



SEVIER COUNTY

TENNESSEE

Sevier County Government

Employee Handbook

Adopted July 1, 2026

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	12
Employment Terms and Conditions	13
1.1 Employment at Will.....	13
1.2 Employment Eligibility Verification	13
1.3 Equal Employment Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination.....	14
1.3.1 Non-Discrimination	14
1.3.2 General Accommodation Policy	15
1.3.3 Disability Accommodations.....	15
1.3.4 Pregnancy and Childbirth Accommodations	16
1.3.5 Religious Accommodations	16
1.3.6 Harassment.....	17
Employment Status and Classification	20
2.1 Employment Classifications	20
2.1.1 Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) Classifications	20
2.1.2 Employment Types	20
2.1.3 Work Schedule Types	21
2.1.4 Other Employment Categorizes	21
2.2 Initial Employment Period.....	21
2.3 Promotions and Transfers	22
2.3.1 Promotions	22
2.3.2 Transfers	22
2.4 Voluntary Demotions.....	23
2.5 Administrative Demotions	23
2.6 Dual and Outside Employment.....	24
2.6.1 Dual Employment Within the County	24
2.6.2 Outside Employment	25

2.7	Specialty Teams and Interdepartmental Assignments	26
2.8	Job-Related Examinations	27
2.8.1	Background Checks	27
2.9	Rehire Eligibility.....	28
2.10	Separation from Employment.....	28
2.10.1	Resignations	28
2.10.2	Retirement	28
2.10.3	Job Abandonment.....	28
2.10.4	Terminations and Dismissals	29
2.10.5	Employment References	29
2.10.6	Return of County Property	29
	Work Hours, Timekeeping, and Compensation.....	30
3.1	Workweek and Hours of Work	30
3.2	Meals and Breaks.....	30
3.2.1	Paid Breaks	31
3.2.2	Standard Break Options	31
3.2.3	Emergency Services and On-Call Personnel	31
3.2.4	Nursing Mothers	32
3.3	Timekeeping Requirements	32
3.4	Overtime	33
3.5	Compensatory Time.....	34
3.5.1	Accrual of Compensatory Time.....	34
3.5.2	Use of Compensatory Time	35
3.5.3	Changes in Employment.....	35
3.6	Flexible Scheduling for Exempt Employees.....	36
3.7	Travel Time, Training, and Compensable Hours.....	36
3.7.1	Ordinary Commuting.....	36

3.7.2	Travel During the Workday	37
3.7.3	Overnight Travel.....	37
3.7.4	Training, Meetings, and Required Attendance	37
3.7.5	Work Performed During Travel.....	37
3.7.6	Crew Rest and Fatigue Management (Public Safety Personnel)	38
3.7.7	Fitness and Wellness Time	38
3.7.8	Timekeeping and Supervisor Responsibilities.....	38
3.8	On-Call and Emergency Response Pay	38
3.8.1	On-Call Status.....	39
3.8.2	Call-Back and Return to Work	39
3.8.3	Minimum Call-Back Pay	40
3.8.4	Declaration of State of Emergency	40
3.8.5	Documentation and Reporting	40
3.9	Paychecks and Payroll	41
3.9.1	Direct Deposit	41
3.9.2	Payroll Corrections and Error Reporting	41
3.9.3	Employee Financial Obligations to the County	42
3.10	Payroll Deductions.....	43
3.10.1	Mandatory Payroll Deductions.....	43
3.10.2	FLSA Safe Harbor Deductions for Exempt Employees.....	43
3.10.3	Voluntary Deductions	44
3.10.4	Wage Assignments and Court-Ordered Deductions	44
3.10.5	Processing Timeframes	45
3.10.6	Correction of Deduction Errors.....	45
3.11	Longevity Pay	45
3.12	Final Pay and Termination Pay.....	47
	Workplace Safety and Conduct	48

4.1	Commitment to Workplace Safety.....	48
4.2	Drug-Free Workplace	48
4.2.1	Prohibited Conduct	48
4.2.2	Testing.....	49
4.2.3	Disciplinary Action.....	51
4.2.4	Confidentiality	52
4.2.5	Employee Assistance and Resources	52
4.3	Smoke-Free Workplace	52
4.3.1	Designated Outdoor Areas.....	53
4.3.2	Signage and Enforcement	53
4.3.3	Compliance with Applicable Laws.....	53
4.4	Workplace Behavior, Violence, and Weapons	53
4.4.1	Definition of Abusive Conduct.....	54
4.4.2	Definition of Workplace Violence.....	54
4.4.3	Domestic Violence.....	55
4.4.4	Employer Responsibilities	55
4.4.5	Employee Responsibilities.....	56
4.4.6	Retaliation.....	56
4.4.7	Reporting.....	56
4.4.8	Investigation and Corrective Action	57
4.4.9	Confidentiality	57
4.4.10	Firearms in Vehicles Exception	57
4.5	Safety Reporting and Investigation.....	58
4.5.1	Exposure Incident Reporting	59
4.6	Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	59
4.7	Infectious Disease	60
4.8	Service Animals	60

4.8.1	Service Animals	60
4.8.2	Health and Safety Requirements for Service Animals	61
	Workplace Policies and Procedures	62
5.1	Attendance Expectations	62
5.2	Job Performance Standards	63
5.3	Media Inquiries	63
5.4	Remote Work	63
5.5	Dress & Grooming	64
5.6	Disciplinary Action Process	65
5.7	Complaint Resolution	66
5.8	Workplace Privacy & Monitoring	67
5.8.1	Searches	67
5.8.2	Communications and Data Privacy	67
5.8.3	Recording Policy	67
5.8.4	Employee Data and Personnel Files	68
5.9	Asset Management and Use Policy	68
5.10	Technology, Communications, & Data Security	69
5.10.1	Cybersecurity and Data Protection	69
5.10.2	No Expectation of Privacy	70
5.10.3	Technology Use Standards	70
5.10.4	Portable Electronic Devices	71
5.10.5	Artificial Intelligence (AI) Assisted Productivity Tools	71
5.10.6	Compliance with Other Policies	71
5.10.7	Employee Rights	72
5.11	Social Media Use	72
5.12	Confidentiality & Use of Information	73
5.13	Workplace Notices & Postings	73

5.14	Solicitation and Distribution	74
	Leave and Time Off Policies	75
6.1	Holidays	75
6.1.1	Additional Holidays	76
6.1.2	Eligibility	76
6.1.3	Holiday Compensation.....	76
6.1.4	Separation of Employment	77
6.1.5	Religious Observances.....	77
6.2	Administrative Closure Leave	77
6.2.1	Authorization of Administrative Closures	77
6.2.2	Eligibility	78
6.2.3	Administrative Closure Leave Credit	78
6.2.4	Essential Position Designation Framework	79
6.2.4.1	Tier 1 — Always Essential.....	79
6.2.4.2	Tier 2 — Conditionally Essential.....	80
6.2.5	Expectations During Closures.....	80
6.2.6	Compensation During Closures	80
6.2.7	Designation Process	81
6.2.8	Treatment of Exempt Employees.....	81
6.2.9	Relationship to Other Leave	82
6.2.10	Use and Expiration	82
6.2.11	Recordkeeping.....	82
6.3	Annual Leave	83
6.3.1	Accrual of Annual Leave	83
6.3.2	Eligibility	83
6.3.3	Use of Annual Leave	83
6.3.4	Absences Due to Inclement Weather	84

6.3.5	Carryover	85
6.3.6	Separation of Employment	85
6.4	Sick Leave.....	85
6.4.1	Eligibility	86
6.4.2	Use of Sick Leave	86
6.4.3	Carryover	87
6.4.4	Separation of Employment	87
6.5	Bereavement Leave.....	88
6.6	Civic Leave	88
6.6.1	Voting Leave.....	89
6.6.2	Military Leave.....	89
6.6.3	Veterans Day Leave.....	91
6.6.4	Jury and Witness Duty Leave	91
6.6.5	Emergency Responder Leave	92
6.7	Other Leave.....	92
6.8	Leave Without Pay.....	93
6.9	Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)	94
6.9.1	Eligibility	94
6.9.2	Key Employee Rule	94
6.9.3	Qualifying Reasons	95
6.9.4	Amount of Leave	95
6.9.5	Intermittent Leave or Reduced Work Schedule.....	96
6.9.6	Employee Notice Requirements	96
6.9.7	Documentation and Certification.....	96
6.9.8	Designation of Leave	97
6.9.9	Compensation During Leave	97
6.9.10	Return to Work and Employment Status.....	97

6.9.11	Interpretation of Terms.....	98
6.10	Tennessee Parental Leave Act	98
6.11	Paid Maternity Leave	99
6.12	Non-FMLA Medical Leave	100
6.12.1	Eligibility.....	100
6.12.2	Requesting Leave	100
6.12.3	Compensation During Leave.....	100
6.12.4	Employment Status After Leave	100
6.12.5	Returning from Leave	101
6.13	Employee Benefits During Leave	101
6.14	Leave Recordkeeping.....	102
Employee Benefits and Programs		103
7.1	Benefits Eligibility and Enrollment	103
7.1.1	Eligibility	103
7.1.2	Effective Dates.....	103
7.1.3	Enrollment Process	104
7.1.4	Dependent Coverage	104
7.1.5	Open Enrollment and Qualifying Events.....	104
7.1.6	Additional Information	105
7.2	Group Health Insurance and Wellness Benefits	105
7.2.1	Fair Share Provision.....	105
7.2.2	Prescription Drug Program and Reimbursement Arrangements	106
7.2.3	Group Life and Disability Benefits.....	106
7.2.4	Sevier County Wellness Clinic	106
7.2.5	Employee Assistance Program (EAP)	106
7.3	Voluntary Supplemental Benefits	106
7.4	Sevier County Fitness Center.....	107

7.4.1	Eligibility and Access	107
7.4.2	Access Procedures	107
7.4.3	Annual Renewal.....	108
7.4.4	User Responsibilities	108
7.4.5	Additional Requirements	108
7.4.6	Definitions.....	109
7.5	Retiree Insurance Benefits	109
7.5.1	Retiree Eligibility.....	109
7.5.2	Spouse Eligibility.....	109
7.5.3	Election	110
7.5.4	Coverage Continuation and Termination.....	110
7.5.5	Premium Responsibility.....	111
7.5.6	Officials Eligibility	111
7.6	Retiree Wellness Clinic Benefit.....	112
7.6.1	Employee Eligibility	112
7.6.2	Spouse Eligibility.....	112
7.6.3	Election	112
7.6.5	Premium Responsibility.....	113
7.6.5	Officials Eligibility	113
7.6.6	Benefit Details	113
7.7	Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System (TCRS).....	114
7.8	Workers' Compensation	114
7.9	COBRA Continuation Coverage.....	115
	Code of Conduct	116
8.1	General Standards of Conduct	116
8.2	Political Activity	117
8.2.1	Prohibited Political Activities	117

8.3	Destruction and Tampering of Governmental Records	117
	Additional Provisions.....	119
9.1	Severability	119
9.2	Other Policies.....	119
9.3	Volunteer Handbook.....	120
	Employee Handbook Acknowledgement	121
	Employee Acknowledgement and Receipt of Harassment Policy.....	122

Introduction

Sevier County Government created this Employee Handbook to furnish employees with essential information regarding personnel policies, employment conditions, and benefits. These policies have been adopted by the Sevier County Board of Commissioners under Tennessee Code Annotated (T.C.A) § 5-23-101 et seq. and serve to guide administrative actions in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local laws.

This handbook outlines personnel policies, pay practices, general employment provisions, employee benefits, and standards of conduct. However, it does not encompass every aspect of employment. Sevier County Government reserves the right to modify, revoke, suspend, or change any policies, benefits, or practices described in this handbook at any time, in accordance with applicable law. Only policies and procedures formally adopted by resolution of the Sevier County Board of Commissioners or enacted by the County Mayor or their designee as part of the Executive function, are binding on the County.

Nothing in this handbook constitutes or creates an express or implied contract of employment or a guarantee of continued employment for any specific duration. All Sevier County employees are employed at-will, meaning either the employee or the County may terminate the employment relationship at any time, with or without cause or prior notice, so long as the action is not discriminatory or otherwise unlawful under applicable law.

Sevier County Government is an Equal Opportunity Employer and complies with all applicable state and federal laws including, but not limited to, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA), the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA), the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA), and other applicable laws.

These policies and benefits do not apply to officials or employees of the Sevier County Department of Education or to employees of elected officials who maintain separate personnel policies, where such policies conflict with or supplement this handbook. Additionally, public safety departments may adopt supplemental policies to address operational needs.

The effective date of this revised handbook is July 1, 2026. It applies prospectively and is intended to guide all administrative personnel actions unless superseded by law. If any provision of this handbook is found to conflict with local, state, or federal law, the applicable law shall prevail.

This handbook supersedes prior personnel policies and practices to the extent they are inconsistent with its provisions. Requests for policy revision may be submitted in writing for consideration and approval by the County Commission. Employees are expected to comply with all current and future policies throughout their employment.

Employment Terms and Conditions

1.1 Employment at Will

Employment with Sevier County Government is on an at-will basis unless otherwise stated in a written employment agreement signed by the County Mayor or their designee. This means that either the employee or the County may terminate the employment relationship at any time, for any lawful reason, with or without notice.

This handbook, along with any other document provided to the employee, does not establish or imply an employment agreement, whether express or implied. It should not be interpreted as a commitment to continue employment or any benefits for any specific duration. Furthermore, no County representative has the authority to alter the at-will nature of employment except through a written agreement approved and signed by the County Mayor or their designee. All policies, procedures, and benefits are subject to change at the discretion of the County and should not be relied upon as a guarantee of future terms or conditions.

Any salary figures provided to an employee in annual or monthly terms are stated for convenience or comparative purposes only. These figures do not establish an employment contract for any specific duration. Changes to salary or benefits may be made at any time in accordance with applicable law and County policy and does not create a contractual obligation or guarantee of continued employment.

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

To ensure compliance with the NLRA, Sevier County Government is committed to upholding employees' rights to engage in protected concerted activities. Employees are encouraged to bring any concerns regarding NLRA rights to their supervisor or the Human Resources department. Allegations of retaliation or other violations will be reviewed and addressed in accordance with County procedures.

1.2 Employment Eligibility Verification

Sevier County Government is committed to employing only individuals who are legally authorized to work in the United States, whether they are U.S. citizens or noncitizens authorized to work. Discrimination based on citizenship, immigration status, or national origin, as prohibited under the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), is strictly prohibited.

In compliance with the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, all newly hired employees must complete Section 1 of the Employment Eligibility Verification Form (Form I-9) on or before their first day of employment. Employees must present acceptable documentation verifying identity and employment authorization within three (3) business days of their start date, as required by federal law.

Employees are permitted to choose which acceptable documents to present from the lists provided on Form I-9. Sevier County Government will not request or require specific documents and will not reject valid documentation that reasonably appears to be genuine and relates to the employee.

Sevier County Government participates in the E-Verify program, an internet-based system operated by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in partnership with the Social Security Administration, to confirm the employment eligibility of newly hired employees in accordance with applicable law.

1.3 Equal Employment Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination

Sevier County Government is committed to providing a workplace free from discrimination, harassment, and retaliation, and ensuring equal employment opportunities for all employees and applicants. This policy outlines the County's standards of conduct and procedures for reporting and addressing concerns related to discrimination, harassment, reasonable accommodation, and retaliation.

1.3.1 Non-Discrimination

Sevier County Government is firmly committed to providing equal employment opportunities to all employees and applicants, irrespective of protected characteristics. As an Equal Opportunity Employer, the County prohibits discrimination or harassment based on race (including hairstyles historically associated with race such as braids, twists, locs, and afro hairstyles), gender (including pregnancy, childbirth, and pregnancy-related conditions), color, religion, creed, national origin, age, genetic information, veteran status, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, or any other basis prohibited by local, state, or federal law.

This policy applies to all employment practices, including hiring, placement, promotion, termination, layoff, recall, transfer, leave of absence, compensation, and training.

Prohibited conduct includes unlawful discrimination and harassment in any work-related setting, including electronic communications, remote work environments, and off-duty conduct that has a direct impact on the workplace.

Employees with questions or concerns regarding equal employment opportunity are encouraged to contact Human Resources, their immediate supervisor, an Official, Senior Director of Division, or Department Director. Reports will be promptly investigated and appropriate corrective action taken in accordance with applicable laws and County policies.

1.3.2 General Accommodation Policy

Sevier County Government provides reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals in accordance with applicable laws. The County engages in an interactive process to determine appropriate accommodations that do not impose an undue hardship.

