pay Upon Promotion or Demotion.**

Policy 4.6 – Position Control

All positions in the Walton County BCC are established and maintained through a budget each fiscal year in accordance with established budget and accounting procedures. The establishment of additional positions not approved through the budget process shall be coordinated through the HR Department and will be accomplished at the discretion of County Administration upon approval of the Board. Changes to position allocations that do not result in an increase in the current approved budget of a department may be authorized by County Administration.

Policy 4.7 – Abolishment of Positions

Whenever there is justification for abolishing a position such as lack of work, reorganization, lack of funds, or other reason, the department director shall make such recommendation to the Director of HR. The Director of HR shall review and present such recommendations to County Administration for approval. In no case shall a position be abolished as a means of terminating an employee.

Policy 4.8 – Maintenance of the Classification Plan

Each time a department is substantially reorganized, the department director shall submit new Position Questionnaires for all affected positions to the HR Department.

The HR Department may require department directors to submit a **Position Questionnaire Request Form** at any time when there is reason to believe there has been a change in duties and responsibilities of one or more positions.

Any change in the Classification Plan, such as establishing new positions, abolishing positions, reclassifying positions, or pay grade changes for positions require review by the Director of HR and the approval of County Administration.

Annually, the Director of HR may review the Classification Plan with County Administration to determine if changes are warranted.

Policy 5.1 – Purpose

The Compensation Plan is designed as a fair and equitable method for payment of employees of the Walton County BCC. The Compensation Plan shall establish a basic salary schedule as approved by the Walton County BCC. The salary ranges shall include minimum and maximum rates of pay for all positions included in the Classification Plan. In addition to the basic salary schedule, the Compensation Plan consists of two (2) salary components that shall be used to adjust employee compensation. These two (2) mechanisms include market adjustments and performance awards.

Nonexempt Plan
Walton County BCC compensates nonexempt employees based on a pay grade plan.

Exempt Plan
Walton County BCC compensates exempt employees with a salary range-based system.

Policy 5.2 – Nonexempt Pay Grade Plan

The Nonexempt Pay Grade Plan is based on a step-plan system. Every employee within a nonexempt position is placed on step within the Nonexempt Pay Grade Plan that coincides with their position within the classification plan.

- All Nonexempt Employee pay rates shall coincide with the position grade assigned per the Walton County BCC Classification System Section IV of the Human Resources Policy Manual.

- All Nonexempt Employees who receive an adjustment in pay whether an increase or decrease shall be moved to a current step of the position grade.

Policy 5.3 – Exempt Pay Range Plan

The Exempt Pay Range Plan is based on a pay band system. Every employee within an exempt position is placed within the pay band on the Exempt Pay Range Plan that coincides with their position within the classification plan.

- All Exempt Employee pay rates shall fall within the position pay range assigned per the Walton County BCC Classification System Section IV of the Human Resources Policy Manual.

- No Exempt Employee's pay rate shall exceed the position pay range maximum without approval from County Administration.

Policy 5.4 – Market Adjustment

The market adjustment is the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) and is the component that is used to ensure that the salary structure is adjusted to reflect changes in the wage index. This review is done annually as a part of the budget process and if approved, will normally take effect on October 1. The review is based upon information provided by the HR Department, the Office of Management and Budget, and County Administration, with approval by the Walton County Board of County Commissioners.

Employees who have been employed less than six (6) months may receive a prorated COLA adjustment with the approval of the Board.

A market adjustment may result in updates to both the Nonexempt Pay Grade Plan and the Exempt Pay Range Plan.

Policy 5.5 – Starting Rate for New Employees

In most cases, a new employee shall be paid the minimum rate of pay for the position. Exceptions may be granted based on experience and qualifications with the approval of the department director and the Director of HR. The minimum rate for each position is based upon the assumption that a new employee meets the minimum qualifications stated in the class specifications.

Nonexempt Employees

New employees shall be hired at the minimum hourly rate on the Nonexempt Employee Grade Pay Plan. At the recommendation of the hiring manager and approval of the department director new employees may receive step credits at the rate of one (1) step for every three (3) years of verifiable professional work experience. Any exception to this policy must be approved by the Director of HR with guidance from County Administration.

Exempt Employees

Exceptions may be granted based on previous experience and qualifications of the applicant with the approval of the department director and the Director of HR up to the established mid-range of the pay range. Any amount more than twenty (20) percent must be approved by the Director of HR with guidance from County Administration.

Policy 5.6 – Pay Upon Promotion or Demotion

Promotion:

Absent an exception approved by the Director of HR or County Administration, a promoted employee shall receive a salary increase to at least the minimum rate of the position to which the promotion is made. If the employee's training, experience, or other qualifications are substantially above those required for the position; a starting salary may be granted above the minimum rate, not exceeding ten (10) steps for nonexempt positions or twenty (20) percent for exempt positions, subject to the approval of the department director and the Director of HR, provided the increase does not exceed the maximum rate for the position to which the promotion is made.

Demotion:

Absent an exception approved by County Administration, a demoted exempt employee shall receive a decrease in salary of five (5) percent for each Position Pay Range level the employee is demoted or the maximum rate of the position to which the demotion is made depending on the lesser rate. A nonexempt employee who is demoted will move to their current step within the new Position Pay Grade on the Nonexempt Step Plan.

PROMOTION

Pay Grade	Pay Range
	224
	223
	222
	221
	220
	219
	218
	217
	216
	215
	214
	213
	212
	211
112	
111	
110	
109	
108	
107	
106	
105	
104	
103	
102	
101	
100	

DEMOTION

Policy 5.7 – Temporary Work at Higher Classification

An employee may be required to work at a higher classification on a temporary, incidental, or emergency basis and may do so at the discretion of the department director or County Administration. Any such temporary assignment shall not affect the employee's eligibility for normal merit advancements. Documentation of employee temporary assignments should be included in the personnel records.

- Nonexempt employees may receive a temporary pay rate increase not to exceed Five (5) Steps on the Nonexempt Step Plan at the request of the department director and approval by the Director of HR.

- Exempt employees may receive a temporary pay rate increase not to exceed Ten (10) percent of their base pay rate at the request of the department director and approval by the Director of HR.

At the end of the temporary assignment the employee shall be returned to their previous pay rate minus any annual or merit increases.

Any exception to this policy must be approved by the Director of HR with guidance from County Administration.

Policy 5.8 – Incentive Pay

It is the intent of the Walton County BCC to encourage the professional development of its employees. One way in which the Walton County BCC rewards professional development is through incentive pay for achieving certain certifications that are related to the employees' current position within the organization.

At the request of the employee's supervisor and the approval by the department director and the Director of HR employees who obtain a professional certification, license, or credential may receive incentive pay based on the following guidelines. A copy of the certification must be submitted to the HR Department prior to the increase in salary.

Nonexempt Employees

- Shall receive one (1) step per certification earned

Exempt Employees

- Shall receive up to a two (2) percent annual salary increase per certification earned

Some examples of certifications (not all inclusive):

- Class A or B Driver's License
- Inmate Supervisor Certification
- Florida Association of Code Enforcement Certifications
- Professional in Human Resource Certification

Funding for Incentive Pay

Annually the Walton County BCC shall decide whether to allocate funding to the program through the Annual Budget process, any additional funding needed shall be approved by the BCC prior to the request.