The County will not require supporting documentation for a reasonable accommodation request when the limitation and need for accommodation are obvious, when the employee is requesting common accommodations related to pregnancy, or when documentation is not necessary to determine an effective accommodation, in accordance with applicable law.

1.3.3 Disability Accommodations

Sevier County Government is committed to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as amended, and all relevant state and local laws prohibiting discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities. The County adheres to the following guidelines:

- Ensuring that all qualified individuals with disabilities are treated in a nondiscriminatory manner throughout the pre-employment process and during employment, with respect to all terms, conditions, and privileges of employment.
- Administering medical examinations, such as second medical opinions or fitness for duty exams, to applicants only after conditional offers of employment have been extended, and to employees only when job-related and consistent with business necessity.
- Maintaining the confidentiality of all medical-related information, in accordance with the ADA, and retaining such information in separate, secure files.
- Providing reasonable accommodations for qualified applicants and employees with disabilities, unless doing so would impose an undue hardship on the County.

- Notifying individuals with disabilities of the County’s commitment to reasonable accommodation through inclusion of this policy in the Employee Handbook and the posting of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's “Workplace Discrimination is Illegal” poster in all County-owned facilities.

Qualified individuals with disabilities may request reasonable accommodations from the Human Resources department. While written requests are encouraged when feasible, verbal requests will also be accepted. Upon receiving an accommodation request, the Human Resources department will meet with the requesting individual to identify any limitations resulting from the disability and to discuss potential accommodations. Individuals are expected to participate in this interactive process by providing requested documentation, as needed, to assist in assessing the accommodation request.

1.3.4 Pregnancy and Childbirth Accommodations

Pursuant to the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, Sevier County Government provides reasonable accommodations on a temporary basis for an employee’s medical needs arising from pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions, unless such accommodation imposes an undue hardship on business operations as defined by law.

If an employee needs reasonable accommodation based on pregnancy, childbirth, or a related medical condition, they should promptly notify the Human Resources department as soon as possible. While written requests are encouraged when feasible, verbal requests will be accepted. Upon notification, the County will engage in an interactive process with the employee to identify and implement appropriate accommodations, considering the individual’s specific circumstances and medical needs. The County strictly prohibits discrimination against a job candidate or employee because of the need for pregnancy-related accommodation.

1.3.5 Religious Accommodations

Sevier County Government is committed to complying with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and all applicable state and local laws prohibiting discrimination based on religion. The County recognizes and respects the sincerely held religious beliefs and practices of its employees and applicants and will provide reasonable accommodations unless doing so imposes an undue hardship on business operations as defined by law.

The County adheres to the following guidelines:

- Ensuring that all applicants and employees are treated in a nondiscriminatory manner with respect to sincerely held religious beliefs, observances, and practices, in all terms, conditions, and privileges of employment.

- Providing reasonable accommodations for religious beliefs and practices—including, but not limited to, dress or grooming practices, prayer breaks, and religious holidays—unless the requested accommodation would create an undue hardship on County operations.
- Prohibiting any form of retaliation or discrimination against an employee or applicant for requesting or receiving religious accommodation.

Employees or applicants who need religious accommodation should promptly notify the Human Resources department. While written requests are encouraged when feasible, verbal requests will be accepted. Upon receiving a request, the County will engage in an interactive process with the individual to discuss the sincerely held belief or practice and to identify potential accommodations that meet the individual's needs without posing an undue hardship on County operations. Individuals are expected to participate in this interactive process and to provide additional information or documentation, as needed, to facilitate the assessment of the accommodation request.

1.3.6 Harassment

Sevier County Government is dedicated to fostering a safe, respectful, and inclusive work environment for all individuals. In line with this commitment, the County strictly prohibits harassment in the workplace based on any protected characteristic, including race (inclusive of hairstyles historically associated with race such as braids, twists, locs, and afro hairstyles), gender (inclusive of pregnancy, childbirth, and pregnancy-related conditions), color, religion, creed, national origin, age, genetic information, veteran status, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, or any other basis prohibited by local, state, or federal law.

This policy applies to all employees and Officials of Sevier County Government. Harassment by co-workers, supervisors, associates, clients, or any other non-employees conducting business with the County will not be tolerated.

Harassment is defined as any verbal, written, or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual based on their legally protected status. This includes behavior that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment, unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance, or otherwise adversely affects employment opportunities. Examples include, but are not limited to epithets, slurs, jokes, pranks, innuendo, comments, written or graphic material, and stereotyping.

Harassment may occur in any work-related setting, including electronic communications, remote work environments, and off-duty conduct that has a direct impact on the workplace.

1.3.6.1 Sexual Harassment

Sevier County Government specifically prohibits sexual harassment in the workplace. Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or any other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that creates a hostile work environment or affects employment decisions.

Sexual harassment can occur between individuals of any gender and may involve persons of the same gender.

1.3.6.2 Consensual Romantic or Sexual Relationships

While Sevier County Government does not prohibit consensual romantic or sexual relationships between employees, such relationships must be based on mutual consent and must not interfere with job performance or the work environment. Employees involved in such relationships are expected to maintain professionalism during work hours and in any work-related context.

1.3.6.3 Retaliation

Sevier County Government strictly prohibits retaliation or reprisal against employees who:

- Raise concerns regarding equal employment opportunities,
- Make good faith complaints or reports of harassment or discrimination,
- Assist in investigations,
- Request accommodations based on pregnancy, disability, or religion, or
- Participate in any legal or administrative proceeding related to discrimination or harassment.

Any employee who believes they have experienced retaliation or intimidation should promptly report it to the Director of Human Resources or the County Mayor. All allegations will be investigated promptly and handled with appropriate confidentiality.

Any confirmed instance of retaliation or intimidation will be addressed and corrected in accordance with applicable laws and County policies. Sevier County Government is committed to providing a workplace where employees feel safe and supported when exercising their rights and reporting concerns.

1.3.6.4 Reporting and Resolution Procedures

Any employee who believes they have been subject to, or witnessed, violations of the Equal Employment Opportunity policy, including discrimination or harassment, is strongly encouraged to make a formal complaint. Regardless of the perpetrator's role, employees are urged to address the offender directly—if comfortable—and clearly state that the behavior is unwelcome and must stop.

If direct communication is not effective or appropriate, the employee may report the incident to their supervisor, Official, Senior Director of Division, Department Director, or any member of management with whom they are comfortable. Employees may also report directly to Human Resources. Employees may report concerns anonymously through any reporting mechanism established by the County, where available.

Supervisors and managerial employees are required to report any conduct that may constitute harassment or discrimination, even if unsure whether the behavior meets the threshold for a violation.

Upon receiving a complaint, Sevier County Government will promptly conduct a thorough and impartial investigation, maintaining confidentiality to the extent possible. Following the investigation, the responsible supervisor or designee, in consultation with Human Resources, will determine whether a policy violation occurred and recommend appropriate action. If the County Mayor is the subject of the complaint, the Chairman of the County Commission Intergovernmental Affairs Committee will make the determination.

If a violation is substantiated, Sevier County Government will take immediate and appropriate corrective action, up to and including termination. The County may review concerns regarding the outcome at its discretion.

Employment Status and Classification

2.1 Employment Classifications

The following definitions describe the types of employment under Sevier County Government for the purposes of salary administration, eligibility for overtime payments, and employee benefits. All classifications are determined in accordance with applicable federal and state law, including U.S. Department of Labor regulations governing employee classification.

2.1.1 Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) Classifications

- Non-Exempt – Employees who, based on their job duties, are subject to the requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), including provisions for minimum wage and overtime pay.
- Exempt – Employees who, based on their job duties and method of compensation, are not subject to the FLSA's requirements regarding minimum wage and overtime pay, as defined by FLSA exemption criteria.

2.1.2 Employment Types

- Regular – An employee who works a consistent schedule for an indefinite period.
- Non-Regular- An employee who works an irregular or as-needed schedule and is not assigned a consistent number of hours per week.
- Temporary – An employee who is engaged to work on either a full-time or part-time basis for a specific, limited period. A temporary appointment shall not exceed twelve (12) months. Employees hired through temporary employment agencies for specific assignments are considered employees of the respective agency and not of Sevier County Government. Exceptions to the twelve (12) month limitation may be considered on a case-by-case basis by the County Mayor or their designee.
- Seasonal – An employee who works during a specific season or period, typically for a short duration due to school schedules, peak workloads, or other cyclical demands. These employees are paid on an hourly basis and are eligible for overtime pay for hours worked in excess of forty (40) hours in a workweek, in accordance with the FLSA.

2.1.3 Work Schedule Types

- Full-Time – An employee who is regularly scheduled to work an average of thirty (30) hours or more per week. A lookback measurement period may be used to determine full-time status in accordance with Affordable Care Act (ACA) guidelines.
- Part-Time – An employee scheduled to work less than an average of thirty (30) hours per week.

2.1.4 Other Employment Categorizes

- Student Workers – Individuals working for the County as part of a high school or collegiate internship or practicum required to complete academic credit. Student workers may be paid or unpaid only when the arrangement meets all applicable federal and state wage and hour requirements for unpaid internships. Student worker arrangements must also comply with the provisions outlined in the Sevier County Government Volunteer and Internship Program and/or Handbook, as applicable.
- Appointed Employees – Some positions may be classified as appointed by an Elected Official, with the approval of the County Mayor or their designee. Appointed positions are often classified as exempt based on job duties and compensation, in accordance with FLSA requirements, but are not excluded from participation in the standard hiring process as outlined below.

Before accepting any position, the classification(s) of the position will be disclosed to the employee. If an employee changes positions during employment due to promotion, transfer, or other circumstances, the Human Resources department will notify them of any change in classification or status.

All positions are designated within the *Classification and Compensation Policy*, which includes the corresponding “FLSA Type,” “Employee Type,” and “Schedule Type,” and may also include an “Other Type” designation where applicable. All position classifications and the *Classification and Compensation Policy* itself are determined by the County Mayor or their designee in accordance with the *Classification and Compensation Policy*.

2.2 Initial Employment Period

All newly hired employees shall serve a ninety (90) calendar day initial employment period beginning on the first day of employment. This period is intended to provide time for the employee to adjust to the new position and for Sevier County Government to evaluate the employee’s performance, conduct, and overall suitability for continued employment. Completion of the initial employment period does not alter the at-will nature of employment.

During this period, the employee's supervisor will assess work performance, attitude, compatibility with the position and team, and other job-related factors. It is recommended that the supervisor conduct a comprehensive performance evaluation no later than two (2) weeks prior to the conclusion of the initial employment period. The supervisor may meet with the employee to discuss the evaluation and provide feedback regarding strengths, areas for improvement, and any necessary corrective action.

A supervisor may initiate a performance evaluation and recommend disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, in accordance with County policy at any time during the initial employment period.

2.3 Promotions and Transfers

Sevier County Government is committed to providing career advancement opportunities through promotions and transfers that align with operational needs and employee development.

2.3.1 Promotions

Sevier County Government is committed to providing promotional opportunities to qualified employees whenever feasible. Employees are encouraged to pursue such opportunities by enhancing their qualifications through additional education and training, consistently demonstrating strong job performance, maintaining reliable attendance, and showing a willingness to take on additional responsibilities.

To be considered for promotion, an employee must meet the following criteria, unless an exception is approved by the County Mayor or their designee.

- Successful completion of the initial transition period of employment;
- No recent disciplinary action that would impact the employee's ability to perform in the new role, as determined by the County; and
- Possession of the minimum qualifications specified in the applicable job description.

All promotional decisions will be made in accordance with applicable laws and policies, including the County's commitment to equal employment opportunity.

2.3.2 Transfers

Transfers may be initiated by an Official, Senior Director of Division, or Director of Department based on operational needs such as workforce reduction, changes in organizational structure, reallocation of resources, or

other legitimate business reasons. In such cases, employees may be transferred to a different position or department without a significant change in classification or pay, as appropriate.

An employee who declines a transfer initiated by the County may be subject to appropriate action based on operational needs and applicable County policies.

Employees may also request a voluntary transfer to another position. To be considered for a voluntary transfer, an employee must meet the following criteria unless an exception is approved in accordance with County policy:

- Successful completion of the initial transition period of employment;
- No recent disciplinary action that would impact the employee's ability to perform in the new role, as determined by the County;
- A job-related reason supporting the transfer request; and
- No recent voluntary transfer that would impact operational continuity, as determined by the County.

All transfer decisions will be made in accordance with applicable laws and policies, including the County's commitment to equal employment opportunity.

2.4 Voluntary Demotions

Employees may voluntarily request a demotion to a position in a lower classification. Such requests must be submitted in writing to the appropriate Official, Senior Division Director, or Department Director. Employees may also apply for vacant positions that are classified at a lower level than their current position.

All voluntary demotions are subject to review and approval at the discretion of the County, based on operational needs and the qualifications of the employee. The classification and compensation associated with a voluntary demotion will be determined in accordance with the Sevier County Government *Classification and Compensation Plan*.

2.5 Administrative Demotions

Sevier County Government reserves the right to reassign or demote an employee to a position in a lower classification based on performance, disciplinary action, operational needs, or other legitimate business reasons.

Such actions will be taken in accordance with applicable laws and County policies. Compensation and classification adjustments will be determined in accordance with the Sevier County Government *Classification and Compensation Plan*.

2.6 Dual and Outside Employment

Sevier County Government permits employees to hold secondary employment, either within or outside the organization, provided they obtain prior written approval. This includes both dual employment (multiple positions within the County) and outside employment (employment with non-County entities). All secondary employment must not interfere with an employee's primary County responsibilities, create a conflict of interest, or violate wage and hour laws.

2.6.1 Dual Employment Within the County

Dual employment occurs when a full-time employee in one department simultaneously holds a part-time, consulting, or contractual position in another department within Sevier County Government. For full-time employees, any additional employment is considered secondary. Participation in specialty or cross-functional teams within the primary position is not considered dual employment.

Employees seeking to hold multiple positions within Sevier County Government must submit a written request to the Human Resources department for review and approval. The request must include the position titles, departments, and scheduled hours for each role, and an explanation of how the employee will meet the responsibilities of both positions.

Approval is required from both the Human Resources department as well as from the directors or officials of both departments. It is the responsibility of both departments to ensure that the secondary role does not create a conflict of interest, interfere with the performance of the primary role, or result in a violation of wage and hour laws. Scheduling conflicts must be resolved in favor of the primary position.

Employees may begin working in the secondary position only after receiving written approval from all required parties. All hours worked across both positions must be accurately reported and tracked in compliance with Sevier County Government's payroll and timekeeping policies. Overtime eligibility will be determined in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), based on the combined hours worked across both positions. All hours worked must be recorded and compensated in accordance with applicable wage and hour laws, regardless of whether the work was authorized.

If a dual employment arrangement is terminated, the department initiating the termination must promptly notify the other department and Human Resources. A determination will then be made jointly as to whether the employee will continue in either or both positions.

2.6.2 Outside Employment

Employees of Sevier County Government may engage in outside employment only with prior written approval from their Elected Official, Senior Division Director, or Department Director. Such outside employment must not interfere with the employee's ability to perform the duties of their primary position or create a conflict of interest.

Employees who are required to respond to emergencies as part of their County duties must report to duty when required upon notification, even if they are engaged in outside employment at the time. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

If outside employment is determined to be incompatible with County duties—due to performance concerns, scheduling conflicts, or the appearance of a conflict of interest—the employee may be required to discontinue such outside employment as a condition of continued employment with the County.

Prohibited Types of Outside Employment:

- Employment that involves receiving a fee, gift, or anything of monetary value in a manner that creates, or appears to create, a conflict of interest.
- Employment that impairs the employee's physical or mental capacity in a way that adversely affects performance in their County position.
- Employment that interferes with the employee's ability to fulfill official County responsibilities.
- Employment that creates a conflict of interest or adversely impacts the County's operations or public trust.

Restrictions on Outside Employment Activities:

- Outside employment must not involve the use of County time, property, equipment, supplies, or other resources unless expressly authorized in writing by an appropriate director or Official.
- Employees must not use or disclose confidential or non-public information obtained through their County position in connection with outside employment.

- Employees must not use their official title, position, or any statement of affiliation with Sevier County Government in connection with outside employment in a manner that suggests official sponsorship or endorsement.
- Employees must not engage in outside employment that involves conducting business with County subordinates, to avoid the appearance of favoritism, coercion, or conflict of interest.

2.7 Specialty Teams and Interdepartmental Assignments

Sevier County Government may assign or permit employees to participate in specialty teams, interdepartmental assignments, or multi-agency operations established to support public safety, emergency response, or other operational needs.

Participation in such assignments is considered part of the employee's County employment and must not interfere with the employee's primary job responsibilities unless otherwise directed by the County. Employees are expected to comply with all applicable County policies, including those related to timekeeping, compensation, workplace conduct, and safety.