Policy 5.9 – Overtime Pay

Exempt Employees

- Executive, professional, and administrative, as defined in the Fair Labor Standards Act, are normally exempt from overtime except during emergencies or disasters. All department directors are included in this exemption. When a state of emergency has been declared or in the opinion of County Administration with direction of the Board, exempt employees may be authorized for overtime pay.
- Overtime pay may be authorized for exempt employees when responding to other jurisdictions to provide assistance with an emergency or disaster under the Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement (SMAA). Overtime is contingent upon the SMAA Form B being completed and signed by the requesting jurisdiction's representative, as the requesting jurisdiction shall be responsible for reimbursing all costs associated with the response.

Nonexempt Employees

- All nonexempt employees will be paid overtime compensation after forty (40) hours of work in a seven (7) day work week. The Walton County BCC work week starts on Saturday and runs through the following Friday. Nonexempt employees shall receive one and one half (1½) their regular hourly rate of pay for all hours worked more than forty (40) per work week.

General Requirements

- Overtime is to be avoided except during peak loads or in emergencies. Employees are strictly prohibited from working overtime without permission in advance from their supervisor.

- Overtime hours must be submitted on the time sheet and should include the total number of hours and the date the overtime was worked.

Policy 5.10 – Merit Pay Increase

To be eligible for a merit increase, an employee must be employed with at least six months of continuous service before the merit award date.

An employee whose pay is at the maximum step of the grade scale, or the maximum of the salary band may not be granted an increase that would cause the base pay to exceed the maximum of the grade or range for that position without the Chief Financial Officer and County Administration approval.

Determination of Merit Increase

Supervisors and managers shall recommend merit-based pay increase for the following reasons:

- To retain an employee
- To reward an employee's performance beyond the annual increase
- Additional duties added to employee current position
- Major re-evaluation of current position
- Status change from PT to FT
- Lateral transfer at the Walton County BCC's request

Review and Approval of Request

Prior to approval the department director, the Chief Financial Officer, County Administration, and the Director of HR will:

- Review the reason for the request
- Review the employee's previous performance
- Confirm funding within the budget
- Consider previous similar requests throughout the Walton County BCC for consistency

Increase Rates

Nonexempt Employees

Request is not to exceed ten (10) steps on the **Nonexempt Step Plan**

Exempt Employees

Request is not to exceed twenty (20) percent increase to annual salary

Funding for Merit Pay

Annually the Walton County BCC shall decide whether to allocate funding to the program through the Annual Budget process, any additional funding needed shall be approved by the BCC prior to the request.

Policy 5.11 – Additional Pay Types

Call Back Pay

Nonexempt employees who have completed their regularly scheduled workday and who are called back to work shall receive either two hours call back pay at their regular hourly rate of pay or pay for the actual time they spend working when called back; whichever is greater.

Standby Pay

Nonexempt employees placed on twenty-four-hour standby after normal duty hours shall earn one hour pay at the straight time rate for every day they are on standby, plus pay for all hours physically worked. Employees on standby are not entitled to call back pay.

Weekend Pay

This type of pay applies to nonexempt employees who work within departments that require employees to regularly work weekends. Nonexempt employees who are scheduled to work on Saturday and/or Sunday regularly may be paid an additional hourly wage. The rate of the additional Weekend Pay shall be determined by the department director, the Chief Financial Officer, and the Director of HR with the approval of County Administration.

Holiday Additional Pay

This type of pay applies to nonexempt employees who work within departments that require employees to regularly work holidays. Nonexempt employees who are scheduled and work on a Walton County BCC approved holiday may receive an hourly rate at one and a half times their normal hourly rate. Employees are required to work on their scheduled day prior to and after the scheduled holiday to receive holiday pay.

Funding for Additional Pay Types

Annually the Walton County BCC shall decide whether to allocate funding to the program through the Annual Budget process, any additional funding needed shall be approved by the BCC prior to the request.

Policy 5.12 – Timesheet Violations

It is a violation of the Walton County BCC's policy for any employee to falsify their own payroll record or to alter another employee's payroll record without their approval. It is also a violation of Walton County BCC policy for any employee or manager to instruct another employee to falsely report hours worked or to alter another employee's payroll record to under or over report hours worked (or to fail to report any such misconduct). Report any violations of this policy immediately to your supervisor and the HR Department. It is not a violation of the Walton County BCC's policy for a supervisor, manager, or department director to make accurate corrections to a payroll record to ensure compliance with county policies.

Nonexempt employees shall not work any hours outside of their normal workday unless their supervisor has authorized the unscheduled work. Employees shall not start work early, finish work late, work during a meal break or perform any other extra or overtime work unless authorized to do so and that time is recorded on their payroll record. Employees are prohibited from performing any "off-the clock" work. "Off-the-clock" work means work performed but not reported on biweekly payroll records. Any employee who fails to report or inaccurately reports any hours worked may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of their employment.

Policy 5.13 – PTO Pay Upon Termination of Employment

Voluntary Termination
Employees who voluntarily resign, retire or who are laid off for lack of work or funding, shall be paid for up to 240 unused Paid Time Off (PTO) hours earned by them prior to the date of their separation, provided that all Walton County BCC owned equipment and uniforms are returned to the Walton County BCC and the employee is not otherwise indebted to the Walton County BCC. Employees who terminate employment prior to the end of their training period are not eligible to receive a payout of accrued PTO.

Involuntary Termination
Employees who are involuntarily terminated (except for layoffs as referenced above) may not be paid for any accrued Paid Time Off (PTO) annual leave earned, and such accrued PTO will be considered forfeited upon termination. Department directors, with the prior approval of County Administration, may authorize an exception to this policy and permit payout of accrued PTO when an employee is involuntarily dismissed, not to exceed 240 unused PTO hours, where the department director and the Director of HR deem it appropriate under the circumstances. Only employees who have completed their training period are eligible for their exception.

Employees whose employment with the Walton County BCC is terminated for any reason, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, shall not be paid for any unused sick leave accrued hours. However, employees hired prior to 11/5/2021 can include any accrued sick hours to reach their maximum PTO payout based on their years of service.

Subject to any limitations imposed by applicable law, final pay may be withheld until all Walton County BCC owned property issued to the employee has been returned or accounted for to the satisfaction of the department director.

Exceptions
Employees hired prior to 10/01/2021 who voluntarily resign, retire or who are laid off for lack of work or funding, will be paid for unused Paid Time Off (PTO) earned by them prior to the date of their separation, based on the chart below, provided that all Walton County BCC owned equipment and uniforms are returned to Walton County and the employee is not otherwise indebted to the Walton County BCC.

5.99 years or less	Up to 240 hours
6 to 12.99 years	Up to 320 hours
13 to 19.99 years	Up to 400 hours
20 years or greater	Up to 500 hours

Any exception to this policy shall be approved by the Walton County BCC prior to execution of a PTO payout at termination.

Policy 6.1 – Purpose

The Walton County BCC is committed to providing its employees with a variety of benefits that will allow the Walton County BCC to recruit and retain a diverse workforce. Some benefits are provided to employees at no cost while others are offered at reduced costs at the benefit of the employee.

Policy 6.2 – Group Insurance

All regular full-time employees are eligible for group insurance benefits as provided by the Walton County BCC. Dual employed family members on the insurance plan may not be paid for one to opt out of the plan.

Employees who terminate their employment have the option, at the time of their termination, of retaining their health insurance as set forth in the current health insurance benefit plan, under COBRA. Health insurance may also be retained under the provision of COBRA when a covered employee no longer qualifies for coverage due to a reduction in work hours.

Employees who retire from employment with the Walton County BCC or any covered constitutional office will have the option of continuing their medical insurance at the rate set forth by the Walton County BCC and their current insurance provider. A retiree is defined by section 112.0801, *Florida Statutes.* If the retired employ opts out of this coverage at their retirement date or later in the future, they may not have the opportunity to rejoin the medical insurance provided by the Walton County BCC. Please refer to the Employee Benefit Guide or contact the HR Department for additional information.