The structure, roles, and operational responsibilities of specialty teams may be defined through departmental procedures, interlocal agreements, or memoranda of understanding (MOUs), as applicable. Employees participating in such assignments are required to follow the terms and expectations outlined in those governing documents.

Compensation, scheduling, and hours worked in connection with specialty team participation will be administered in accordance with applicable federal and state law and County policy.

Participation in any specialty team, interdepartmental assignment, or multi-agency operation is subject to approval by the employee's Department Head and may require approval from the County Mayor or their designee, as applicable. Approval to participate in a specialty assignment does not guarantee continued participation. Such approval may be modified, suspended, or revoked at any time, with or without cause, based on operational needs, performance considerations, budgetary constraints, staffing requirements, policy violations, or any other factor determined to be in the County's best interest.

2.8 Job-Related Examinations

Sevier County Government requires that current employees and applicants who have received a conditional offer of employment undergo job-related medical or physical examinations as determined to be job-related and consistent with business necessity, in accordance with applicable federal and state laws. When an examination is required for a specific position, all applicants receiving a conditional offer for that position will be subject to the same examination requirement.

In addition to pre-employment examinations, current employees may be required to undergo medical examinations at other times when such examinations are job-related and consistent with business necessity. Circumstances that may warrant such examinations include, but are not limited to, exposure to hazardous conditions, requests for reasonable accommodation due to a disability, or when there are legitimate concerns about an employee's ability to perform essential job functions due to a medical condition.

Medical examination records maintained by the County are considered confidential medical records in accordance with applicable law and are stored separately from general personnel files. Examination results may be disclosed only as permitted by law, including to the employee, individuals authorized in writing by the employee, or other entities as required for business necessity or legal compliance.

2.8.1 Background Checks

Sevier County Government conducts background checks through an approved provider after extending a conditional offer of employment. The scope of the screening varies by position and may include criminal history, sex offender registry, employment and education verification, motor vehicle records, and license or certification verification.

Background checks are used solely to assess job-related qualifications and are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. A prior conviction will not automatically disqualify a candidate. If background check results may impact employment eligibility, the applicant will be provided appropriate notice and an opportunity to respond, in accordance with the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA).

All background check results are treated confidentially and maintained separately from personnel files.

Background checks may also be required for current employees under certain circumstances, such as consideration for internal transfers or promotions, reasonable, job-related concerns, changes in job responsibilities requiring additional clearance, or compliance with applicable laws or licensing requirements. Employees will be notified, and consent obtained, prior to any additional screening.

2.9 Rehire Eligibility

Former employees who separated voluntarily with proper notice, as defined in *Section 2.10.1 – Resignations*, or who were separated due to circumstances beyond their control, and whose prior employment record is deemed satisfactory by the County, may be considered eligible for rehire.

Reemployment is not guaranteed and is subject to the needs of the department and the qualifications of the applicant at the time of the vacancy.

Please note that prior service with Sevier County Government will not be credited toward benefit accruals (such as leave or seniority) upon rehire, unless otherwise required by law or specified in County policy.

2.10 Separation from Employment

The following policies and procedures have been established by Sevier County Government to govern both voluntary and involuntary separations of employment.

2.10.1 Resignations

Employees wishing to terminate their employment must submit a signed, written resignation at least two (2) weeks in advance. The County reserves the right to accept a resignation immediately or to designate an earlier separation date. In such cases, the employee will be compensated for all hours actually worked through their final day of employment.

Employees may request to withdraw their resignation up to the end of their last day worked; however, the County is under no obligation to approve such requests once the resignation has been submitted.

2.10.2 Retirement

Employees planning to retire are encouraged to provide a minimum of two (2) months' notice to allow adequate time for processing retirement paperwork and ensuring timely commencement of retirement benefits.

2.10.3 Job Abandonment

Employees who fail to report to work or contact their supervisor for three (3) consecutive scheduled workdays will be considered to have abandoned their position and may be separated from employment. Supervisors must notify the Human Resources department immediately upon the third day of unexcused absence so that termination

procedures may be initiated. Employees separated due to job abandonment may be deemed ineligible for rehire based on the circumstances.

2.10.4 Terminations and Dismissals

Employees may be dismissed from employment for reasons including, but not limited to, unsatisfactory performance, misconduct, or violation of County policies. Dismissals shall be conducted in a fair and consistent manner, which may include verbal and/or written warnings, performance improvement plans, or other corrective actions as appropriate to the situation.

Employees may be provided with notice of dismissal in accordance with applicable laws and County procedures. Final pay and benefits will be administered in accordance with federal and state law. Employees must return all County property prior to or upon dismissal. All dismissal actions will comply with applicable laws and regulations.

2.10.5 Employment References

When contacted as a reference source for current or former employees, Sevier County Government will generally limit information provided to the employee's name, position(s) held, dates of employment, and rehire eligibility, unless otherwise required or permitted by law.

2.10.6 Return of County Property

Employees are responsible for returning all County-owned materials, including but not limited to books, computers, software, data, files, keys, identification badges, and written records, that were issued to them, developed by them, or otherwise in their possession or control. All such items must be returned to the employee's supervisor, Official, Senior Division Director, Department Director, or the Human Resources department no later than the employee's final day of employment. Additional guidance on returning County assets is outlined in the *Asset Management Policy*.

Work Hours, Timekeeping, and Compensation

3.1 Workweek and Hours of Work

The standard workweek for all departments and offices begins at 12:00 a.m. on Monday and ends at 11:59 p.m. on the following Sunday for purposes of payroll and overtime calculations. Certain departments may have a designated workweek that differs based on operational needs, provided it is consistently applied and documented.

Each employee's work schedule is determined based on their position and operational requirements. Work schedules are assigned by the employee's supervisor based on departmental staffing plans and operational needs. While most full-time employees are expected to work forty (40) hours per week, specific scheduling – such as staggered shifts, rotating coverage, or alternate start-times – may be implemented to ensure adequate service coverage and compliance with applicable laws and policies.

Work hours may vary by department and role. Daily and weekly schedules are subject to change at the discretion of management in response to operational needs, emergency situations, or workload fluctuations. Supervisors will provide as much advance notice of schedule changes as reasonably possible and will coordinate such changes with affected employees whenever feasible.

3.2 Meals and Breaks

Lunch breaks typically range from thirty (30) minutes to one (1) hour, depending on business necessity and the operational requirements of each office or department. In accordance with Tennessee law (T.C.A. § 50-2-103) and the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA):

- All non-exempt employees who are scheduled to work six (6) or more consecutive hours must be provided with an unpaid, uninterrupted meal break of at least thirty (30) minutes, unless the nature of the work allows for frequent paid breaks.
- Employees must be completely relieved of all work duties during their meal period. If they are required to perform any work-related tasks or remain on-call and unable to use the time effectively for their own purposes, the time must be considered compensable under the FLSA.
- Non-exempt employees are required to clock out for unpaid meal breaks unless otherwise required due to the compensable nature of the break or established departmental timekeeping practices.

- Employees should be relieved of work duties during unpaid meal periods and may leave their immediate work area when operationally feasible.
- Meal breaks will be provided in accordance with applicable law and may be scheduled based on departmental operations, provided all legal requirements are met.

3.2.1 Paid Breaks

While not required by law, paid breaks may be provided to support employee well-being and productivity. If granted, the following conditions apply:

- Employees may be permitted up to two (2) paid fifteen (15) minute breaks per day—one in the morning and one in the afternoon—subject to operational needs and supervisor approval.
- Employees are not required to clock out for paid breaks.
- Employees who choose not to take paid breaks are not entitled to additional pay or extended work time in lieu of the break.
- Supervisors should make a reasonable effort to ensure that employees can take paid breaks, but it is the employee's responsibility to take breaks at appropriate times.

3.2.2 Standard Break Options

Employees may, with supervisor approval, choose between the following standard arrangements:

1. A 30-minute unpaid lunch break and two 15-minute paid breaks (morning and afternoon); or
2. A 1-hour lunch break, with 30 minutes unpaid and 30 minutes treated as compensable time in accordance with departmental practices and applicable law, and no additional rest breaks.

3.2.3 Emergency Services and On-Call Personnel

Meal and paid break provisions for on-call personnel or those assigned to emergency services may differ due to the nature of their roles. These employees may be required to remain available for immediate response, in which case break time may be considered compensable under FLSA. Department-specific protocols may further define how such breaks are scheduled and compensated.

3.2.4 Nursing Mothers

Sevier County Government is committed to complying with federal and state law by providing reasonable break time and a private location for employees to express breast milk upon returning to work after the birth of a child.

In accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), as amended by the Providing Urgent Maternal Protections (PUMP) for Nursing Mothers Act, and applicable Tennessee law, Sevier County Government will provide:

- Reasonable break times each time an employee has a need to express milk for up to one (1) year following the birth of a child; and
- A private, functional space—other than a bathroom—that is shielded from view, free from intrusion by coworkers and the public, and reasonably available for the purpose of expressing breast milk.

Employees are encouraged to notify the Human Resources Department in advance of their need for lactation accommodations so that appropriate arrangements can be made to support employee needs and department operations.

Break time for expressing breast milk may run concurrently with any break time already provided to the employee. Non-exempt employees will not be compensated for lactation breaks unless the employee is not completely relieved from duty during the break, in which case the time will be considered compensable under the FLSA.

If an employee believes that Sevier County Government has not adequately provided a private space or sufficient break time for expressing breast milk, the employee should notify the Human Resources Department, County Mayor or their designee. Upon receipt of such notice, the County will make a reasonable good faith effort to resolve the issue as promptly as practicable.

The County strictly prohibits retaliation against any employee for requesting or using lactation accommodations.

3.3 Timekeeping Requirements

All employees are required to accurately record and submit time records using the approved electronic timekeeping system provided by Sevier County Government. Non-exempt employees must record all hours worked. Exempt employees are required to report their time in accordance with County procedures for purposes of payroll processing, leave tracking, and administrative oversight.

Time records must be completed and submitted each pay period for supervisor review and approval. Supervisors are responsible for timely reviewing, verifying, and approving employee time records to ensure accuracy and compliance with all applicable policies and laws. Supervisors may not alter an employee's recorded time without the employee's knowledge and appropriate documentation. Official time records are maintained by the County Mayor's Office.

All work performed must be recorded, regardless of whether it was authorized. Employees will be compensated for all hours worked but may be subject to disciplinary action for failure to obtain proper authorization. Working "off-the-clock" (performing work without recording hours) by non-exempt employees is prohibited. If an employee is instructed or requested by a supervisor to work off-the-clock, they must accurately record all time worked and promptly report the incident to Human Resources or the County Mayor. Anonymous reporting is available, and Sevier County prohibits retaliation for good-faith reporting of violations.

Time entries must accurately reflect all hours worked. Time may be rounded to the nearest fifteen (15) minute increment using a consistent and neutral rounding practice that does not, over time, result in the failure to compensate employees for all hours worked. Rounding practices will be applied in a manner that complies with applicable wage and hour laws and will not systematically favor the County or the employee.

If an employee identifies an error or discrepancy in their time record, they must promptly notify their supervisor or Human Resources. Corrections must be documented and submitted through the approved timekeeping system with supervisory approval.

Any falsification, alteration, or intentional misrepresentation of time records by an employee or supervisor is a serious violation of T.C.A. § 39-16-504 and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

3.4 Overtime

Overtime refers to hours worked beyond the applicable threshold established by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), which is typically forty (40) hours in a standard workweek unless an alternate work period applies. Non-exempt employees may receive compensatory time off in lieu of cash payment for overtime, in accordance with FLSA requirements and *Section 3.5 – Compensatory Time*. Departments that provide cash payment for overtime must establish written terms through a memorandum approved by the County Mayor. Overtime pay or compensatory time earned will normally be reflected in the employee's next regularly scheduled paycheck or timekeeping record.

Law enforcement and fire protection personnel follow alternative work periods as defined by the Fair Labor Standards Act. Law enforcement personnel work a fourteen (14) consecutive-day work period, with overtime calculated for hours worked in excess of eighty-six (86) hours. Fire protection personnel work a twenty-eight (28) consecutive-day work period, with overtime calculated for hours worked in excess of two hundred twelve (212) hours.

For overtime purposes, “time worked” includes all actual hours worked and excludes paid leave such as holidays, sick leave, annual leave, administrative closure leave, bereavement leave, or civic leave. All overtime worked must be recorded and will be compensated in accordance with applicable law, regardless of whether prior authorization was obtained.

Non-exempt employees must obtain advance authorization from their supervisor and approval from their Official, Senior Division Director, or Department Director before working any overtime. Failure to secure authorization may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Exempt employees are not entitled to overtime pay or compensatory time. They are expected to fulfill the duties of their position regardless of hours worked.

3.5 Compensatory Time

Compensatory time (Comp Time) allows non-exempt employees to take paid time off in lieu of receiving overtime pay, in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Compensatory time is accrued at a rate of one and one-half hours for each hour of overtime worked.

Each department is responsible for maintaining accurate records of compensatory time earned and used. All compensatory time must be documented in the official timekeeping system and reported to the Finance Department. Failure to accurately record or report compensatory time may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring compliance with applicable wage and hour laws and confirming that employees are properly compensated for all qualifying hours.

3.5.1 Accrual of Compensatory Time

Non-exempt employees may accrue up to two hundred forty (240) hours of compensatory time. Employees engaged in public safety, emergency response, or seasonal activities may accrue up to four hundred eighty (480) hours. Once the maximum accrual is reached, any additional overtime must be paid as cash wages.

The County will review compensatory time balances periodically and process payouts on a semiannual basis, typically on the first payroll in June and the first payroll in December, at the employee's current regular rate of pay. Employees should refer to the payroll calendar for deadlines related to compensatory time use and payout processing.

Supervisors are responsible for making a good faith effort to allow employees to use accrued compensatory time within a reasonable period, provided such use does not unduly disrupt department operations, in accordance with FLSA standards.

In limited circumstances, and with supervisory approval, employees may retain accrued compensatory time beyond a scheduled payout when a planned and approved absence is scheduled within a reasonable timeframe following the payout date.

Employees working under grants or contracts may accrue compensatory time only if authorized in advance and consistent with the terms of the applicable agreement.

3.5.2 Use of Compensatory Time

Accrued compensatory time should be used prior to annual leave, when feasible and consistent with operational needs. Employees may use accrued compensatory time with prior notice and supervisory approval, provided the absence does not unduly disrupt department operations.

When compensatory time is used during a workweek, only the amount necessary to offset hours worked up to forty (40) hours will be deducted. Compensatory time may not be used to create additional paid time in excess of the standard workweek.

3.5.3 Changes in Employment

Non-exempt employees promoted or transferred into exempt positions will be paid for their accrued compensatory time at their non-exempt rate prior to the change in status.

Upon separation, employees will be paid for all unused compensatory time at the higher of:

1. The employee's final regular rate; or
2. The average regular rate over the last three (3) years of employment, in accordance with FLSA.

Employees who are appointed or elected to public office will likewise be paid out for all accrued compensatory time at their non-exempt rate prior to assuming their new role.

3.6 Flexible Scheduling for Exempt Employees

Exempt employees may be permitted to adjust their work schedule, known as “Flex Time” (or “Puck Time”), with prior approval from their Official, Senior Director of Division, or Director of Department. Flex Time allows for temporary adjustments to daily or weekly schedules to accommodate workload demands or personal needs, provided employees continue to meet the responsibilities of their position.

Exempt employees are expected to maintain a full work schedule consistent with the expectations of their position, generally equivalent to an 80-hour pay period. Flex Time is intended for short-term schedule adjustments within a pay period and may not be carried over into future pay periods, recorded as compensatory time, or result in additional compensation.

In situations where an exempt employee works significant hours and is unable to utilize Flex Time within the same pay period due to operational demands, the employee may request Other Time in accordance with *Section 6.7 – Other Time*.

The County Mayor retains authority to review and override the use of Flex Time in cases of abuse or inappropriate application. Departments are responsible for ensuring Flex Time practices are applied consistently and in compliance with applicable laws and County policy.

3.7 Travel Time, Training, and Compensable Hours

Sevier County Government complies with the Fair Labor Standards Act and applicable regulations regarding compensable time. This section establishes guidelines for determining when travel, training, and related activities are considered hours worked for non-exempt employees.

Compensable time includes all hours during which a non-exempt employee is required or permitted to perform work for the benefit of the County.

3.7.1 Ordinary Commuting

Normal travel between an employee’s residence and their regular worksite is not considered hours worked and is not compensable.

3.7.2 Travel During the Workday

Travel that occurs as part of an employee's principal work activities is considered compensable time. This includes travel between job sites and travel to attend meetings, training, or other work-related functions.