Policy 6.3 – Retirement Programs

Walton County BCC employees may be eligible to participate in the Florida Retirement System (FRS). Complete and up-to-date information on the Florida Retirement System is available at www.myfrs.com. Employees are responsible for making their own elections to the Florida Retirement System.

Employees who are not eligible to participate in the Florida Retirement System (FRS) may elect to contribute 3% of their gross income to the Mission Square 401 (b) account. That payment shall be accomplished through a payroll deduction each pay period. If the employee elects to make such a contribution, the Walton County BCC shall contribute to that employee's Mission Square 401 (b) account a percentage equal to that which the Walton County BCC contributes to the FRS Investment Plan minus any administrative fees required by the FRS Plan for its regular employees.

Policy 6.4 – Tuition Reimbursement

OVERVIEW

It is the intent of the Walton County BCC to encourage the professional development of its employees. This policy identifies the criteria that must be met for an employee to qualify for tuition reimbursement for work-related educational classes.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all permanent employees of the Walton County BCC who have been employed for at least one year, consecutively, successfully completed their training period; met performance standards for the past six months; and have not had any disciplinary actions in the past six months.

PROVISIONS

General Rule

An employee is eligible for reimbursement for tuition of classes attended at a regionally accredited college or university, which are related to the employee's current job or those that could be applicable for employment opportunities within Walton County. No costs other than tuition will be reimbursed.

Eligibility

Before enrolling in an eligible course, the employee must obtain approval from the department director by submitting a Tuition Reimbursement Request for the course and for tuition reimbursement. The department director will forward each approved request to the HR Department where the Tuition Reimbursement Committee made up of the Director of HR, the Chief Financial Officer, and the Director of Administration will determine if the course meets the criteria. All potential reimbursement requests are subject to the availability of funds at time of pre-approval.

Employees are eligible for reimbursement for up to six (6) credit hours per semester with a maximum of eighteen (18) credit hours per fiscal year, based upon the availability of funds. Any exception to this must be approved by the Director of HR with guidance from County Administration.

Employees requesting reimbursement are responsible for obtaining approval from their departmental director and the Director of HR prior to the first day of the course for which they are seeking reimbursement.

Reimbursement Procedures

The employee must initially pay all costs (courses covered by grants and scholarships that cover full tuition costs are not eligible for tuition reimbursement) associated with the tuition of the approved course(s).

After successful completion of the course, the employee must submit to the HR Department proof of payment and proof of final course grade within thirty (30) days of course completion in order to update the previously submitted Tuition Reimbursement Request to request payment.
After approval by the Director of HR, documents will be forwarded to the Finance Department for processing.

Reimbursement shall be as follows:

Grade "A" (+/-) or "Pass" in Pass/Fail classes – 100% of paid tuition
Grade "B" (+/-) - 90% of paid tuition
Grade "C" (+/-) – 75% of paid tuition
Lower than a "C" – no reimbursement

Employees who participate in the Tuition Reimbursement Program will be obligated to remain employed with Walton County BCC for a minimum of two (2) years after completion of the last class attended for which they were reimbursed. Employees who voluntarily resign or terminate employment for any reason, prior to the expiration of the two (2) year period, shall repay Walton County BCC 100% of the monies received by the employee from the Tuition Reimbursement Program. Any balance due at time of resignation will be automatically withheld and deducted from the employee's final payroll check.

Policy 6.5 – Travel Expenses

Walton County BCC employees shall use county owned vehicles for all county business and travel if possible. Attempts to use a county owned vehicle shall be exhausted before proceeding with private vehicle use.

Walton County BCC employees shall be entitled to reimbursement for the use of their private vehicles and for expenses which they may incur while performing travel in conduct of Walton County BCC business.

Mileage reimbursement rates for travel by privately owned vehicles shall be paid in accordance with the IRS optional standard mileage rate.

Department directors traveling out of Walton County shall receive prior approval from County Administration.

Department directors shall approve and notify County Administration for travel outside of Walton County for their department employees.

Please refer to the **Walton County Board of County Commissioners Travel Policy** located on the Financial Policy Documents page of the Finance Department website for more information.

Policy 6.6 – Worker's Compensation

All Walton County BCC employees are covered by, and are entitled to, the benefits of the Florida Workers' Compensation Law.

All Walton County BCC employees who sustain an injury while performing their duties are responsible for immediately reporting the accident to their supervisor, contacting the HR Department, and completing a **First Report of Injury Form**.

The **First Report of Injury Form**, completed by the employee and signed by the supervisor and/or department director, and the Supervisor's **Accident/Incident Investigation Report Form**, completed by the employee's supervisor, should be forwarded to the HR Department within 24 hours.

Employees are required to see a doctor authorized by the Walton County BCC. Employees should not go on their own to your private doctor for treatment.

Drug testing may be required if the employee is at fault for the accident and/or medical treatment is provided due to the accident or injury (see **Policy 2.2 – Drug Free Workplace**) .

Injuries/accidents must be filed with Workers' Compensation within 7 days or the Walton County BCC may be fined up to $500 for late filing.

The following are criminal violations of s. 440.105, Florida Statute, that constitutes a felony of the first, second or third degree, depending on the monetary value of the fraud as provided in s. 775.083, or s. 775.084, Florida Statute:

- Filing a false claim of on-the-job injuries or exaggerating injuries.
- An injured worker or any party making a claim of an on-the-job injury will be required to provide his/her personal signature attesting that he/she has reviewed, understands, and acknowledges the following statement: "Any person who, knowingly and with intent to injure, defraud, or deceive any employer or employee, insurance company, or self-insured program, files a statement of claim containing any false or misleading information commits insurance fraud, punishable as provided in s. 817.234."
- If the injured worker or party refuses to sign the document benefits or payments shall be suspended until such signature is obtained.

Policy 6.7 – Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

The Walton County BCC is committed to maintaining and strengthening our most important resources – our employees. In support of this tradition, the Walton County BCC has initiated an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). We recognize that many kinds of personal and emotional problems which often affect job performance can be resolved more readily if they are properly identified, diagnosed, and appropriately treated. Problems included under this program are marital, child or other family problems, persistent anxiety, substance abuse, stress problems, financial, or other distractive concerns. The establishment of the EAP will provide a confidential short-term counseling and referral service for eligible employees and their immediate family members. This EAP reflects the Walton County BCC's concern for the well-being of its employees as well as its dedication to the effective accomplishment of its goals.

The Walton County BCC encourages their employees who are experiencing problems to take it upon themselves to seek assistance from the EAP. For more information on the EAP, contact the HR Department.

Policy 7.1 – Purpose

The Walton County BCC is committed to its employees and providing them with a work-life balance that is beneficial to both the employees and the Walton County BCC.

Policy 7.2 – Attendance Standards

Each Walton County BCC employee plays an important role in completing the mission of the Walton County BCC. Therefore, each employee is expected to be at their work location on time each day. Absenteeism or tardiness, even for good reasons, is disruptive to county operations and interferes with our ability to satisfy our customers' needs. Excessive absenteeism or tardiness can result in discipline up to and including termination.

When absence is due to illness, the Walton County BCC reserves the right to require appropriate medical documentation.

Attendance
Employees are expected to be present for work when they are scheduled to work.

Employees are expected to report for work on time and complete their regularly scheduled workday.

If an employee must be absent or late, it is the employee's responsibility to notify their supervisor; notifying another employee within the department is not sufficient. This notification must be given as soon as the employee knows they will be tardy or unable to work. Acceptable forms of notification include verbal phone calls and emails. Texting, absent unusual circumstances, is not acceptable for notification purposes. Notification of absence must be provided no later than one (1) hour prior to the starting time of the employee's workday. Employees must make every attempt to notify their supervisor that they will be late prior to the start of the employee's scheduled work shift.

Employees who fail to report to duty without contacting their supervisor may be disciplined, up to and including termination.

Employees who fail to report for duty without contacting their supervisor for three (3) consecutive workdays shall be considered resigned and terminated for job abandonment.

Employees are required to record their actual work in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Employees working overtime without prior authorization shall be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of their employment.

Punctuality
Employees are considered tardy if they fail to report to their assigned work location at their scheduled time, including returning from breaks or lunch.

An employee who abuses tardiness to the point it becomes excessive shall have disciplinary action taken to correct the behavior.

If an employee who has received disciplinary action continues to abuse this standard, they shall be subject to further disciplinary action, up to and including termination of their employment.

Flexibility in the regular workday is permitted providing operational efficiency is maintained, and an employee has approval from their department director.

Policy 7.3 – Disaster Emergency Work Assignment

This policy, created by the Department of Emergency Management, establishes the framework for which employees may be assigned for work in preparation for, in response to, and/ or recovery from, the impacts of a wide variety of disasters or emergency situations that could adversely affect the health, safety and/or general welfare of community.

This policy becomes active in whole, or in part, as determined by County Administration when any natural, technological, or other emergency or disaster requires employees to be assigned duties for direct support to Walton County.

Emergency Essential Employees who fail to report to their work assignment may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of their employment.

Upon determination that there no longer exists a threat to the health, safety, or general welfare of the community, or there is no longer a need to provide resources to support other jurisdictions under mutual aid agreements, County Administration may deactivate this policy in whole or part. Upon deactivation of this policy in whole or in part, employees affected by the deactivation shall be required to return to their normal duties and responsibilities, and eligibility for additional emergency or disaster compensation will cease.

The need to provide emergency services may supersede other Walton County BCC operations. During an emergency or disaster, employees may be temporarily assigned to duties other than the essential functions of their position and/or assigned to work at different job sites.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all permanent full-time or part-time employees of the Walton County BCC who have been employed for at least six months.

DEFINITIONS

Emergency Leave Time off with pay during regularly scheduled working hours when Walton County BCC offices are closed, and employees are released from duty due to an emergency or disaster.

Emergency Pay Non-director-level exempt and nonexempt employees, who are designated by their department directors to work during emergencies when county offices are closed will be compensated based on the employee's straight-time hourly rate; if more than 40 hours are worked during the normal work week, time and one-half the regular straight-time will be paid for all such hours worked.

PROVISIONS

All Walton County BCC employees have an emergency management obligation to be available for working assignments before, during, and after disasters and/ or emergencies. Employees will be notified and trained or instructed in their emergency disaster assignments annually. Employees are required to report, either by phone or in person, to their department's designated contact point prior to and

immediately after a disaster and/ or emergency to receive work assignments. Assignments will typically include clean-up, repair, answering citizen phone lines, manning Emergency Operations Center (EOC), and working at community distribution centers or comfort stations. Because these assignments are essential to the recovery of the community after an emergency or disaster, failure to respond or be available for assignment will be considered cause for disciplinary action, up to and including termination of their employment.

Emergency pay will begin when Walton County BCC offices are officially closed and County Administration releases employees; or when emergency conditions warrant. Emergency pay will be paid continuously for all hours worked until the emergency ends or until normal business hours resume, whichever comes first.

Exempt and nonexempt county employees who are designated by their department directors to work during emergencies will be compensated for time worked at their normal rate plus the essential worker pay rate regardless of the number of hours worked during the pay period. In accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act, employees required to be on site and available for duties will be paid at applicable pay rates. Employees on site for personal convenience or safety who are not working will not be paid.

If a county owned vehicle is not available for use by an employee assigned to disaster or emergency duties under this policy, the employee will be eligible for mileage reimbursement for use of a personal vehicle from the location of their usual work assignment to the location of the disaster or emergency assignment.

Exempt and nonexempt employees, who are released from duty by County Administration during normal work hours, will be compensated at their usual rates of pay for their regularly scheduled hours. Employees who are released from duty and already on official leave during this time will not be charged leave and will receive their usual rates of pay for the same number of hours as the other employees who are released from duty. Employees participating in out-of-town, work-related activities do not qualify for emergency pay or emergency leave, unless environmental circumstances warrant and authorized by County Administration.

Due to the Emergency Management obligation of all Walton County BCC employees, employees placed on alert during an emergency or disaster are not entitled to stand-by pay, unless they are otherwise on routine stand-by.

Exempt employees are required to submit exception reports to document time worked for which emergency pay is payable; however, exempt employees are not required to submit exception reports for emergency leave.

Policy 7.4 – Holidays

The Walton County BCC approves the Walton County BCC employee holiday schedule annually.

Those eligible for paid holidays are all permanent employees who have that date as a regularly scheduled workday. To receive pay for the observed holiday, an employee shall have been present and/or on approved paid leave, on the workday before and after the holiday.

Full-time employees are eligible for eight (8) or ten (10) hours of holiday pay based on the regularly scheduled workday. Part-time employees are eligible for eight (8) hours of holiday pay.

If holiday falls on regular scheduled off day the employee's supervisor may schedule them an additional day off within the pay period.

Policy 7.5 – Paid Time Off (PTO)

The Walton County BCC's Paid Time Off (PTO) program allows all permanent employees to be paid for time off for any purpose deemed necessary.

- PTO must be requested by the employee and approved by their supervisor before taking leave.
- Begin accruing PTO at the beginning date of employment but shall not be permitted to use PTO until thirty (30) days of employment.
- Employees shall be allowed to maintain a balance of up to 1000 hours at the end of the calendar year.
- Up to 240 hours of PTO paid when employment voluntarily ends **(see Policy 5.13 – PTO Pay Upon Termination of Employment)**.
- No employee shall be allowed to use PTO that has not already been earned.
- No employee shall earn PTO during a leave of absence without pay, a suspension without pay, or when the employee is otherwise in a non-paid status.

PTO shall be accrued based on the following schedule for fulltime permanent employees:

Years of Service	Accrual Rate per Hour	Accrual Rate per 80 hours pay period	Annual PTO Accrual (Based on 2080 hours)
0 – 4.99 years	0.1000	8	208 hours
5 – 9.99 years	0.1125	9	234 hours
10 – 14.99 years	0.1250	10	260 hours
15 or more years	0.1500	12	312 hours

PTO shall be accrued based on the above accrual rate per hour for part-time permanent employees.

Employees hired prior to 11/6/2021

- Annual leave accrued prior to 11/06/2021 was converted to PTO
- Sick leave stopped accruing on 11/05/2021
- Sick leave earned prior to 11/06/2021 shall be used in its entirety prior to utilizing any PTO for all time off
- Up to 500 hours (based on years of service) of PTO shall be paid to employee when employment voluntarily ends based on years of service with the Walton County BCC
- If an employee does not have 500 hours of PTO accrued at termination, any additional hours may be drawn from sick leave balance not to exceed 500 total hours

Leave for Less Than One Day
Leave requests shall be completed by any regular nonexempt employees for all times absent from work. For time entry purposes, exempt employees absent from work more than half their scheduled workday shall report PTO for the missed hours. Department directors are not required to complete a leave request for time less than one full day of absence unless required by their direct supervisor.