3.7.3 Overnight Travel

Travel that requires an employee to remain away from home overnight for official County business is considered compensable when it occurs during the employee's normal working hours, regardless of the day of travel.

When an employee is required to operate a vehicle as part of work-related travel, the time spent driving is considered compensable work time. When an employee is traveling as a passenger in an automobile, airplane, train, bus, or other mode of transportation outside of their normal working hours, such time is generally not compensable unless the employee performs work while traveling. Travel as a passenger during the employee's normal working hours remains compensable in accordance with applicable law.

Supervisors should, when practicable, schedule travel during normal working hours to minimize overtime or compensatory time.

3.7.4 Training, Meetings, and Required Attendance

Time spent attending training programs, meetings, conferences, or other work-related events is considered compensable unless all the following conditions are met:

- Attendance is outside normal working hours
- Attendance is voluntary
- The activity is not directly related to the employee's job
- The employee performs no productive work during attendance

If any of these conditions are not met, the time is considered hours worked and must be recorded.

3.7.5 Work Performed During Travel

Any work performed while traveling, including but not limited to responding to calls, emails, or performing assigned duties, is compensable and must be recorded as hours worked.

3.7.6 Crew Rest and Fatigue Management (Public Safety Personnel)

Employees assigned to emergency response or public safety functions may be subject to crew rest or fatigue management requirements based on the nature of their duties.

Crew rest practices are established at the departmental level through standard operating guidelines or procedures and may vary based on operational needs, call volume, and staffing conditions. These practices are intended to promote employee safety, operational readiness, and compliance with applicable laws.

During emergency operations or unusual circumstances, crew rest practices may be modified or suspended as necessary to maintain essential services. Supervisors are responsible for managing staffing and work assignments in a manner that balances operational demands with employee safety.

3.7.7 Fitness and Wellness Time

Sevier County Government may permit employees in certain positions to engage in physical fitness or wellness activities during scheduled work hours, where such activities are directly related to job requirements or overall employee health and readiness.

When approved, fitness or wellness time will be considered compensable work time and must be recorded in accordance with *Section 3.3 – Timekeeping Requirements*. Participation must be approved in advance by the employee's supervisor and must not interfere with operational needs.

Specific eligibility, scheduling, and usage guidelines are established at the departmental level through standard operating procedures or guidelines.

3.7.8 Timekeeping and Supervisor Responsibilities

Employees are responsible for accurately recording all compensable travel and training time in the County's timekeeping system in accordance with *Section 3.3 – Timekeeping Requirements*.

Supervisors are responsible for reviewing, verifying, and approving time entries related to travel and training to ensure compliance with County policy and applicable law.

3.8 On-Call and Emergency Response Pay

This policy outlines compensation guidelines for employees assigned to on-call duties or responding to emergencies outside of regular working hours, in accordance with applicable laws and County policy.

3.8.1 On-Call Status

Certain positions may be designated as subject to on-call status based on departmental needs. Employees assigned to on-call status must remain available to respond to work-related duties outside of their regular schedule.

- On-Call Time: Time during which an employee is required to be available but is not actively working is considered on-call or standby time. Compensation is determined based on the level of restriction placed on the employee, in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act and County policy. Applicable procedures and a list of positions are maintained in the *Payroll and Timekeeping Procedures*.
- Compensable Time: Time spent performing work-related duties during on-call periods—including responding to calls, traveling when such travel is compensable under applicable law, or completing assignments—must be recorded and is considered hours worked.

Employees will be informed of on-call expectations, schedules, and compensation terms by their supervisor or department.

3.8.2 Call-Back and Return to Work

When a non-exempt employee is called back to work without prior notice, compensable time is calculated as follows:

- Compensable time begins when the employee is required to respond to a call-back or begins performing work-related duties, as applicable.
- Travel time is compensable when work is performed during travel or when travel otherwise qualifies as compensable under applicable law.
- Time spent obtaining required work-related materials (e.g., tools, equipment, supplies) is compensable.
- Time spent performing duties at the worksite is compensable until the assignment is complete.

Standard commuting time to a regular worksite is not compensable unless work is performed during the commute or the travel qualifies as a special assignment.

3.8.3 Minimum Call-Back Pay

If a non-exempt employee is called back to work unexpectedly and total compensable time is two (2) hours or less, the employee will receive a minimum of two (2) hours of pay at the applicable rate. If total compensable time exceeds two (2) hours, the employee will be compensated for actual hours worked.

3.8.4 Declaration of State of Emergency

When the County Mayor issues a Declaration of a State of Emergency, special payroll provisions apply:

3.8.4.1 Non-Exempt Employees

Non-exempt employees performing emergency response duties will receive cash compensation (not compensatory time) for all hours worked beyond the applicable overtime threshold, in accordance with *Section 3.4 – Overtime Policy*. Overtime will be paid at one and one-half (1.5) times the regular rate.

3.8.4.2 Exempt Employees

Exempt employees who perform significant additional duties during the emergency may, with prior approval from the County Mayor or their designee, receive additional compensation or Other Time in recognition of those duties. This compensation may be in the form of cash payment or leave time, at the County Mayor's discretion.

3.8.4.3 Compensable Time Parameters

Compensable time begins when the employee begins performing assigned emergency response duties, including compensable travel, and ends when those duties are completed.

Only actual hours worked during the emergency period count toward overtime calculations. Paid leave taken during the same workweek does not count toward overtime thresholds but does not disqualify the employee from earning overtime.

3.8.5 Documentation and Reporting

All time worked under this section must be accurately recorded in accordance with County timekeeping procedures.

- Standard rules regarding overtime reporting and substitution of pay for compensatory time apply, unless otherwise stated in these emergency provisions.

- Failure by employees or supervisors to accurately document or report emergency response hours may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

3.9 Paychecks and Payroll

Employees are paid on a bi-weekly basis, generally every other Friday. If a scheduled payday falls on a holiday, pay will be issued on the preceding business day. Paychecks will not be distributed prior to the established payday except as required for administrative or legal purposes.

Elected officials and other designated positions may be paid on a semi-monthly basis, in accordance with applicable classification and payroll procedures.

3.9.1 Direct Deposit

All new employees of Sevier County Government are required to enroll in direct deposit for the receipt of their wages. Paper checks are not issued to new employees as a standard method of payment. Current employees who are not enrolled in direct deposit are strongly encouraged to do so to support timely and secure payroll processing. Employees who are unable to participate in direct deposit will be provided an alternative method of payment in accordance with applicable law.

Employees are responsible for providing accurate and current banking information for direct deposit. Any changes to this information must be promptly reported to the Human Resources Department to help ensure accurate and timely wage payment. If direct deposit information is not provided or requires correction, payment may be issued through an alternative method in accordance with County procedures.

Employees who have questions or need assistance with direct deposit enrollment should contact the Payroll Specialist or the Human Resources Department.

3.9.2 Payroll Corrections and Error Reporting

Employees are responsible for reviewing their pay statements and promptly reporting any discrepancies, including missed payments, incorrect hours, inaccurate deductions, or overpayments. Employees should notify the Payroll Specialist or Human Resources Department as soon as a potential error is identified. Employees should report discrepancies as soon as possible, preferably within five (5) business days of receiving the paycheck to ensure timely resolution.

Supervisors are also encouraged to assist employees in identifying and reporting discrepancies when needed.

3.9.2.1 Underpayments and Missed Pay

If an employee has been underpaid or did not receive expected compensation (e.g., base pay, overtime, stipend, or other authorized payments), the County will investigate and, if validated, issue the corrected payment within the next available payroll cycle or as soon as administratively feasible.

Retroactive adjustments may be issued through off-cycle checks at the discretion of the Finance Department based on the severity of the error and timing of the report.

3.9.2.2 Overpayments and Repayment

If an employee is overpaid, the County is legally obligated to recover the overpayment.

- Employees will be notified in writing of the error and the total amount to be repaid.
- The Payroll Specialist will work with the employee to establish a reasonable and lawful repayment plan through payroll deductions or other approved methods.
- The County will not deduct repayment amounts from future paychecks without first obtaining the employee's written consent, unless otherwise authorized by law.
- Repayment plans will consider the amount owed, the employee's earnings, and applicable state and federal laws.

3.9.2.3 Good Faith Compliance

The County will take prompt action to correct confirmed payroll errors and strive to maintain good faith compliance with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), Tennessee law, and internal policies. Employees will not be retaliated against for reporting a good-faith concern regarding payroll accuracy.

3.9.3 Employee Financial Obligations to the County

Employees may be required to reimburse Sevier County Government for overpayments, unearned compensation, stipends, or other financial obligations incurred in the course of employment, in accordance with applicable law and County policy.

Repayment may be made through payroll deduction or other approved methods, subject to required authorizations where applicable. The County will work with employees to establish reasonable repayment arrangements consistent with legal requirements.

Specific procedures governing repayment, including applicable approval processes and timelines, are established in administrative procedures and related policies.

3.10 Payroll Deductions

Sevier County Government complies fully with all applicable federal, state, and local laws governing payroll deductions. This policy outlines the types of deductions that may be made from employee wages, the circumstances under which they are made, and employee rights regarding these deductions.

3.10.1 Mandatory Payroll Deductions

Certain payroll deductions are required by law and must be withheld from employee wages, including but not limited to:

- Federal income taxes
- Social Security and Medicare taxes (FICA)
- Court-ordered wage garnishments, child support, or other legal withholdings
- Any other legally mandated deductions as required by federal, state, or local authority

3.10.2 FLSA Safe Harbor Deductions for Exempt Employees

Sevier County Government adheres to the Fair Labor Standards Act's safe harbor provisions for exempt employees, which allow salary deductions only under specific circumstances, including:

- Absences of one or more full days for personal reasons other than sickness or disability
- Absences of one or more full days due to sickness or disability if deductions are made under a bona fide plan that provides wage replacement
- Offsets for compensation received for jury duty, witness fees, or military pay
- Penalties imposed in good faith for violations of major safety rules
- Unpaid disciplinary suspensions of one or more full days imposed in good faith for workplace conduct violations

- Proportional salary payments during the first or last week of employment if the employee does not work the full week
- Unpaid leave taken under the Federal Family and Medical Leave Act
- Mandatory deductions required by law

These salary deductions will be made only in accordance with these parameters, and exempt employees will be informed of such deductions in accordance with County procedures.

Exempt employees will generally receive their full salary for any workweek in which they perform work, regardless of the number of hours worked. Salary deductions for partial-day absences are not permitted, except as allowed under applicable law. When an exempt employee is absent for less than a full day, available leave balances may be reduced in accordance with County leave policies.

3.10.3 Voluntary Deductions

Employees may authorize voluntary deductions from their paychecks for approved benefit plans or programs, subject to applicable agreements and authorizations. These may include:

- Retirement plan contributions (e.g., 401(k), 457 plans)
- Premiums for health, dental, vision, or other insurance plans offered by the County
- Uniform or equipment purchases as authorized by the employee's department
- Contributions to flexible spending accounts or health savings accounts
- Other deductions authorized in writing by the employee in accordance with County policies

Employees must provide written authorization for all voluntary deductions and may revoke such authorization in accordance with the terms of the applicable program or plan.

3.10.4 Wage Assignments and Court-Ordered Deductions

Sevier County Government complies with all wage assignments, garnishments, levies, and other court-ordered payroll deductions. When legally permitted, affected employees will be notified of such deductions. The County

will ensure that these deductions are made promptly and accurately in accordance with the order. Employees with questions regarding these deductions should contact the Human Resources Department.

3.10.5 Processing Timeframes

All payroll deductions, whether mandatory or voluntary, will be processed in a timely manner consistent with payroll schedules and benefit plan requirements. Deductions authorized after the cutoff date for a payroll period will be reflected in the subsequent payroll cycle.

3.10.6 Correction of Deduction Errors

Sevier County Government strictly prohibits improper deductions from pay. Employees who believe an error has occurred in the amount, type, or legality of a deduction should report it immediately to the Payroll Specialist or the Human Resources Department.

The County will investigate the issue confidentially and without retaliation, in accordance with *Section 3.9.2 – Payroll Corrections and Error Reporting*. Improper deductions will be corrected and reimbursed as necessary, consistent with FLSA safe harbor provisions.

This policy is intended to comply with the FLSA safe harbor provisions, which protect exempt status when improper deductions are corrected promptly and in good faith.

3.11 Longevity Pay

Longevity pay is an additional benefit that may be provided to eligible employees at the discretion of the Sevier County Board of Commissioners and is subject to annual budget approval. The following guidelines govern eligibility and calculation under the Sevier County Government Longevity Pay Plan:

- Only regular, full-time employees of Sevier County Government are eligible for longevity pay.
- Service time is calculated as of November 1st of each year.
- To receive credit for a month of service, an employee must be hired on or before the 15th of that month.
- Service time is applicable only for employment with Sevier County Government. However, employees transferring directly from the Sevier County School System or the Sevier County Highway Department as full-time employees may count prior full-time service from those divisions if there is no break in full-time service between positions.

To receive longevity pay, the employee must be in active, full-time, regular status on the date of payroll processing, or as otherwise determined by the County Mayor or their designee. Longevity pay is generally disbursed in November, in accordance with the approved payroll schedule.

For employees employed at the time of the initial adoption of the Longevity Pay Plan, service time was established using Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System (TCRS) records or, if unavailable, internal personnel records. These determinations are final and will not be adjusted. For employees hired after adoption of the plan, service time is based on the employee's official full-time start date with Sevier County Government.

Payment amounts are based on the employee's calculated years of service and issued according to the applicable Longevity Pay Schedule.

Service Time in Months	Annual Payment
0 months to 11 months	No Payment
12 months to 59 months	\$250
60 months to 119 months	\$500
120 months to 179 months	\$750
180 months to 239 months	\$1,000
240 months to 299 months	\$1,250
300 months to 359 months	\$1,500
360 months to 419 months	\$1,750
420 months to 479 months	\$2,000
480 months to 539 months	\$2,250
540 months to 599 months	\$2,500
600 months to 659 months	\$2,750
660 months to 719 months	\$3,000

Elected officials and any positions governed by separate statutory or compensation provisions may be subject to different longevity pay structures, as established by applicable law or County policy.

3.12 Final Pay and Termination Pay

When an employee's employment is terminated, they will receive payment for all earned but unpaid wages no later than the next regular payroll following separation, unless an earlier payment is required by applicable law.

Final wages will generally be paid via the employee's established direct deposit. If the direct deposit account has been closed or is otherwise unavailable, a paper check will be issued and either mailed to the employee's last known address or made available for pickup upon request. Employees are encouraged to ensure that Human Resources has up-to-date banking and mailing information on file prior to their final day of employment.

Any accrued and unused leave balances or other final benefits will be paid out in accordance with the applicable County policies governing each leave or benefit program for which the employee was eligible at the time of separation.

The County may recover amounts owed by the employee in accordance with applicable law and with proper authorization where required. These may include:

- Unreturned County-owned property or equipment
- Repayment of outstanding payroll advances or benefit premiums
- Deductions required by law or court order

Such deductions will be made only to the extent permitted under federal and state law. If the final paycheck is insufficient to cover the total amount owed, the County may pursue reimbursement through other lawful means.

Final wages will not be withheld due to failure to return County property; however, the County may pursue recovery through lawful means.

In the event of an employee's death, any final wages or owed amounts will be disbursed to the employee's estate or surviving spouse in accordance with applicable law.

Workplace Safety and Conduct

4.1 Commitment to Workplace Safety

All employees have the right to a safe work environment and share the responsibility to maintain it. This includes following established safety rules, policies, and procedures. Employees are encouraged to promptly report any health or safety concerns to their supervisor.

In the event of an emergency requiring immediate assistance, employees should dial 911 to activate emergency services. All workplace injuries, accidents, or illnesses - regardless of severity - must be reported in accordance with *Section 4.5 – Safety Reporting and Investigation*.

Employees who violate safety rules and regulations are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Employees must comply with all established safety procedures, including emergency response protocols and safety requirements adopted by the County. Employees are expected to follow instructions provided during emergency situations and participate in required training or drills.

Supervisors and department leadership are responsible for supporting a safe work environment, including enforcing safety requirements, addressing identified hazards, and cooperating with safety inspections, audits, and investigations conducted by the County or authorized agencies.

Comprehensive safety procedures, emergency response protocols, and inspection programs are maintained in the Sevier County Government Safety Plan and applicable departmental procedures.

4.2 Drug-Free Workplace

Sevier County Government is committed to providing a safe, healthy, and productive workplace. To support this goal, the use, possession, or impairment from illegal drugs and alcohol on County premises or while on duty is strictly prohibited. This policy complies with T.C.A. § 50-9-100 et seq. and other applicable laws.