Duration of Leave
PTO shall be limited to fourteen (14) consecutive calendar days unless approved in advance by the department director and Director of HR.

Policy 7.6 – Bereavement Leave

A maximum of three (3) regularly scheduled and consecutive workdays with pay may be granted to permanent employee when a death in the employee's immediate family occurs.

Immediate family is defined as the employee's spouse, parents, or grandparents of either, children or grandchildren of either, guardians of either, brothers or sisters of either, or relatives residing in the same household.

The employee shall notify their supervisor and/ or department director of the need for bereavement leave prior to using it.

Employees must notify their supervisor of the deceased relative's name and relationship to the employee. Evidence of death and funeral attendance may be required.

Department directors may authorize additional days off without pay or allow employees to utilize available PTO based on individual circumstances.

Abuse of bereavement leave shall result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of their employment.

Policy 7.7 – Family and Medical Leave (FMLA)

Eligible employees may take up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave each year for specified family and medical reasons.

Employee Eligibility

To be eligible for family or medical leave, the employee must:

- have worked at least 12 months for the Walton County BCC
- have worked at least 1,250 hours for the Walton County BCC over the previous 12 months
- work at a location where there are at least 50 employees within 75 miles

Conditions Triggering Leave

Family and medical leave must involve one or more of the following reasons:

- For the birth of a child, to care for a newly born child, or placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care.
- To care for an immediate family member (spouse, child, employee's parent, or domestic partner) with a serious health condition.
- Because of the employee's own serious health condition, which makes the employee unable to perform the functions of the employee's job.

Duration of Leave

Eligible employees may receive up to 12 work weeks of unpaid leave during any "rolling" 12-month period, measured backward from the date of any family or medical leave. Family and medical leave involving the birth or placement of a child for adoption or foster care must be concluded within 12 months of the birth or placement.

An employee may take family and medical leave intermittently -- which means taking leave in blocks of time, or by reducing your normal weekly or daily work schedule -- whenever it is medically necessary to care for a seriously ill family member, or because you are seriously ill and unable to work. Intermittent leave is not permitted for birth of a child, to care for a newly born child, or placement of a child for adoption or foster care.

Depending on the purpose of the employee leave request, they may choose (or the Walton County BCC may require) to use accrued paid leave, if available, as a substitute for some or all of the family and medical leave.

Military Caregiver Leave

Effective immediately, up to 26 weeks of military caregiver leave may be taken to care for a spouse, child, parent or next of kin who is a "covered serviceman" with a serious injury or illness. A covered service member may be either a current service member or a veteran of the Armed Forces, provided the discharge was anything other than dishonorable and occurred within the past five years.

For a current service member, a serious injury or illness is one that was incurred by a service member in the line of duty on active duty that may render the service member medically unfit to perform the duties of their office, grade, rank, or rating. A serious injury or illness also includes injuries or illnesses that existed before the service member's active duty and that were aggravated by service in the line of duty on active duty.

For a veteran, a serious injury or illness is one that was incurred by the veteran in the line of duty on active duty in the Armed Forces or that existed before the veteran's active duty and was aggravated by service in the line of duty on active duty, and that is either:

- a continuation of a serious injury or illness that was incurred or aggravated when the veteran was a member of the Armed Forces and rendered the service member unable to perform the duties of the service member's office, grade, rank, or rating; or
- a physical or mental condition for which the veteran has received a Department of Veterans Affairs Service-Related Disability Rating (VASRD) of 50 percent or greater. (The rating may be based on multiple conditions); or
- a physical or mental condition that substantially impairs the veteran's ability to work because of a disability or disabilities related to military service, or would do so absent treatment; or
- an injury that is the basis for the veteran's enrollment in the Department of Veterans Affairs Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers.

Qualifying Exigency Leave Additionally, close family members of military personnel (defined as spouse, child, or parent) may take up to twelve (12) weeks of job protected leave, if eligible, if the member of the military's is on covered active duty or called to covered active duty.

For members of the regular Armed Forces, "Covered Active Duty" means duty during deployment of the member with the Armed Forces to a foreign country.

For members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces (members of the National Guard and Reserves), "Covered Active Duty" means duty during deployment of the member with the Armed Forces to a foreign country under a call or order to active duty in support of a contingency operation.

Maintenance of Health Benefits

If an employee and/or their family participate in a group health plan, the Walton County BCC shall maintain coverage under the plan during approved family and medical leave. This coverage shall be provided based on the coverage under the plan before the leave was taken and on the same terms as if the employee had continued to work. Where appropriate, you must decide to pay your share of health plan premiums while on leave.

In some instances, the Walton County BCC may recover premiums it paid to maintain health coverage for an employee and family.

Job Restoration

Upon returning from a family and medical leave, the employee shall be restored to their original job, or to an equivalent job with equivalent pay, benefits, and other employment terms and conditions. In

addition, use of family and medical leave shall not result in the loss of any employment benefit that an employee has earned or was entitled to before using family and medical leave.

Notice and Medical Certification

When seeking family and medical leave, an employee must provide:

- 30 days advance notice of the need to take family and medical leave if the need is foreseeable.
- Medical certifications support the need for leave due to a serious health condition affecting the employee or an immediate family member. Second or third medical opinions and periodic recertifications at the Walton County BCC's expense may also be required.
- Such periodic reports as deemed appropriate during the leave regarding your status and intent to return to work.
- Medical certification of fitness for duty before returning to work if the leave was due to your serious health condition.

When leave is needed for a planned medical treatment for an employee's own serious health condition or that of an immediate family member, the employee shall try to schedule treatment so that it will not unduly disrupt the Walton County BCC's operation. Employees who fail to provide information to, or otherwise cooperate with the Walton County BCC in administering this policy, may have their leave delayed and/or be subject to discipline up to and including termination of employment as permitted by law.

Other Employment

The Walton County BCC prohibits an employee from outside employment during an employee's leave period. An employee engaging in outside employment while on an approved leave may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of their employment.

Exceeding FMLA Leave

Any employee who exceeds their FMLA entitlement may be subject to termination of employment.

Non-Contractual Nature of This Policy

The duration of leave, availability of benefits, opportunity for job restoration, and other rights and privileges associated with FMLA Leave are limited by the requirements of applicable state and federal law. No express or implied contractual rights should be inferred from this policy. The Walton County BCC reserves the right to modify this or any other policy as necessary, at its sole discretion.

Policy 7.8 – Military Leave of Absence

The following information is intended to be used as a guide for a Miliary Leave of Absence. The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA) is detailed and lengthy; the provisions contained therein shall apply to all Walton County BCC employees.

Employees are eligible for military leave of absence when they are assigned (volunteered or ordered) to active or inactive duty in connection with U.S. Reserve Forces or the National Guard. A copy of the members' official orders shall be submitted with as much advance notice as possible.

Policy 7.9 – Domestic Violence Leave

Any employee who has worked for the Walton County BCC for a minimum of three (3) months is entitled to take three (3) days of unpaid leave if they or a member of their immediate household have been the victim of domestic violence and need to engage in any of the following activities:

- to seek an injunction for protection against domestic violence or repeat of sexual violence
- to obtain medical care or mental health counseling for the employee or the household member to address issues resulting from domestic violence
- to obtain services from a victim services organization
- to make the employee's home secure from the perpetrator of domestic violence or to relocate to a new location to escape the perpetrator
- to seek legal assistance to address issues that arose from the domestic violence or to attend or prepare for a court related proceeding relating to an act of domestic violence

Employees must provide appropriate advance notice to their supervisor of the need for leave unless they are prevented from doing so because of imminent danger.