4.2.1 Prohibited Conduct

Employees and job applicants are prohibited from:

- Using, possessing, selling, distributing, or purchasing illegal drugs in a manner that affects the workplace.

- Reporting to work under the influence of illegal drugs or in violation of established testing thresholds.
- Reporting to work impaired by alcohol or consuming alcohol on County premises or during work hours.
- Misusing prescription drugs, including use without a valid prescription or in a manner inconsistent with medical directions. Proper use of prescribed medications is permitted. Employees or applicants may confidentially inform the Medical Review Officer (MRO) of prescribed or over-the-counter medication before or after any test.

4.2.2 Testing

4.2.2.1 Applicant Testing

All job applicants are required to submit to drug testing as a condition of employment. Testing will be conducted by the Sevier County Wellness Clinic or a designated facility. Applicants must sign a consent form authorizing testing.

Applicants refusing testing or testing positive will not be offered employment.

4.2.2.2 Employee Testing

4.2.2.2.1 Reasonable Suspicion Testing

Employees may be tested based on reasonable suspicion, defined by specific, objective, and articulable facts such as:

- Direct observation of substance use or impairment.
- Erratic behavior or deterioration in work performance.
- Credible reports of substance abuse.
- Evidence of test tampering.
- Substance use contributing to workplace accidents.
- Use, possession, sale, or transfer of drugs on County premises or during work hours.

Employees visibly impaired at work will not be allowed to perform duties. When practicable, supervisors will confirm observations with a second supervisor and privately discuss the situation with the employee. If

impairment is suspected, Human Resources and the Director of Safety will be contacted, and the employee will be required to undergo drug and/or alcohol testing within two (2) hours. Impaired employees will be transported to testing by designated personnel and not allowed to drive.

Refusal to submit to testing may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

4.2.2.2.2 Post Accident Testing

Employees involved in workplace accidents resulting in significant property damage or personal injury requiring offsite medical treatment must undergo drug and/or alcohol testing as soon as possible, and no later than four (4) hours after the incident. The decision to test will be made by the supervisor in consultation with Human Resources and the Director of Safety.

Refusal to submit to testing may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

4.2.2.2.3 Safety-Sensitive and Commercial Driver's License Testing

Employees in safety-sensitive positions—such as equipment operators, emergency medical personnel, firefighters, corrections and sheriff's officers, and sanitation workers—may be subject to random drug and alcohol testing. Employees holding Commercial Driver's Licenses (CDLs) are subject to testing in accordance with the Omnibus Transportation Employee Testing Act of 1991 and applicable federal regulations.

Random selection will be conducted using a scientifically valid method in accordance with applicable federal requirements.

4.2.2.2.4 Other Random Testing

Sevier County Government reserves the right to conduct random testing for other employee groups as necessary, in accordance with applicable law and consistent procedures.

4.2.2.2.5 Follow-Up Testing

Employees may be required to undergo follow-up testing as part of a treatment or rehabilitation program. Following a policy violation, employees who are retained may be subject to follow-up testing for a period of at least one year. Failure to comply or subsequent violations may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

4.2.2.2.6 Routine Fitness-for-Duty Testing

Employees may be required to submit to drug or alcohol testing as part of a routine fitness-for-duty examination required by law, regulation, or County policy.

4.2.2.3 Testing Procedures and Laboratory Standards

Employees and applicants will report to or be transported to the Sevier County Wellness Clinic or a designated testing location.

Specimens are generally provided in private, except when there is suspicion of tampering. All specimens will be tested at a federally certified laboratory. Positive results will be confirmed, and strict chain-of-custody procedures will be maintained.

Test results are reviewed by a Medical Review Officer (MRO), who will provide the individual with an opportunity to explain or rebut a confirmed positive result within seventy-two (72) hours. Individuals may request that a split specimen be tested at another federally certified laboratory at their own expense within seventy-two (72) hours of notification.

Alcohol testing will be conducted using federally approved methods. A second test may be administered following an initial positive result in accordance with applicable standards.

4.2.2.4 Alternate Testing Procedures

Employees or applicants who, due to a documented medical condition, are unable to provide a required specimen (e.g., urine) may request an alternate testing method (such as oral fluid or hair analysis). To qualify, they must submit written confirmation from a licensed healthcare provider stating the specific medical need and recommended alternate procedure.

Requests should be made to the Human Resources department prior to testing whenever practicable. Sevier County Government will make reasonable efforts to accommodate the medical need while maintaining the integrity of the testing program.

4.2.3 Disciplinary Action

Employees who violate this policy or refuse to cooperate in required testing may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Sevier County Government may, at its discretion, offer a last-chance agreement, which may include requirements for substance abuse treatment, follow-up testing, and conditions for continued employment. Employees who fail to comply with such agreements or who commit subsequent violations may be subject to termination.

Employees required to undergo testing will be compensated for time spent in testing. Employees may be placed on administrative leave pending test results, in accordance with County policy. If test results are negative, the employee will be compensated for any unpaid time associated with the testing process.

Failure to timely submit to testing may be considered misconduct and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination, and may impact eligibility for workers' compensation benefits in accordance with applicable law.

4.2.4 Confidentiality

Information received through substance abuse testing will be maintained in accordance with County confidentiality policies and applicable law, including requirements of the Tennessee Bureau of Workers' Compensation Drug-Free Workplace Program.

4.2.5 Employee Assistance and Resources

Sevier County Government will assist employees in locating treatment and rehabilitative services for substance abuse. Employees are expected to follow recommended treatment plans. Seeking assistance does not exempt employees from compliance with this policy or from performance expectations.

Leave may be granted in accordance with applicable policies, and return to work may be conditioned upon successful completion of treatment, including required follow-up testing.

4.3 Smoke-Free Workplace

Sevier County Government is committed to promoting a safe and healthy work environment. To support this goal, the use of tobacco products and electronic smoking or vaping devices—including cigarettes, e-cigarettes, vaping devices, and pipes—is strictly prohibited:

- Inside all County-owned or leased buildings
- Within all County-owned or leased vehicles
- In any indoor or covered area under County control, including lobbies, hallways, restrooms, and stairwells

- Within 25 feet of any entrance, exit, window, or ventilation intake to a County facility

Employees are not entitled to additional breaks for smoking or tobacco use beyond those otherwise provided under County policy.

Use of smokeless tobacco on County property may be restricted or permitted by department policy, in accordance with operational needs.

4.3.1 Designated Outdoor Areas

Departments may establish designated outdoor smoking areas that comply with the distance requirements above and do not obstruct walkways or create a nuisance for other employees or the public. All such areas must be clearly marked, away from building entrances, and maintained in a clean condition.

4.3.2 Signage and Enforcement

“No Smoking” signs or symbols must be posted at all County building entrances and within facilities as required by law. Supervisors and managers are responsible for ensuring employees, visitors, and contractors comply with this policy. Individuals found in violation of this policy will be reminded and directed to comply.

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination, in accordance with County personnel policies.

4.3.3 Compliance with Applicable Laws

This policy adheres to Tennessee’s Clean Indoor Air Act (T.C.A. § 68-250-101 et seq.) and any other relevant state or local regulations governing smoking. Where a local ordinance imposes stricter requirements, those provisions will prevail.

4.4 Workplace Behavior, Violence, and Weapons

Sevier County Government is committed to maintaining a workplace free from abusive conduct, violence, and unauthorized weapons. The County strives to provide top-quality services in an atmosphere of respect, collaboration, safety, and equality. All employees are entitled to dignity and respect. Complaints of negative and inappropriate workplace behaviors will be taken seriously and addressed promptly. Employees who report such behavior will not be subject to retaliation.

This policy applies to all Sevier County Government employees. Contractors and other individuals on County premises are expected to comply with applicable provisions of this policy. This policy applies to County premises, during work hours, while traveling on County business, and to off-duty conduct that has a direct impact on the workplace or County operations. This includes electronic communications.

4.4.1 Definition of Abusive Conduct

Abusive conduct includes acts or omissions that would cause a reasonable person – considering the severity, nature, and frequency of the behavior – to believe that an employee has been subjected to an abusive work environment. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Repeated verbal abuse, including derogatory remarks, insults, and epithets;
- Verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a threatening, intimidating, or humiliating nature;
- Sabotage or undermining another employee's work performance.

A single act generally does not constitute abusive conduct unless it is severe and egregious. The following do not constitute abusive conduct:

- Disciplinary procedures under adopted County policies;
- Routine coaching, feedback, or correction of work performance;
- Reasonable assignments or scheduling decisions;
- Differences in personal expression or opinion;
- Passionate expression without harmful intent; or
- Non-abusive exercise of supervisory discretion

4.4.2 Definition of Workplace Violence

Workplace violence includes any act or threat of physical violence, intimidation, or other disruptive behavior against employees, visitors, or others at the work site. A “threat of violence” is any expression - verbal or otherwise - of a present or future intent to cause harm.

Prohibited conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Physically striking or injuring another person;
- Engaging in behavior that creates reasonable fear of injury;
- Possession, brandishing, or use of a weapon on County premises or while on government business, except as authorized by law or County policy;
- Intentionally damaging property belonging to the County, its employees, or the public;
- Threatening harm to individuals or property;
- Verbal threats or intimidation that cause fear or emotional distress.

Firearms or other lethal weapons are prohibited on County premises, in County vehicles, and at County-sponsored events unless:

- The employee is legally authorized and required to carry a weapon as part of official duties (e.g., law enforcement);
- The County Mayor or their designee has granted authorization; or
- The firearm is lawfully stored in a personal vehicle in accordance with Tennessee law.

Any person who engages in violent behavior or violates the weapons provisions of this policy may be removed from County property and may be required to remain off premises pending investigation.

4.4.3 Domestic Violence

Threats or acts of domestic violence that occur in the workplace or pose a risk to the workplace must be reported immediately to Human Resources. Employees subject to a restraining or protective order are encouraged to provide a copy to Human Resources to assist in maintaining workplace safety. Assistance is available through the County's Employee Assistance Program.

4.4.4 Employer Responsibilities

Supervisors and others in positions of authority have a heightened duty to ensure that appropriate workplace behavior is maintained and that concerns are addressed in a timely manner. Supervisors must:

- Take reasonable steps to promote a safe working environment and address threatening or potentially violent situations;
- Model appropriate behavior by treating all individuals with courtesy and respect;
- Ensure employees are aware of this policy and understand reporting procedures;
- Monitor for signs of inappropriate behavior and take appropriate action to address concerns;
- Respond promptly, sensitively, and confidentially to reported concerns.

4.4.5 Employee Responsibilities

Employees must treat all individuals with dignity and respect and must not engage in threatening, violent, intimidating, or abusive conduct. Employees are expected to promote a safe and respectful workplace and report any incidents of abusive conduct, workplace violence, or weapons violations in accordance with this policy.

Employees are expected to cooperate with preventative measures and understand that violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action.

4.4.6 Retaliation

Sevier County Government strictly prohibits retaliation against any individual who reports or assists in the investigation of violations of this policy. Retaliation includes interference, harassment, threats, or any form of reprisal.

4.4.7 Reporting

Employees who believe they have been subjected to abusive conduct or workplace violence, or who become aware of weapons violations, must report the behavior to their supervisor, department leadership, or the Human Resources Department, either orally or in writing. Employees are not required to report concerns to their immediate supervisor and may report to any appropriate channel.

Employees are encouraged to provide detailed information, including dates, times, locations, and witnesses. While written documentation is preferred, it is not required.

Supervisors must promptly report any known incidents of workplace abuse, intimidation, violence, or weapons-related violations to the Human Resources department. Supervisors must also take reasonable steps to protect individuals involved, which may include separating employees when appropriate.

4.4.8 Investigation and Corrective Action

The County will conduct prompt, thorough, and impartial investigations of reported incidents and may implement interim measures as necessary to ensure workplace safety. Investigations may include interviews with involved parties and witnesses, and documentation of findings.

The investigative report will be submitted to the appropriate Official for review and action. Individuals involved will be informed of the outcome, consistent with applicable law.

Appropriate corrective action will be taken when allegations are substantiated. Disciplinary actions may include, but are not limited to, counseling, training, reassignment, suspension, or termination. Supervisors who fail to take appropriate action may also be subject to disciplinary action.

Sevier County Government encourages all employees to report concerns under this policy. However, intentional or malicious false allegations may have serious consequences. Individuals who knowingly make false accusations will be disciplined in accordance with County policy.

Employees experiencing ongoing emotional or physical effects from abusive conduct will be informed of available support resources, including the Employee Assistance Program. When abusive conduct has been confirmed, the County will continue to monitor the situation and may take additional or preventive action to reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

4.4.9 Confidentiality

Sevier County Government will make reasonable efforts to maintain confidentiality throughout the reporting and investigation process, consistent with applicable law. Complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed due to legal requirements, including public records obligations, and the need to take appropriate corrective action.

4.4.10 Firearms in Vehicles Exception

Nothing in this policy is intended to interfere with or prohibit employees from transporting or storing a firearm or ammunition in their privately owned vehicle on County property, provided the individual is legally permitted to possess the firearm under Tennessee law. Firearms must be kept out of ordinary observation and secured in the trunk, glove box, or a container securely affixed to the vehicle when the employee is not in the vehicle, in accordance with T.C.A. § 39-17-1313.

4.5 Safety Reporting and Investigation

Sevier County Government requires the prompt reporting and documentation of all workplace injuries, illnesses, accidents, incidents, unsafe conditions, and near-miss events to ensure employee safety, regulatory compliance, and continuous improvement of workplace practices.

All employees must immediately report any work-related injury, illness, accident, incident, or unsafe condition to their supervisor or appropriate department contact as soon as practicable. All such events must be documented in accordance with applicable County procedures. Failure to report may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that all reported events are promptly documented, reviewed, and reported in accordance with County policy and applicable law. This includes initiating appropriate response measures, evaluating the circumstances of the event, identifying contributing factors, and coordinating with Human Resources, the Director of Safety, and other appropriate officials as required.

Accident and incident reporting, investigation procedures, required documentation, and timelines are governed by applicable County policies and procedures, which may vary depending on the nature of the event. These include, but are not limited to:

- Workers' Compensation procedures for work-related injuries and illnesses;
- Fleet Safety procedures for vehicle-related incidents;
- Department-specific safety procedures and protocols;
- Other administrative procedures established by the County for incident reporting and investigation

These procedures establish the appropriate reporting methods, required forms, timelines, and follow-up actions for each type of incident. Employees and supervisors are responsible for following the specific procedures applicable to the type of incident being reported.

Employees are required to fully cooperate with all accident and incident investigations, including providing accurate information and participating in follow-up actions as necessary. Sevier County Government will take appropriate corrective action based on investigation findings to eliminate hazards, prevent recurrence, and promote a safe work environment.

4.5.1 Exposure Incident Reporting

Employees who experience an exposure incident involving blood or other potentially infectious materials must report the incident immediately in accordance with this policy and follow all applicable post-exposure procedures.

For purposes of this policy, an exposure incident includes contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials through the eyes, mouth, mucous membranes, non-intact skin, or through puncture wounds or cuts resulting from contact with contaminated objects.

Exposure control procedures, including required training, protective measures, vaccination availability (including Hepatitis B vaccination where applicable), and post-exposure evaluation and follow-up, are governed by the Sevier County Government Exposure Control Plan and applicable departmental procedures.

Employees are required to comply with all exposure control measures and work practice controls, and to cooperate with any required post-exposure evaluation, treatment, and documentation requirements.

4.6 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Sevier County Government requires the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) when necessary to protect employees from workplace hazards, in accordance with applicable safety standards and departmental procedures.

Employees must use required PPE as directed and in accordance with established safety procedures. PPE may include, but is not limited to gloves, eye protection, face coverings, protective clothing, hearing protection, and respiratory equipment.

Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that employees are provided with appropriate PPE, are trained in its proper use, and comply with all applicable safety requirements.

Failure to use required PPE or follow established safety practices may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Specific PPE requirements, training, and maintenance procedures are governed by departmental safety programs and applicable County procedures.

4.7 Infectious Disease

To help reduce the transmission of infectious diseases, employees are expected to practice good hygiene, including:

- Washing hands frequently with soap and water for at least twenty (20) seconds;
- Coughing and sneezing into the elbow rather than the hand;
- Avoiding touching the eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

Employees who are experiencing symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat, or other signs of illness must not report to work and must notify their supervisor as soon as possible, in accordance with applicable leave policies. If symptoms develop while at work, the employee should isolate from others in the workplace, notify their supervisor, and leave the workplace promptly.

Employees are expected to cooperate with Sevier County Government's public health and disease mitigation efforts. This may include, but is not limited to, wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) or other measures as required by the County in response to infectious disease outbreaks or guidance from public health authorities.

4.8 Service Animals

Sevier County Government is committed to maintaining a healthy and safe work environment. To support this commitment, employees are not permitted to bring personal pets to work. Pets may pose health risks, including allergens, distractions, or property damage.

4.8.1 Service Animals

Employees with disabilities who require the assistance of a service animal may bring a service animal to work under certain conditions, in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As defined by 28 CFR §36.104, a service animal is a dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability.

Requests to bring a service animal into the workplace should be made as a reasonable accommodation under the ADA and must follow Sevier County Government's reasonable accommodation procedures.

The presence of a service animal must not pose a direct threat to the health or safety of others or create undue hardship for Sevier County Government. Requests for accommodations may be subject to temporary or trial

approval as part of the interactive process. Service animals must demonstrate appropriate behavior while on County property. Disruptive, aggressive, or out-of-control service animals may be required to leave the premises, and permission to bring the animal may be revoked if violations persist.

4.8.2 Health and Safety Requirements for Service Animals

All service animals must comply with applicable state and local vaccination requirements, including rabies vaccination, and must be in good health.

Service animals must be under control and on a leash, harness, or other appropriate restraint at all times, unless the employee's disability prevents the use of such restraints, in which case the animal must be otherwise under the employee's control.

The employee is solely responsible for supervising, caring for, and cleaning up after the service animal, including appropriate disposal of waste.

Workplace Policies and Procedures

5.1 Attendance Expectations

Sevier County Government requires employees to take personal responsibility for their attendance and punctuality. Employees are expected to arrive on time and be ready to work each day they are scheduled.

If an employee is unable to report to work due to illness or another reason, they must notify their supervisor, Official, Senior Director of Division, or Director of Department before the start of their scheduled shift, or as soon as reasonably possible in the event of an emergency. Employees are required to provide daily notification for each day of absence unless the employee is on authorized, legally protected leave (e.g., FMLA), in which case separate procedures may apply. If the immediate supervisor or other listed contact is unavailable, employees must notify the Human Resources Department as soon as possible.

Failure to provide timely and appropriate notice may result in the absence being designated as a no-call/no-show, which is subject to disciplinary action.

Excessive absenteeism or tardiness, whether excused or unexcused, consistent with applicable law, may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Employees who are absent for three (3) or more consecutive workdays due to illness or injury, or who seek medical treatment related to their ability to safely perform job duties, must provide a medical release from a licensed healthcare provider before returning to work. The release must include:

- The date(s) of the absence;
- The date the employee is cleared to return to work; and
- Whether the employee is released to full duty or requires restrictions.

Sevier County Government reserves the right to request a healthcare provider's note to verify any absence related to illness or injury. This request may be made at the discretion of the employee's Official, Senior Director of Division, or Director of Department.

5.2 Job Performance Standards

Effective communication between employees and management is essential. Discussions regarding job performance are ongoing and may occur informally throughout the year. Employees are encouraged to proactively engage their supervisors if they seek additional feedback or guidance.

Formal performance evaluations may be conducted at the discretion of each department, based on operational needs and established practices. Where utilized, evaluations typically include a written performance appraisal and a discussion between the employee and supervisor to review job performance and establish expectations and goals.

5.3 Media Inquiries

All media inquiries regarding Sevier County Government operations, policies, or activities must be referred to the Director of Public Affairs and Communications. Employees are not authorized to speak to the media on behalf of the County unless specifically designated to do so.

Nothing in this policy is intended to, nor should it be interpreted to, limit employees' rights under any applicable federal, state, or local laws, including rights protected under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) to engage in protected concerted activities. Such activities include, but are not limited to, discussing or seeking to improve terms and conditions of employment, such as wages, working conditions, and benefits. Employees retain the right to engage in or refrain from such activities.

5.4 Remote Work

Sevier County Government may permit employees to work from a remote location under specific circumstances. Remote work arrangements are evaluated on a case-by-case basis, and the terms and conditions of any remote work arrangement will be documented in a written agreement between the County and the employee. This agreement will outline expectations regarding work hours, communication, equipment use, data security, confidentiality, and employee responsibilities.

Employees are not permitted to change their remote work location—such as relocating their residence or primary work site to another city, state, or country—without prior written approval from department leadership. Approval will be based on operational needs, legal considerations, and the ability to maintain effective supervision. Employees must be available to attend in-person meetings, trainings, or other required events, generally with reasonable advance notice.

Employees working remotely are responsible for maintaining a safe and suitable work environment and for protecting County property, records, and information. Work-related injuries or illnesses occurring while performing authorized work duties must be reported immediately in accordance with County workers' compensation and incident reporting procedures. Employees working remotely remain subject to all County policies regarding confidentiality, cybersecurity, records retention, and public records.

Remote work is a privilege, not a right. Employees must maintain performance and productivity standards consistent with their job requirements. Non-exempt employees must accurately record all hours worked and comply with all County timekeeping, scheduling, meal period, break, and overtime requirements. Non-exempt employees may not work overtime or perform work outside their approved schedule without prior authorization. Failure to meet these performance standards, comply with timekeeping requirements, or violation of any terms of the remote work agreement may result in the revocation of remote work privileges and a requirement to return to onsite work. Continued non-compliance or performance issues may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

This policy is subject to applicable federal, state, and local laws, including but not limited to workplace safety, labor standards, tax regulations, public records requirements, cybersecurity obligations, workers' compensation laws, and reasonable accommodation requirements.

5.5 Dress & Grooming

All employees are expected to present a professional image to visitors, coworkers, and the public. Maintaining an appropriate personal appearance, similar to the proper maintenance of work areas, is a continuing requirement of employment. Employees should avoid wearing clothing that includes references to sex or sexual activity, obscene or inappropriate language, or the promotion or use of drugs or alcohol. Clothing must adequately cover all undergarments and should be professional and appropriate to the work environment.

Employees are required to carry or wear their identification badge while on County premises, as required by their department.

Certain positions may require adherence to specific dress, grooming, hygiene, uniform, or safety standards based on job duties or operational needs. Sevier County Government will provide required uniforms and protective equipment for designated positions. Such items remain County property and must be properly maintained and returned upon separation of employment or as directed.

Hairstyles, grooming, tattoos, jewelry, body piercings, and hair color must present a professional appearance appropriate to the employee's work environment and duties. Visible tattoos are permitted provided they are not obscene, discriminatory, sexually explicit, gang-related, or otherwise inconsistent with maintaining a professional workplace. Jewelry, accessories, hairstyles, or clothing that create a safety hazard may be prohibited or restricted based on job duties or work environment.

Departments may establish additional job-specific dress, grooming, uniform, or appearance standards consistent with operational needs, safety requirements, and this policy. Employees should consult their supervisor regarding department-specific expectations.

Dress and grooming standards will be applied fairly and consistently, without regard to race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, gender identity, and sexual orientation), national origin, age, disability, or any other protected status under federal, state, or local law. Nothing in this policy shall be interpreted or applied in a manner inconsistent with the Tennessee CROWN Act or other applicable law.

Employees who fail to meet established attire or grooming standards may be subject to corrective action and may be required to leave the workplace to correct the issue. Hourly employees will not be compensated for time missed due to noncompliance with dress or grooming standards.

Employees who require an accommodation for sincerely held religious beliefs or disabilities related to dress or grooming standards should follow the procedures outlined in this handbook.

5.6 Disciplinary Action Process

Every employee has the duty and responsibility to be aware of and comply with all existing rules, policies, and procedures, and to perform their duties in accordance with established expectations and standards. When an employee's performance or behavior fails to meet those standards, disciplinary action may be taken.

The primary purpose of disciplinary action is to identify and correct problems, prevent recurrence, and encourage satisfactory future performance and conduct.

Sevier County Government expects employees to uphold standards of honesty, professionalism, good conduct, and fairness. Employees must treat the public, vendors, and co-workers with respect, courtesy, professionalism, and consideration at all times.

Employees found to be in violation of any Sevier County Government policy may be subject to disciplinary action. The nature and severity of such action will be determined by the County based on the seriousness of the violation, the employee's prior disciplinary record, and other relevant circumstances.

Depending on the nature of the violation, disciplinary measures may range from coaching, counseling, verbal or written warnings, suspension with or without pay, demotion, or termination.

Sevier County Government reserves the right to impose disciplinary actions deemed appropriate for any conduct that violates County policies or standards. The County reserves the right to determine the appropriate level of corrective action based on the circumstances and may deviate from progressive discipline where warranted.

The County may place an employee on administrative leave or take other interim action during the investigation of alleged misconduct or policy violations.

5.7 Complaint Resolution

Misunderstandings or conflicts can arise in any workplace. To maintain a productive and respectful environment, Sevier County Government encourages employees to address concerns early so they can be resolved constructively and efficiently.

Employees are encouraged to first discuss workplace concerns with their supervisor or department leadership. If the employee does not believe it is appropriate to speak with someone in their direct chain of supervision due to the nature of the concern or the individuals involved, they may contact the Human Resources Department directly.

Employees may also submit concerns in writing to the County Mayor or Human Resources Department for review. Written concerns should include the nature of the issue, relevant facts, and any prior efforts made to address the matter.

Concerns will be reviewed and addressed as promptly as practicable. All complaints will be handled as confidentially as possible and investigated impartially when appropriate.

Nothing in this section replaces any reporting obligations or complaint procedures established elsewhere in County policy, including policies related to discrimination, harassment, workplace violence, safety, or other legally protected matters.

Retaliation against any employee for raising a concern in good faith or participating in an investigation is strictly prohibited.

The Human Resources Department may maintain documentation related to reported concerns and any resulting review or investigation.

5.8 Workplace Privacy & Monitoring

Sevier County Government seeks to balance employee privacy interests with the County's responsibility to maintain a safe, secure, and efficient workplace. This section outlines County practices regarding workplace searches, monitoring, recordings, and access to employee information and personnel records.

5.8.1 Searches

Employees' personal belongings, including bags, purses, and vehicles located on County property, may be subject to search where reasonable and legally permissible. Searches will be conducted in a reasonable and respectful manner by or under the direction of authorized personnel.

Work areas, including desks, cabinets, lockers, electronic devices, and other County-provided property, may also be subject to inspection or search. Employees should have no expectation of privacy in County-provided property, work areas, or equipment.

Employees are expected to cooperate with reasonable requests related to safety, security, investigations, or compliance reviews. Failure to cooperate may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

5.8.2 Communications and Data Privacy

Sevier County Government reserves the right to monitor communications, including email, internet usage, and phone calls, conducted using County-owned equipment, systems, or networks, in accordance with applicable law and County policy. Employees should have no expectation of privacy when using County-owned systems, equipment, or networks.

Additional requirements regarding technology usage, cybersecurity, and communications systems are addressed in *Section 5.10 – Technology, Communications, & Data Security*.

5.8.3 Recording Policy

Employees may not create or distribute unauthorized photographic, video, or audio recordings in the workplace when such recordings violate confidentiality obligations, privacy rights, security requirements, or applicable law. This includes the use of devices with recording capabilities, such as cell phones, cameras, or audio recording devices.

Recordings for legitimate work purposes must be authorized in advance by department leadership or otherwise permitted by County policy.

Nothing in this policy is intended to prohibit activities protected by applicable federal, state, or local law.

5.8.4 Employee Data and Personnel Files

Personal employee information is considered confidential and will only be accessed, used, or shared for legitimate business, legal, or operational purposes by individuals with an authorized need to know. This information may include, but is not limited to, employee names, addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses, emergency contact information, equal employment opportunity demographic data, medical information, Social Security numbers, dates of birth, employment eligibility documentation, and benefits enrollment information, including dependent information.

Participants in County benefit plans should be aware that personal information may be shared with benefit providers, administrators, or third-party vendors as necessary for claims processing, administration, recordkeeping, or other authorized business purposes.

All hard copy personnel records will be maintained in secure areas with restricted access. Reasonable safeguards will be used to protect electronically maintained employee information. Certain records, including I-9 forms and medical records, will be maintained separately from general personnel records in accordance with applicable law.

In accordance with Tennessee law, including T.C.A. § 8-50-108, employees and former employees may request access to personnel records maintained by Sevier County Government by submitting a written request to the Human Resources Department in accordance with County procedures. Requests for access to personnel records will be processed within the timeframe required by applicable Tennessee law. Access to records may be limited, restricted, or withheld to the extent permitted by law.

Employee personnel information maintained by Sevier County Government may be subject to disclosure under the Tennessee Public Records Act and applicable County Open Records policies. Information protected from disclosure by law, including Social Security numbers, medical information, and other confidential data, will be redacted or withheld as required by applicable law.

5.9 Asset Management and Use Policy

Employees are responsible for the proper use, care, and protection of County-owned or leased property and equipment and must comply with all applicable County policies and procedures governing its use.

County property, equipment, supplies, systems, and resources are provided for official business purposes. Employees may not use, permit others to use, or remove County property for unauthorized personal or non-County purposes without prior approval from department leadership.

All County property remains the property of Sevier County Government and may be subject to inventory, inspection, or audit at any time.

For additional guidance, refer to applicable County asset management, vehicle, and technology policies.

5.10 Technology, Communications, & Data Security

Sevier County Government provides employees with technology systems, communication tools, and electronic resources to support official County business. These resources may include, but are not limited to, computers, telephones, voicemail, scanners, email, internet access, text messaging systems, portable electronic devices, and other County-provided technology.

County technology systems and resources are intended primarily for business-related purposes. Limited incidental personal use is permitted provided it does not interfere with work responsibilities, productivity, system operations, security, or applicable County policies. All use of County technology resources must be conducted professionally, responsibly, and in accordance with applicable law and County policy.

5.10.1 Cybersecurity and Data Protection

Employees are responsible for safeguarding County systems, devices, and data. This includes protecting login credentials, using secure practices, identifying phishing attempts or suspicious communications, and immediately reporting suspected cybersecurity incidents, unauthorized access, or potential data breaches.

Employees may not use unauthorized artificial intelligence tools, applications, or external platforms to process, store, or transmit confidential County information without approval from Information Technology (IT) or authorized County leadership.

County IT security standards require security controls be based on risk assessment and the protection of County systems, data, and infrastructure. Security controls shall not be reduced, bypassed, or otherwise modified solely for convenience or user preference.

Failure to comply with cybersecurity or data protection requirements may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

5.10.2 No Expectation of Privacy

Employees should have no expectation of privacy when using County-owned systems, equipment, networks, or communication resources. Use of County technology systems is subject to monitoring, inspection, access, and disclosure in accordance with applicable law and County policy.

Electronic communications and records created, received, or maintained in the course of County business may be subject to disclosure under the Tennessee Public Records Act and applicable County Open Records policies.

5.10.3 Technology Use Standards

To protect County systems and information, the following requirements apply:

- Technology Equipment: Employees must coordinate with Purchasing and Information Technology (IT) staff, or their designees, before purchasing, installing, relocating, or connecting any technology equipment or devices to County systems. Unauthorized hardware, peripherals, and external storage devices are prohibited.
- Software Installation: Employees must coordinate with Purchasing and Information Technology (IT) staff, or their designees, before purchasing, installing, relocating, or connecting any software or applications to County systems. Unauthorized software, applications, external storage devices, and the use of personally owned licensed subscription-based or Software as Service (SaaS) products are prohibited.
- Network Configurations: Employees may not alter, disable, bypass, or tamper with system settings, security controls, antivirus protection, or network configurations unless authorized to do so.
- Sensitive Information: Confidential or sensitive information must not be transmitted, stored, or shared through unsecured methods or unauthorized platforms. Approved security measures, encryption methods, and transfer protocols must be used when required.
- Acceptable Use: Employees may not use County systems or resources to access, create, store, transmit, download, or distribute material that is illegal, discriminatory, harassing, threatening, sexually explicit, offensive, or otherwise inconsistent with County policy or applicable law.
- Copyright and Licensing: Employees may not copy, install, distribute, or use copyrighted software, digital materials, or electronic resources in violation of licensing agreements or applicable law.

- County Business Use: Email, internet access, messaging systems, photocopiers, scanners, and similar resources are intended primarily for official County business. Personal use must remain limited and appropriate.

5.10.4 Portable Electronic Devices

Employees are responsible for protecting portable electronic devices used for County business, including laptops, tablets, smartphones, external storage devices, and similar equipment, whether County-issued or personally owned and authorized for work purposes.

Employees must use passwords, secure access methods, and reasonable physical safeguards to protect such devices from loss, theft, unauthorized access, or misuse. Lost or stolen devices that contain or may access County information must be reported immediately to Information Technology staff or other designated personnel.