All employees must first exhaust any available annual paid time off leave before being eligible to use domestic violence leave.

The Walton County BCC may require the employee to provide documentation such as police reports, court notice, etc.

Policy 7.10 – Paid Time Off Bank (PTOB)

This policy establishes a plan for allowing participating full-time regular employees who have been employed for a minimum of one (1) year of service to a source of additional leave upon depletion of their personally accrued PTO and/ or sick leave for illnesses and disabilities that are not job related.

Administration of the Paid Time Off Bank

The Benefit's Coordinator shall be the administrator along with a committee comprised of four additional employees who are responsible for the oversight and approval of the PTOB.

Membership and Participation

- All full-time regular employees who have successfully completed their training period and have completed one (1) year of service are eligible for membership.
- The employee's PTO balance must be a minimum of 100 hours.
- The employee shall be required to contribute 10 hours of PTO to join the PTOB.
- The employee must contact the HR Department to join upon first becoming eligible or during the annual open enrollment period.
- Participation in the PTOB is always voluntary and a participating employee may withdraw from the PTOB at any time by given written notice, however no contributions shall by returned.
- Failure to meet the above guidelines shall result in the employee waiting until the next available open enrollment period.

Maintenance of the Paid Time Off Bank

- The PTOB shall be considered depleted when less than 500 hours remain on deposit.
- When the PTOB is depleted, each participating employee, with prior notification, shall contribute 10 PTO hours.
- If the participating employee's PTO balance is less than 10 hours at the time, the PTOB is depleted, that employees shall be removed from the PTOB and not allowed to rejoin until the next annual open enrollment.

Use of the Paid Time Off Bank

- The PTOB Committee shall review all requests on a case-by-case basis and shall consider past PTOB usage by the requesting employee.
- The PTOB is not intended for elective or cosmetic surgery, normal pregnancy, and childbirth.
- Employees requesting PTO from the PTOB shall deplete all their PTO and Sick Leave accruals prior to withdrawal from the PTOB.
- Prior to receiving PTO from the PTOB, the employee shall have a minimum two (2) week waiting period from the beginning of the leave and/or notification being received in the HR Department.
- A participating employee may be granted up to 480 hours of PTO from initial withdrawal from the PTOB.
- Employees shall not accrue PTO while withdrawing from the PTOB.
- Any employee who exhausts 480 hours of PTO from the PTOB shall wait two full calendar years before requesting PTO from the PTOB for any new illness or disability.

- To make an informed decision, a medical certification and/ or a release of medical information signed by the employee shall be provided to the committee to review the request for PTOB hours for each new illness or disability.
- An employee has the right to appeal any denial of PTOB use by the committee to County Administration.

Discontinuation of the Paid Time Off Bank

The Walton County BCC may, at any time, discontinue the PTOB.

All hours remaining in the PTOB at time of the repeal of this policy shall be apportioned among and returned to the remaining members of the PTOB.

Policy 7.11 – Donated Leave

This policy establishes a plan for allowing full-time permanent employees with less than one (1) year of service a source of additional leave upon depletion of their personally accrued PTO for personal illnesses and disabilities that are not job related.

Participation

- Donated PTO shall only be used for an employee's personal medical emergency. A medical emergency is defined as a medical condition of the employee that is likely to require the employee to be absent from work for a prolonged period and to result in a substantial loss of income because of the employee's lack of available PTO.
- The following are not covered by this policy: Elective surgeries or intentionally self-inflicted injuries.

Requesting / Receiving Employee

- All full-time permanent employees who have successfully completed orientation are eligible to participate.
- An employee making the request shall have exhausted all their PTO accruals.
- An employee receiving donated PTO shall be limited to eighty (80) hours during their first year of employment.
- An employee receiving workers' compensation benefits is not eligible to receive donated leave.
- Employees shall submit the request in writing to the HR Department utilizing the **Walton County BCC Donated PTO Request Form** provided by the HR Department.

Donating Employees

- Participation by donating employees in voluntary and no employee shall be pressured to donate PTO to any employee.
- Donating employees are required to donate a minimum of twenty (20) hours to the requesting employee.
- Donating employees are required to have a balance of 160 hours after the donation of leave.

Discontinuation of Donated Leave

The Walton County BCC may, at any time, discontinue the ability to request Donated Leave.

Policy 7.12 – Work Life Balance

This policy establishes a program that requires County Administration and Department Directors to take time away from work annually.

Requirements

- County Administration and Department Directors shall be away from the workplace a minimum of four (4) or five (5) consecutive workdays (based on their normal workweek) biannually, except in the case of extreme hardships or emergencies.
    - The four (4) or five (5) consecutive workdays (based on their normal workweek) can precede or follow a holiday but will not include those days.
    - A workday is defined as a day that the employee normally works.
- Absences due to leaves of absences or vacation shall satisfy this requirement.
- Attendance at a work-related conference or seminar is considered a scheduled workday and it may not be used as part of this mandatory leave.
- Any exception to this policy shall be approved by the County Administrator

Policy 7.13 – Accrual Buy Back Program

This policy establishes a program for allowing the Walton County BCC to allocate part of the annual budget to buy back accrued Sick Leave and/ or Paid Time Off Leave from permanent Walton County BCC employees.

Participation

- All full-time regular employees who have successfully completed their training period and have completed one (1) year of service are eligible to participate.
- Funding shall be approved in advance by the Walton County Board.
- Employees shall submit the request in writing to the HR Department utilizing the **Walton County BCC Accrual Buy Back Form** provided by the HR Department.
- Employees can allocate up to Forty (40) hours to be bought back by the Walton County BCC.
- Employee's Paid Time Off Accrual balance must be a minimum of 80 hours after the buyback.
- Employees who participate in the buyback program shall be subject to a four (4) week waiting period before utilizing the PTOB within the following calendar year.
- Employees hired prior to 11/6/2021 shall allocate any Sick Leave Accruals to be bought back prior to allocating Paid Time Off Accruals.

Discontinuation of the Accrual Buy Back Program

Annually the Walton County BCC shall decide whether to allocate funding to the program through the Annual Budget process.

Policy 8.1 – Purpose

The Walton County BCC provides their employees with a workplace that promotes rewarding employees with advancements.

Policy 8.2 – Promotions

All permanent full-time and part-time employees after successfully completing their training period of (6) six months of employment, shall be eligible for promotion or transfer to another department with the approval of both department directors and the Director of HR. Inter-departmental transfers may be approved before the initial training period is completed at the department director's discretion with the approval of the Director of HR.

Employees desiring a promotion and/or transfer to another position shall apply for a posted position by completing an application on the Walton County BCC Career Portal prior to the job posting end date.

Veteran's preference in promotion will be given in accordance with Chapter 295*, Florida Statutes*. Eligibility for preference in promotion shall apply only to a Veteran's first promotion after reinstatement or re-employment, without exception.

When an employee is promoted to a higher position, the employee shall be paid at a rate based on the guidelines set in **Policy 5.6 – Pay Upon Promotion or Demotion** and taking into consideration the circumstances surrounding, and the reasons for, the promotion. An employee receiving a promotion shall be required to serve a new training period pursuant to **Policy 3.9 – Training Period** based on the request of the department director.

Policy 8.3 – Demotions

A position may be filled by the demotion of an employee in accordance with the provisions of these rules and regulations. A demotion may be the result of reclassification of a position, disciplinary action or at the request of the employee.