5.10.5 Artificial Intelligence (AI) Assisted Productivity Tools

Sevier County Government recognizes that employees may engage in the use of AI-assisted productivity tools. Employees are expected to use sound judgment and conduct themselves professionally when AI-assisted activity relates to County business, coworkers, or the public. Employees remain responsible for reviewing and validating AI-generated content before use.

Employees may not:

- disclose confidential, sensitive, or legally protected information;
- engage in harassment, discrimination, threats, or other conduct that violates County policy;
- misrepresent their identity, position, or authority with Sevier County Government; or
- represent personal opinions as official County positions unless authorized to do so.

5.10.6 Compliance with Other Policies

Use of County technology systems and communication resources must comply with all applicable Sevier County Government policies, including, but not limited to, policies related to equal employment opportunity, harassment, workplace conduct, confidentiality, records retention, cybersecurity, and workplace violence.

5.10.7 Employee Rights

Nothing in this policy is intended to restrict or interfere with employee rights protected by applicable federal, state, or local law, including rights under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) to engage in protected concerted activity regarding wages, working conditions, or other terms and conditions of employment.

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

5.11 Social Media Use

Social media includes social networking sites, blogs, forums, messaging applications, video-sharing platforms, and other online communication tools.

Sevier County Government recognizes that employees may engage in personal social media activity. Employees are expected to use sound judgment and conduct themselves professionally when social media activity relates to the workplace, County business, coworkers, or the public.

Employees may not:

- disclose confidential, sensitive, or legally protected information;
- engage in harassment, discrimination, threats, or other conduct that violates County policy;
- misrepresent their identity, position, or authority with Sevier County Government; or
- represent personal opinions as official County positions unless authorized to do so.

Employees should be respectful and accurate when referencing Sevier County Government, coworkers, public officials, vendors, or members of the public. Employees may not make unauthorized statements on behalf of the County regarding legal matters, emergency situations, official investigations, or other matters requiring designated public communication.

Employees authorized to manage official County social media accounts or communications must comply with applicable County communication, records retention, and public information requirements.

Nothing in this policy is intended to interfere with employee rights protected by the First Amendment, the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), or other applicable federal, state, or local laws, including employees'

rights to engage in protected concerted activity regarding wages, working conditions, or other terms and conditions of employment.

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

5.12 Confidentiality & Use of Information

Employees may have access to confidential, sensitive, protected, or nonpublic information through their employment with Sevier County Government. Such information may include personnel records, medical information, financial data, investigative materials, legal matters, security-related information, or other information protected by law or County policy.

Employees may access, use, or disclose County information only as necessary to perform authorized job duties and in accordance with applicable law and County policy. Employees may not use confidential or nonpublic information obtained through County employment for personal benefit, private interests, or any unauthorized purpose.

Employees must take reasonable precautions to safeguard confidential information from unauthorized access, disclosure, removal, or misuse, whether the information is maintained in paper, electronic, verbal, or other form.

Nothing in this policy is intended to prohibit disclosures protected or required by applicable law, including lawful reporting of suspected violations of law or protected employee rights.

Confidentiality obligations continue during and after employment with Sevier County Government.

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination, and may also result in civil or criminal penalties where permitted by law.

5.13 Workplace Notices & Postings

Sevier County Government maintains workplace postings and employee notices as required by applicable federal, state, and local laws. Required notices may include labor law postings, safety information, employment notices, and other legally required communications.

Job openings and employment opportunities may be posted through official County communication channels, including the County website or other designated systems.

Employees may not remove, alter, deface, or post unauthorized materials on County bulletin boards or posting areas without authorization.

5.14 Solicitation and Distribution

To minimize disruptions to County operations and maintain a safe and productive workplace, the following rules regarding solicitation and distribution apply.

Employees may not solicit other employees during working time, either as the solicitor or the person being solicited. Working time refers to periods when employees are expected to be performing work duties and does not include authorized meal periods, break periods, or time before or after scheduled shifts.

Employees may not distribute literature, handbills, or other materials during working time or in working areas. Distribution may occur only during non-working time and in non-working areas.

Exceptions to this policy must be approved in advance by department leadership or other authorized County officials.

Non-employees may not solicit, distribute materials, or engage in unauthorized activities on County property without prior authorization from the County Mayor or designee.

Nothing in this policy is intended to interfere with employee rights protected by applicable federal, state, or local law, including rights under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) to engage in protected concerted activity regarding wages, hours, working conditions, or other terms and conditions of employment.

Leave and Time Off Policies

Sevier County Government recognizes the importance of providing employees with leave and time off benefits. Leave benefits will be administered in accordance with applicable federal and state laws, County policies, operational needs, and payroll administration procedures.

Employees are responsible for complying with applicable notice, approval, documentation, and leave reporting requirements. Leave benefits and job protections vary depending on the type of leave requested and applicable law.

Employees on approved leave are generally not expected or permitted to perform work unless specifically authorized by Sevier County Government. This includes, but is not limited to, performing job duties remotely, responding to work-related communications, accessing County systems for work purposes, or otherwise performing compensable work activities while on leave. Nothing in this section prohibits limited work-related communication necessary for operational coordination, return-to-work planning, or similar administrative purposes authorized by the County.

6.1 Holidays

Sevier County Government observes the following holidays for eligible employees:

Holiday	Date(s) Observed
New Year's Day	January 1
Martin Luther King Day	Third Monday in January
Presidents' Day	Third Monday in February
Good Friday	Friday before Easter
Memorial Day	Last Monday in May
Independence Day	July 4
Labor Day	First Monday in September
Veterans Day	November 11
Thanksgiving	Fourth Thursday and the following Friday in November
Christmas	December 25 and 26

6.1.1 Additional Holidays

Additional holidays may be designated and declared by the County Mayor. These holidays may be treated the same as any official holiday listed above for holiday compensation purposes or designated as office closures for specific groups of employees. If a holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday, the County Mayor will determine the day of observance. The County Mayor may also close County offices prior to the official observance of holidays.

6.1.2 Eligibility

Holiday compensation is provided to eligible regular, full-time employees in accordance with County policy. Holiday pay is not considered time worked for overtime calculation purposes under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).

Employees must be in an active paid status the workday immediately before and after the observed holiday unless otherwise approved or required by applicable law. Employees on active-duty military leave during the holiday will remain eligible for holiday pay.

6.1.3 Holiday Compensation

Holiday compensation is based on allotted hours per shift as outlined below. Non-exempt employees will receive holiday pay at their regular hourly rate. An exception applies to the Department of Emergency Medical Services, which may provide holiday compensation as time off at the discretion of the Department Director.

Exempt employees approved by their supervisor to work on a holiday may use those hours worked, up to the holiday hours outlined below, as non-compensable carryforward holiday leave, which must be used within twelve (12) months of accrual.

Due to operational needs, some employees may be required to work on a holiday, observe the holiday on an alternate schedule, or have a scheduled day off. Eligible employees not scheduled to work on the holiday will still receive holiday compensation according to the chart below.

Employees will be notified if their schedule requires work on a declared holiday. Generally, employees who use leave time on a holiday are not eligible for holiday compensation. However, department-level procedures may allow employees to use annual leave or compensatory time on a holiday while still receiving holiday compensation.

Shift Length	Holiday Hours
8-hr	8 Hours
10-hr	10 Hours
12-hr, 16-hr, 24-hr, & 48-hr	12 Hours

6.1.4 Separation of Employment

Employees are eligible to receive holiday pay only if their official termination date is the day after the holiday or later. Employees whose termination date falls on or before the holiday are not eligible to receive holiday pay for that day.

6.1.5 Religious Observances

Employees who wish to observe religious holidays not scheduled by Sevier County Government should discuss their request with their supervisor. Based on operational needs, the employee may be allowed to work on a normally observed holiday and take time off for a different religious observance. Employees may also switch shifts with another employee, use accrued annual leave, compensatory time, or take unpaid leave.

Sevier County Government will make reasonable efforts to accommodate religious observances in accordance with applicable law and the provisions outlined in this handbook.

6.2 Administrative Closure Leave

Sevier County Government recognizes that, from time to time, it may be necessary to close or modify operations due to inclement weather, emergencies, infrastructure failures, public safety events, designated special events or other occasions designated by the County Mayor or their designee. When such circumstances arise, the County Mayor or their designee may authorize an administrative closure and approve Administrative Closure Leave for affected employees.

Administrative Closure Leave is intended to ensure equitable and consistent compensation for employees when work schedules are impacted by County-directed closures.

6.2.1 Authorization of Administrative Closures

Administrative closures may be authorized by the County Mayor or their designee and may include:

- Full-day closures

- Delayed openings
- Early dismissals
- Department-specific closures
- Closures related to designated special events

Not all County offices or departments may be included in a closure. Determinations regarding scope and duration will be based on operational needs and public safety considerations.

6.2.2 Eligibility

Administrative Closure Leave is available to:

- Regular full-time employees; and
- Part-time employees who are scheduled to work during the period of an authorized closure

To be eligible, employees must:

- Be scheduled to work during the affected period; and
- Be prevented from working their regular schedule due to the closure

Employees who are not scheduled to work during the affected period are not eligible for Administrative Closure Leave.

6.2.3 Administrative Closure Leave Credit

When an administrative closure is declared, eligible employees will be credited Administrative Closure Leave based on the number of regularly scheduled work hours impacted by the closure. Administrative Closure Leave is limited to an employee's regularly established work schedule.

For full-day closures, employees will receive Administrative Closure Leave equal to their regular shift length, consistent with their standard schedule:

- 8-hour shifts: 8 hours
- 10-hour shifts: 10 hours

- 12-hour or longer shifts: 12 hours

For delayed openings, early dismissals, or partial closures, employees will receive Administrative Closure Leave only for the portion of their scheduled workday that was impacted by the closure.

For example, the County opens at 10:00 AM instead of 8:00 AM:

- Employee A normally works 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM → receives 2 hours of closure leave
- Employee B normally works 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM → receives 0 hours (schedule not impacted)
- Employee C normally works 7:00 AM – 3:30 PM → receives 3 hours (only the impacted portion of the shift is covered)

When only certain offices or departments are closed, Administrative Closure Leave will be granted only to employees assigned to the affected units whose scheduled hours are impacted.

6.2.4 Essential Position Designation Framework

Positions may be designated as essential based on operational, public safety, or continuity-of-government needs. Essential designations are categorized as follows:

6.2.4.1 Tier 1 — Always Essential

Tier 1 positions are required to maintain critical operations during administrative closures. Employees in these roles are generally expected to report to work during closures unless otherwise directed.

Examples of Tier 1 functions include:

- Emergency Management
- Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
- Law Enforcement
- Fire Services
- Dispatch / Communications
- Jail Operations

6.2.4.2 Tier 2 — Conditionally Essential

Tier 2 positions support operations that may be necessary depending on the type, severity, or duration of the event. Employees in these roles may be required to report to work based on operational needs.

Examples of Tier 2 functions include:

- Facilities / Maintenance
- Solid Waste
- Fleet Services
- Select Finance, Payroll, and Human Resources functions
- Information Technology (IT) Support
- Snow and Ice Removal
- Utilities Support

Activation of Tier 2 positions will be determined by Department Directors in coordination with the County Mayor's Office.

6.2.5 Expectations During Closures

Employee expectations during administrative closures are based on essential designation:

- Tier 1 employees are expected to report to work as directed.
- Tier 2 employees may be required to report based on activation decisions.
- Non-essential employees are not expected to report unless specifically approved.

Tier 2 and non-essential employees must receive prior approval from an Elected Official or Department Director before working during an administrative closure.

6.2.6 Compensation During Closures

Compensation during administrative closures will be administered based on employee designation and work status during the closure period.

- Employees who do not work due to an administrative closure will receive Administrative Closure Leave for all impacted scheduled hours.
- Employees who are required or approved to work during administrative closure will be compensated for all hours worked in accordance with applicable County pay policies.

Compensation for essential employees is determined by their designated tier:

- Tier 1 (Always Essential): Employees required to work during a closure will be compensated for hours worked. Administrative Closure Leave will not be credited for hours worked.
- Tier 2 (Conditionally Essential): Employees who are activated to work during a closure will be compensated for hours worked. In addition, Administrative Closure Leave may be credited for closure hours equivalent to those granted to similarly scheduled non-essential employees, provided activation has been approved in accordance with this policy.

Non-essential employees who are approved to work during an administrative closure will be compensated for hours worked. Administrative Closure Leave will not be credited for hours actually worked.

6.2.7 Designation Process

Departments must submit essential position designations to Human Resources. Human Resources will maintain a centralized registry of all essential designations, and employees will be notified in writing of their designation status. Temporary or event-specific designations may be assigned as necessary based on operational needs.

6.2.8 Treatment of Exempt Employees

In accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) salary basis rules:

- Exempt employees will not be subject to pay reductions for County-directed closures.
- Exempt employees whose schedules are impacted will be credited Administrative Closure Leave for the applicable hours.
- Administrative Closure Leave counts toward the required eighty (80) hours per pay period.
- Exempt employees may not be required to use unpaid leave for partial-day closures initiated by the County.

6.2.9 Relationship to Other Leave

Administrative Closure Leave:

- Is recorded in a separate leave category;
- Does not count as hours worked for overtime, compensatory time, or FLSA threshold calculations;
- Does not reduce annual, sick, or compensatory leave balances; and
- Replaces leave that would otherwise have been charged during the closure period.

Employees on pre-approved paid leave during a declared closure will not be charged leave for closure hours and will instead receive Administrative Closure Leave.

6.2.10 Use and Expiration

Administrative Closure Leave may be used for future scheduled absences with supervisory approval. When used for future absences, Administrative Closure Leave will generally be applied after compensatory time and Other approved leave balances available to exempt employees, and before annual leave, unless otherwise required by law or approved by the County Mayor or designee.

Unused Administrative Closure Leave:

- Expires at the end of the calendar year;
- Has no monetary value; and
- Is not payable upon separation from employment.

The County Mayor or their designee may authorize a one-time extension of up to sixty (60) days for the use of Administrative Closure Leave when operationally necessary or in the best interest of the County.

6.2.11 Recordkeeping

All Administrative Closure Leave must be accurately documented in the County's timekeeping system and approved by the appropriate supervisor.

Supervisors and payroll staff are responsible for ensuring proper coding and compliance with this policy.

6.3 Annual Leave

Sevier County Government recognizes the importance of time away from work for rest, family responsibilities, and personal activities. To support employee well-being, paid annual leave is provided to eligible regular, full-time employees, and employees are encouraged to use annual leave throughout the year.

6.3.1 Accrual of Annual Leave

Regular, full-time employees accrue annual leave according to the following schedule based on shift length and years of service:

	8-hr Shift	10-hr Shift	12-hr Shift	16-hr Shift	24-hr Shift	48-hr Shift
Years 1 - 5	8 hr/mo	8 hr/mo	10 hr/mo	12 hr/mo	12 hr/mo	12 hr/mo
Years 6 - 10	10 hr/mo	10 hr/mo	12 hr/mo	14 hr/mo	14 hr/mo	14 hr/mo
Years 11 - 20	12 hr/mo	12 hr/mo	14 hr/mo	18 hr/mo	18 hr/mo	18 hr/mo
Years 21+	16 hr/mo	16 hr/mo	18 hr/mo	24 hr/mo	24 hr/mo	24 hr/mo

Annual leave accrues on the last day of each month and may be used beginning the following month. Employees begin accruing leave immediately upon hire. Service time is calculated as of January 1 of each year, and accrual increases become effective on January 1 following the applicable service milestone.

Departments utilizing shifts shorter than those listed above will receive prorated annual leave based on the equivalent 8-hour shift accrual rate.

6.3.2 Eligibility

Employees must be in regular, full-time paid status for a full pay period during the month and be employed on the last day of the month to accrue annual leave. Employees in their initial employment period are eligible if these requirements are met.

6.3.3 Use of Annual Leave

Annual leave may be used only with advance approval from the employee's Official, Senior Director of Division, or Department Director.

General provisions include:

- Leave requests may be denied if granting the request would create an undue hardship on departmental operations.
- Employees may not transfer or loan annual leave to another employee.
- Annual leave must be used in increments of at least fifteen (15) minutes.
- When annual leave is used during a workweek, leave will be charged only to the extent necessary to reach the employee's maximum scheduled hours before overtime applies, as follows:
 - o Forty (40) hours per workweek for most employees;
 - o For law enforcement personnel under the 7(k) exemption, one hundred seventy-one (171) hours in a twenty-eight (28) day work period or eighty-six (86) hours in a fourteen (14) day work period; and
 - o For fire protection personnel under the 7(k) exemption, two hundred twelve (212) hours in a twenty-eight (28) day work period.
- Departments with regularly scheduled shifts exceeding forty (40) hours per workweek may use scheduled shift hours as the threshold, subject to approval by the County Mayor or designee.
- When compensatory time, administrative closure leave, annual leave, sick leave, or other approved leave balances are used in the same payroll period and hours exceed the applicable thresholds above, leave balances will generally be deducted in accordance with applicable County payroll and leave administration procedures.
- Annual leave is not counted as time worked for overtime calculations.