When an employee is demoted to a lower position, the employee shall be paid at a rate based on the guidelines set forth in **Policy 5.6 – Pay Upon Promotion or Demotion** taking into consideration the circumstances surrounding, and the reasons for, the demotion. An employee receiving a demotion shall be required to serve a new training period pursuant to **Policy 3.9 – Training Period**. If a demotion is based on performance, the said employee shall be required to serve a new training period.

Policy 8.4 – Transfers

The Walton County BCC encourages employee transfers for the purpose of increasing job knowledge and skills in preparation for advancement within the organization. Post-training period, permanent employees may apply for transfers to regular Walton County BCC positions. Employees should utilize the Walton County BCC Career Portal to locate and apply for open county positions.

Policy 9.1 – Purpose

The performance evaluation program is intended to inform employees how well they are performing their work and how they can improve their work performance. The program is also intended to:

- Be used as a guide for determining performance-based pay increases
- Be considered in selecting employees for promotion
- Provide essential information for employee career development
- Be used to transition an employee from training to regular status
- Be used in determining whether an employee's performance warrants corrective action, up to and including termination.

Policy 9.2 – Evaluation Program

The HR Department shall be responsible for the establishment and administration of a performance evaluation program for all employees of the Walton County BCC. The performance evaluation shall be administered as prescribed by the Director of HR with guidance from County Administration.

Policy 9.3 – Evaluation Periods

Training Period Reviews

All permanent part-time and full-time employees may be evaluated prior to the end of their initial six (6) month or extended training period.

Annual Reviews

An annual review process may be implemented at the discretion of the department director or County Administration with guidance from the Director of HR.

Policy 9.4 – Evaluation Review Process

The performance evaluation may be prepared by the employee's immediate supervisor and subsequently reviewed and approved by the department director prior to administering.

Supervisors may provide feedback on the evaluation forms for them to be considered complete.

The evaluator shall discuss each performance evaluation with the employee.

The employee, supervisor and department director shall approve the evaluation.

Performance evaluations are not subject to the grievance policy.

Policy 9.5 – Evaluation Processing

Completed evaluations shall be forwarded to the HR Department.

Performance Evaluation Forms shall be maintained in the employee's permanent personnel record.

Policy 10.1 – Purpose

It is the policy of the Walton County BCC to:

Provide a well-defined system of discipline that sets forth standards of conduct and specific guidelines for disciplinary actions and which will be applied to all employees equitably, without bias or prejudice.

The HR Department is designated as the official repository of all employee records. All disciplinary actions taken shall be forwarded to the HR Department for inclusion in the employee's personnel files.

Policy 10.2 – General Provisions

It is the intent of the Walton County BCC that discipline should be characterized as corrective and constructive rather than punitive and that disciplinary actions be utilized as an element of an overall program to educate and motivate employees to exhibit behavior that will contribute to individual growth and development and to the successful operation of the Walton County BCC.

Any Walton County BCC employee may be disciplined.

The need for disciplinary action may arise because of different kinds of actions on the part of the employee, such as, but not limited to:

- Failure to perform their job in a satisfactory manner, that is, unsatisfactory performance as to one or more of the requirements of the job
- Infraction of established rules, regulations, policies, and procedures
- Offenses or misconduct which violate general rules of behavior or are specifically prohibited by law
- Being convicted of a felony or a misdemeanor
- Excessive tardiness or absences
- Incompetence, inefficiency, negligence, or failure to follow orders
- Abuse, misuse or theft of public property, equipment facilities or supplies
- Willfully making false statements to supervisors, the Board, or to the public
- Falsification of records or misrepresentation of uniform, badge, or position
- Violation of departmental rules, safety work habits, personnel or policy regulations, safety rules or county ordinances
- Possession, or use of alcoholic beverages or narcotic drugs (not prescribed by a physician) during working hours on Walton County BCC owned property or vehicles
- Reporting to work under the influence of alcoholic beverages or narcotic drugs (whether prescribed by a physician) or any other drug, which affects the employee's ability to carry out their duties
- Acceptance of gratuity in violation of the Walton County BCC policy and/ or Florida Statutes of Conduct and Ethics
- Political activity prohibited by law
- Violation of State and/or Federal Statutes and regulations pertaining to public employees
- Refusal to work overtime when necessary
- Conduct that is disruptive, insubordinate, antagonistic, offensive, undermining, or injurious to the Walton County BCC whether in relation to co-workers, other employees, superiors, elected officials, or citizens
- Failure to promptly report injuries or accidents through proper channels to supervisors
- Failure to maintain a valid driver's license as defined in **Policy 2.22 – Driver's License**
- Any gambling activity of any kind while on duty or while on Walton County BCC owned property
- Smoking in Walton County BCC owned buildings or vehicles

Policy 10.3 – Application of Disciplinary Actions

Although internal consistency in administering discipline is desirable, numerous factors should be considered in determining the appropriate level of discipline to be assessed at each successive step. Some of the factors involved include time intervals between offenses, effectiveness of prior disciplinary actions, willingness to improve, overall work performance, job attitudes, and disciplinary actions previously taken with other comparable employees for similar offenses.

Some infractions may be more serious in one case, because of the employee's responsibilities than in another case.

A repetition of the same offense or other serious offenses indicates that more severe disciplinary measures should be administered.

Certain offenses are of such a serious nature that immediate discharge upon first offense is applicable. Prior to any action to dismiss an employee, the department director shall contact the Director of HR and review that personnel file.

When circumstances permit, department directors are encouraged to pursue a philosophy of "progressive discipline" by administering gradually increasing disciplinary actions for each successive instance of employee misconduct. Each level of progressive discipline shall be fully documented for inclusion in the employee's personnel file.

Incidents of misconduct may differ in individual cases from somewhat similar incidents, and the Walton County BCC retains the right to treat each incident on an individual basis without creating a precedent for cases that arise in the future.

These provisions are not to be construed as a limitation upon the retained rights of the Walton County BCC but are to be used as a guide.

The HR Department is responsible for providing guidance on the application of disciplinary actions and shall approve all disciplinary actions prior to administering them to the employee.

Section XI
Dispute Resolution

Policy 11.1 – Purpose

It is the policy of the Walton County BCC that employees should have an opportunity to present their work-related complaints and to appeal management decisions through a dispute resolution procedure. The Walton County BCC shall attempt to resolve promptly all disputes that are appropriate for handling under this policy including grievances, reports of misconduct, reports of harassment, and reports of sexual harassment. Failure to follow all timelines within the policy will forfeit the employee's right to the grievance policy. This policy does not apply to County Administration or department directors.

Policy 11.2 – Grievances

If an employee believes a rule, policy, practice, or procedure has been applied unjustly, the following procedure may be used to resolve such concerns. The Walton County BCC has special grievance procedures to resolve such complaints. To use these procedures, the employee must have completed their training period and have attained permanent status.

It is the responsibility of supervisory and management employees to hear and consider any valid employee grievance, and take necessary corrective action when indicated, or provide a reasonable explanation as to why the complaint is not justified.

Each employee has the responsibility to ensure any grievance filed is reasonable, based upon factual information, and not abuse the purpose and intent of the system.

Exceptions

The following areas of personnel administration are considered management prerogatives and shall not be subject to grievance; however, employees are encouraged to discuss any concern with their department director:

- Scheduling and assigning work, work hours and workstations
- Establishing work standards and quality
- Size of workforce and reorganizations
- Reductions to the work force
- Appropriations and budgets
- Scope of work within job classification except when an assignment is clearly determined not to be within the job classification
- Performance evaluations
- Salary scales and rates of pay falling within officially established ranges
- The right to discipline
- The missions of the Walton County BCC

Policy 11.3 – Process for Filing a Complaint

Employees who feel they have an appropriate dispute should proceed as follows:

Step One

Promptly bring the complaint to the attention of the immediate supervisor. If the dispute involves the supervisor, then the employee may proceed directly to step two. The supervisor should investigate the complaint, attempt to resolve it, and give a decision to the employee within a reasonable time. The supervisor should prepare a written and dated summary of the dispute and proposed resolution for the employee's personnel file.

Step Two

Appeal the decision to the department director or the HR Department if dissatisfied with the supervisor's decision or if the complaint involves supervisor. This appeal or initial dispute notification must be made within seven (7) calendar days in writing. The department director shall within fourteen (14) calendar days confer with the employee, the supervisor, and other appropriate parties, investigate the dispute and then issue a written, final, and binding decision.

Step Three

Appeal the decision to the Director of HR or County Administration within seven (7) calendar days of receiving the written decision from the department director or the HR Department.

Policy 11.4 – Internal Investigation Procedure

The following procedure for investigating and resolving claims of misconduct, sexual harassment, or other forms of illegal/improper harassment prohibited by this policy.

All employees have been informed as to the policy concerning illegal/improper harassment or misconduct. All incidents, reports or complaints of sexual harassment or misconduct should be filed or reported to the HR Department immediately. All such complaints, once filed, shall be investigated, and handled exclusively by the Director of HR, or his designee, in consultation with County Administration and/ or the County's Attorney, unless otherwise specifically provided in this procedure. However, an employee disciplined because of a finding of sexual harassment or misconduct or filing a willful or intentional bad faith claim of sexual harassment misconduct shall be entitled to file a grievance in accordance with applicable policy.

Because of the extremely sensitive nature of these types of problems and the potential "spill-over effect" on the job future and personal lives of all involved, the following procedures are established.

When a complaint of illegal/improper harassment is made against an employee or person doing business with the Walton County BCC:

- A complaint file will be opened by the Director of HR which will be separate from the personnel file of the employee involved. The file shall be confidential to the extent allowed by Florida law and will be available only to County Administration, for the specific case, and:
    - The County Attorney
    - Investigators, if any (until the investigation is completed) assigned the specific case by the Director of HR
    - Outside council, if obtained
- Investigators assigned to handling the complaint will not discuss any aspect of the investigation with anyone, except those persons who have access to the file as provided in the first bullet point above and then only upon request or as necessary to complete the investigation.
- The investigators will be charged with the responsibility of gathering information relevant to the complaint. The identity of persons interviewed will remain confidential except to those persons enumerated in the first bullet point above unless otherwise directed by County Administration or required by law.
- The investigation will be supervised by the County Attorney or the Assistant County Attorney.
- Upon completion of the investigation the investigators will make a verbal report to County Administration.
    - A record of the decision of County Administration will be made in the separate file and the parties will be advised of the decision.
    - If the decision involved written discipline a copy of the actual notice of disciplinary action will be placed in the employee's personnel file.

- If the person against whom the claim was made is exonerated or no disciplinary action other than oral reprimand is taken, no entry will be made in the personnel file. In such an instance, the complaint investigation shall clearly state whether there was no merit to the complaint or that it was insufficiently serious to warrant discipline more severe than oral reprimand. If any oral reprimand was given, the next level supervisor shall prepare a memo explaining the oral reprimand. The complaint investigation file will not be disclosed to anyone other than as provided in the first bullet point above unless disclosure is required by law.

Policy 11.4 – Resolution

The Walton County BCC shall seek to obtain resolution for any internal investigations as quickly as possible. Once the investigation is complete all parties involved shall be notified of completion.

Section XII
Separation

Policy 12.1 – Purpose

The Walton County BCC is committed to providing long-term careers to their employees. However, when employees need to leave the Walton County BCC either through retirement, voluntary, or involuntary separations, the Walton County BCC is committed to streamlining the process.

Policy 12.2 – Voluntary Separation

Resignation

An employee wishing to leave the Walton County BCC service in good standing shall provide a written notice of resignation to their supervisor stating the date and reason for their resignation. The resignation should be submitted at least fourteen (14) calendar days based on the employee's schedule prior to the date of leaving. The supervisor may waive the required fourteen (14) calendar days based on the employee's schedule if extenuating circumstances exist. Failure to provide proper notice may cause denial of reemployment rights and/or forfeiture of payment of any unused PTO accruals.

Resignation without notice

- An employee who, without valid reason, fails to report to work for three (3) consecutive workdays without authorized leave shall be separated from the Walton County BCC.
- An employee who fails to give a minimum of fourteen (14) calendar days or two (2) calendar weeks' notice of resignation shall be considered resignation without notice.

Absent extenuating circumstance, an employee who resigns without notice shall forfeit all PTO accruals and shall not receive a payout (see **Policy 5.13 – PTO Pay Upon Termination of Employment**).

Retirement

Walton County BCC employees are covered under the Florida Retirement System. Employees who are considering retirement should contact the HR Department at least ninety (90) days prior to the month that they want to begin receiving retirement benefits to initiate the retirement process. Employees who retire are eligible for re-hire subject to FRS re-employment restrictions and approval of the Walton County BCC.

Death

Separation shall be effective as the last day paid prior to the employees' death or the date of death if it was paid. All compensation due to the employee as of the effective date of separation shall be paid to the beneficiary, surviving spouse, or to the estate of the employee as determined by law or by executed form in the employee's personnel file.

Policy 12.3 – Involuntary Separation

Dismissal for Unsatisfactory Service

Prior to any proceedings to dismiss an employee, the department director shall contact the Director of HR and review that employee's personnel file.

A department director may recommend dismissal of any employee for just cause. Just cause shall include, but not be limited to, negligence, incompetence, or inefficiency in the performance of assigned duties; repeated and/or gross substandard performance of assigned duties; insubordination; violation of rules, regulations, and policies; conduct unbecoming a public employee; unauthorized use, possession, or under the influence of alcohol or drugs while on duty; or conviction of a crime. County Administration and the Director of HR shall approve all terminations for cause prior to the termination occurring.

Employment during the training period shall be terminated at any time during the training period for not meeting the performance standards set forth for the position.

End of Season / Contract

Seasonal and temporary employees shall be terminated at the end of the season, when a project is completed, or prior to six (6) months of employment, whichever dates come first.

Policy 12.4 – Layoff / Reduction in Force

When the Walton County BCC or County Administration determines that a lack of work or funding exists to support a position, the decision may be made to lay off employees as the Walton County BCC deems necessary. Such action shall be taken to support the most cost effective and efficient action possible, without regard to an employee's sex, gender identity or orientation, race, color, national origin, age, marital status, or disability.

Policy 12.5 – Return of Property

By executing the acknowledgment form attached to the Human Resources Policy Manual, the employee accepts and understands that it may be utilized as an enforceable promissory note. If the employee fails to return any equipment, money, credit cards, or other property assigned to the employee during employment, the Walton County BCC may first withhold the value of such amount from any final compensation due to the employee including paychecks, paid time off accrual, or any other such earned benefit. If such compensation does not exist or is insufficient to offset the value of the property due, the employee understands and agrees that the Walton County BCC has legal entitlement to such property and shall be responsible for such value and the cost of all attorney fees and costs expended in pursuing such property.

Policy 12.6 - Exit Interview

The Walton County BCC HR Department shall attempt to collect data as to the reason(s) why employees leave employment with the Walton County BCC. The separating employee shall be contacted to complete a voluntary exit interview after separation. This information will be used for the purpose of determining the causes and possible solutions relating to turnover among county personnel.