6.3.4 Absences Due to Inclement Weather

Annual leave will be charged for absences due to inclement weather unless an administrative closure is declared. Employees on approved leave during an administrative closure will not be charged leave for the closure period and will instead receive Administrative Closure Leave in accordance with *Section 6.2 – Administrative Closure Leave*.

6.3.5 Carryover

Employees may carry over up to ninety-six (96) hours of unused annual leave into the next calendar year. Any excess hours will be transferred to the employee's sick leave balance.

Employees who abuse sick leave or otherwise violate leave policies may be denied annual leave conversion to sick leave upon recommendation of their Official, Senior Director, or Department Head and approval by the County Mayor or designee.

6.3.6 Separation of Employment

Employees may not use annual leave during their notice period prior to separation unless otherwise approved by department leadership.

Employees who fail to provide or fulfill a minimum two-week notice, unless otherwise released from the notice requirement, or who are discharged from employment are not eligible for payment of accrued annual leave.

Employees terminated within one (1) year of their full-time hire date are not eligible for annual leave payout.

Employees with more than one (1) year of service who provide proper notice will be compensated for up to ninety-six (96) hours of accrued annual leave at their regular rate of pay. Excess hours will be transferred to sick leave for Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System (TCRS) retirement credit purposes.

In the event of an employee's death, up to ninety-six (96) hours of accrued annual leave will be paid to the employee's estate or surviving spouse as required by applicable law.

6.4 Sick Leave

Sevier County Government provides regular, full-time employees with paid sick leave. Eligible employees accrue sick leave hours monthly as shown below:

	Hours Per Month	Hours Per Year	Shifts
8-hr Shift	8	96	12
10-hr Shift	8	96	9.6
12-hr Shift	10	120	10
16-hr Shift	12	144	9
24-hr Shift	12	144	6
48-hr Shift	12	144	6

6.4.1 Eligibility

Employees must be in regular, full-time paid status for a full pay period during the month and employed on the last day of that month to accrue sick leave. Employees in their initial employment period are eligible if they meet these requirements.

6.4.2 Use of Sick Leave

Employees may use sick leave for absences due to their own illness or injury or the illness or injury of their spouse, children, grandchildren, parents, or individuals who stood in loco parentis during their childhood or whom they currently serve in loco parentis.

Employees may use sick leave for medical, dental, or other recognized practitioner appointments. Time spent attending appointments at the Sevier County Wellness Center will not be charged as sick leave. However, additional time away from work outside of the actual clinic appointment, such as time spent recovering or picking up medications, will be charged as sick leave.

Using sick leave under false pretenses is a serious violation and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Abuse of sick leave may also result in denial of annual leave carryover to sick leave as described in *Section 6.3 – Annual Leave*.

To be eligible for paid sick leave, employees must follow the notification procedures outlined in *Section 5.1 – Attendance Expectations*.

General provisions for sick leave include:

- Employees may not engage in outside employment or work another job during scheduled work hours while using paid sick leave unless otherwise approved.
- Sick leave may not be transferred or loaned to another employee.
- Sick leave must be taken in minimum increments of fifteen (15) minutes.
- When sick leave is used during a workweek or work period, leave balances will generally be charged only to the extent necessary to reach the employee's applicable overtime threshold. If additional hours worked during the same workweek or work period cause the employee to exceed the applicable threshold, leave balances may be adjusted accordingly.
 - o Forty (40) hours per workweek for most employees;

- For ambulance employees working 24-hour shifts, either forty-eight (48) or seventy-two (72) hours per week depending on the assigned schedule;
 - For law enforcement personnel under the 7(k) exemption, one hundred seventy-one (171) hours in a twenty-eight (28) day work period or eighty-six (86) hours in a fourteen (14) day work period; and
 - For fire protection personnel under the 7(k) exemption, two hundred twelve (212) hours in a twenty-eight (28) day work period.
- Departments with regularly scheduled hours that exceed standard overtime thresholds may administer leave usage based on approved scheduled shift hours rather than overtime thresholds, subject to approval by the County Mayor or designee.
 - When compensatory time, administrative closure leave, annual leave, sick leave, or other approved leave balances are used in the same payroll period and hours exceed the applicable thresholds above, leave balances will generally be deducted in accordance with applicable County payroll and leave administration procedures.
 - Sick leave is not considered time worked for overtime calculation purposes.

6.4.3 Carryover

Employees may carry over an unlimited amount of unused sick leave into the next calendar year.

6.4.4 Separation of Employment

Employees may not use sick leave during a notice period without providing a physician's statement.

Sick leave is not payable upon separation from employment. Instead, accrued sick leave will be applied toward Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System (TCRS) retirement credit in accordance with applicable TCRS rules and procedures.

6.4.4.1 Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System

Under TCRS, employees receive additional retirement credit for each twenty (20) days of unused sick leave. "Days" are calculated by dividing unused sick leave hours by the employee's accrual rate.

Employees with accruals prior to January 1, 2020, follow the same rules, except that hours accrued above twelve (12) per month are divided by twelve (12) to determine days. For employees with multiple accrual rates, efforts will be made to match sick leave hours accordingly; otherwise, a ratio will be applied.

6.5 Bereavement Leave

Sevier County Government provides paid bereavement leave to support employees during the difficult time following the death of an immediate family member.

Employees may be granted up to twenty-four (24) hours of bereavement leave per qualifying event for scheduled workdays in the event of a death in their immediate family. Bereavement leave is intended to provide employees time to attend funeral services, make necessary arrangements, and address immediate matters following the death of an immediate family member.

Bereavement leave should generally be used within ten (10) calendar days following the date of death unless otherwise approved by the employee's Official, Senior Director of Division, or Director of Department.

Immediate family includes spouse, parent, child(ren), sibling, grandparent, grandchild, corresponding step-relatives, in-laws of preceding relationship, and the employee's aunts, uncles, nieces, and nephews.

Bereavement leave is recorded as a separate leave category and does not affect an employee's annual leave or sick leave balances. Bereavement leave hours are paid but are not considered time worked for the purpose of calculating overtime and are not compensable as additional hours above the overtime threshold.

The Official, Senior Director of Division, or Director of Department will determine the number of leave hours approved based on the circumstances involved. Employees requesting bereavement leave may be required, at the discretion of their supervisor, to provide confirmation of the death, including an obituary notice, funeral program, or funeral home announcement.

In extraordinary circumstances, additional bereavement leave or other paid leave may be approved by the County Mayor, Official, or designee based on operational needs and the circumstances involved.

6.6 Civic Leave

Sevier County Government supports employees in fulfilling their civic obligations and public service duties. The following types of civic leave are available under this section.

6.6.1 Voting Leave

Employees who are eligible to vote in a Tennessee election may receive up to three (3) hours off from work to vote while the polls are open. The Official, Senior Director of Division, or Director of Department may determine the specific time the employee may be absent and the amount of leave granted.

Employees will receive Civic leave for this time, and the absence will not be deducted from any accrued leave balance. Voting leave will not count as hours worked for the purpose of calculating overtime.

If an employee's work schedule begins three (3) or more hours after the polls open or ends three (3) or more hours before the polls close, the Official, Senior Director of Division, or Director of Department is not required to grant voting leave.

Employees are encouraged to take advantage of early voting opportunities when available. Requests for voting leave should be made in advance in accordance with applicable Tennessee law.

6.6.2 Military Leave

Sevier County Government supports employees who serve in the uniformed services and provides military leave in accordance with applicable federal and state laws, including the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) and Tennessee Code Annotated.

6.6.2.1 Military Training Leave (Reservists)

Full-time employees who are members of a federal or state military reserve component are eligible for up to twenty (20) working days of paid military leave per calendar year for required training, including annual training and drills. This leave does not apply to weekend drills unless the employee is regularly scheduled to work on weekends.

Employees must submit official military orders when requesting leave.

Part-time employees may request unpaid military leave in accordance with applicable law.

6.6.2.2 Active-Duty Leave

Employees called to active-duty military service must promptly provide a copy of their official orders to their supervisor. Employees will be granted a leave of absence for the duration of their active-duty service.

Any time beyond the first twenty (20) working days of military leave in a calendar year will be unpaid unless the employee elects to use accrued leave. Sevier County Government does not supplement military pay during extended periods of active-duty leave.

6.6.2.3 Benefits During Leave

While on unpaid active-duty leave, employees do not accrue annual or sick leave.

Health insurance benefits may be continued for up to eighteen (18) months under USERRA, with the employee potentially responsible for up to 102% of the full premium. If the military service lasts thirty (30) days or less, the employee will pay only their normal share of the premium.

County retirement contributions will be suspended during the unpaid military leave and will resume upon the employee's return. Eligible employees may make up missed contributions upon reinstatement in accordance with applicable retirement plan rules.

6.6.2.4 Reemployment Rights

Employees returning from military service must notify Sevier County Government of their intent to return within the USERRA timelines:

- One (1) to thirty (30) days of service: report to work on the next scheduled shift following safe travel and rest;
- Thirty-one (31) to one hundred eighty (180) days of service: notify the County within fourteen (14) days of release from service; and
- One hundred eighty-one (181) or more days of service: notify the County within ninety (90) days of release from service.

Employees will be reinstated to the position they would have attained with reasonable certainty had they remained continuously employed, with the same seniority, status, and pay, subject to applicable qualifications and legal requirements.

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for service-connected disabilities as required by law.

Employees are encouraged to contact the Human Resources Department with questions regarding military leave, benefits continuation, or reemployment rights.

6.6.3 Veterans Day Leave

In accordance with Tennessee law, veterans—defined as former members of the United States Armed Forces and current or former members of a reserve or National Guard unit called into active military service of the United States—who are scheduled to work on Veterans Day (November 11) may request to take the day off without pay.

Requests may be denied if the absence would create significant operational disruption or economic hardship as permitted under applicable Tennessee law.

To request Veterans Day leave, employees must submit a written request to their immediate supervisor, Official, Senior Director of Division, or Director of Department at least one (1) month in advance. Employees must also provide proof of veteran status, such as a DD-214 or other official documentation of military service.

6.6.4 Jury and Witness Duty Leave

Sevier County Government encourages employees to fulfill their civic duties by serving on juries or responding to lawful subpoenas as witnesses.

Employees who receive a jury summons or subpoena must notify their supervisor as soon as possible and provide a copy of the summons or subpoena. Written certification of court service must be submitted to document the period of absence.

Employees who serve fewer than three (3) hours in a day, including travel time, are expected to report to work for the remainder of their shift. If service and travel exceed three (3) hours, the employee will be excused for the remainder of that day.

Night shift employees or those working schedules prior to standard court hours will be excused from the shift immediately preceding the first day of jury service. After the first day, if service exceeds three (3) hours, the employee will be excused from the next scheduled shift occurring within twenty-four (24) hours.

Full-time and part-time employees will receive their regular pay while serving on jury duty or appearing as a witness under subpoena. Any compensation received for jury service, excluding mileage or expense reimbursements, will be deducted from the employee's County compensation.

These pay provisions do not apply if the employee is a party to a private legal matter. In such cases, the employee must use annual leave, compensatory time, or leave without pay.

If an employee is subpoenaed or requested to appear as an expert witness in a personal or professional capacity unrelated to their County employment and receives compensation, the absence must be covered by annual leave, compensatory time, or leave without pay.

6.6.5 Emergency Responder Leave

Sevier County Government values employees who serve as volunteer emergency responders and recognizes their important role in public safety. Employees who volunteer as firefighters, emergency medical technicians, or members of a recognized rescue squad may request leave to respond to emergencies during working hours.

To be eligible:

- The employee must provide documentation of affiliation with a recognized emergency response organization;
- The employee must notify their supervisor as soon as possible when responding to an emergency; and
- Leave may only be granted if the absence does not unduly disrupt County operations or public safety.

Leave under this section:

- Is unpaid unless the employee elects to use accrued annual leave or compensatory time;
- Will not be considered unexcused if approved or promptly reported; and
- May require written confirmation from the emergency response agency verifying participation.

6.7 Other Leave

Officials and Senior Directors of Division may approve discretionary “Other” leave to regular, full-time employees under unique or extraordinary circumstances, including significant additional work demands, emergencies, special projects, or operational needs.

This leave is primarily intended for exempt employees who, after administrative review and approval, have performed substantial additional work beyond normal job expectations. “Other” leave is discretionary, is not accrued or earned based on hours worked, and may be granted only with appropriate approval.

Directors of Department may request “Other” leave for employees by submitting justification to their Senior Director of Division or Official for approval. Officials may establish department-specific administrative procedures for the approval and use of “Other” leave consistent with County policy.

Use of approved “Other” leave must be authorized by the employee’s Official, Senior Director of Division, or Director of Department and may be limited or denied based on operational needs.

“Other” leave:

- Has no monetary value;
- Does not carry over unless specifically approved;
- Is not payable upon separation from employment; and
- Is not considered hours worked for overtime calculation purposes.

Additionally, “Other” leave may be approved during the pre-employment process for exempt or non-exempt employees with pre-scheduled travel plans or similar commitments. Such leave must be approved by the Official or Senior Director of Division at the request of the Director of Department and properly documented with Human Resources during the hiring process.

“Other” leave is not intended to replace sick leave, annual leave, compensatory time, administrative closure leave or any other leave category provided by Sevier County Government. This leave will be administered in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local laws.

6.8 Leave Without Pay

Regular, full-time employees may be granted unpaid leave under certain circumstances when approved leave balances are unavailable, insufficient, or otherwise not applicable.

Requests for leave without pay must be submitted in advance and may be approved for a cumulative period of up to thirty (30) calendar days per year by the employee’s Official, Senior Director of Division, or Director of Department.

Requests exceeding thirty (30) calendar days must receive additional approval from the County Mayor or designee.

This section does not apply to unpaid leave related to medical conditions, disabilities, pregnancy, military service, or family care needs, which are governed by applicable federal and state laws and other applicable County leave policies.

All leave without pay under this section is discretionary and subject to operational needs. Approved leave without pay may be modified or discontinued if operational circumstances require. Employees whose leave without pay is discontinued may be required to return to work as directed or use available approved leave balances in accordance with County leave administration procedures.

Leave without pay does not create a guarantee of continued employment, reinstatement rights beyond those required by law, or additional benefits unless otherwise required by applicable law or County policy.

6.9 Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

Sevier County Government complies with the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), which provides eligible employees with unpaid, job-protected leave for qualifying family and medical reasons. During approved FMLA leave, group health insurance coverage will generally continue under the same terms and conditions as if the employee had remained actively employed.

If any provision of this policy conflicts with applicable law, the law will govern. Employees with questions regarding FMLA leave should contact the Human Resources Department.

6.9.1 Eligibility

Employees are eligible for FMLA leave if they:

- Have worked for Sevier County Government for at least twelve (12) months; and
- Have worked at least one thousand two hundred fifty (1,250) hours during the twelve (12) months immediately preceding the leave request.

The twelve (12) months of employment do not need to be consecutive and may include previous periods of employment with Sevier County Government, as permitted by law. Periods of absence due to qualifying military service will be counted in accordance with applicable federal law.

6.9.2 Key Employee Rule

Certain highly compensated employees classified as “key employees” under FMLA regulations may be subject to limitations on reinstatement rights as permitted by law.

6.9.3 Qualifying Reasons

Eligible employees may take FMLA leave for one or more of the following reasons:

1. The birth of a child and care for the newborn child within one (1) year of birth;
2. Placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care and care for the newly placed child within one (1) year of placement;
3. To care for the employee's spouse, child, or parent with a serious health condition;
4. For the employee's own serious health condition that prevents the employee from performing the essential functions of their position;
5. For qualifying exigencies arising out of the employee's spouse, child, or parent being on covered active duty or called to covered active-duty status; or
6. To care for a covered servicemember with a serious injury or illness.

6.9.4 Amount of Leave

Eligible employees may take up to twelve (12) workweeks of unpaid FMLA leave during a rolling twelve (12) month period measured backward from the date FMLA leave is used.

Eligible employees caring for a covered servicemember with a serious injury or illness may take up to twenty-six (26) workweeks of leave during a single twelve (12) month period. This period begins on the first day leave is used for this purpose. Any FMLA leave used for other qualifying reasons during the same period will count toward the twenty-six (26) week entitlement.

If both spouses are employed by Sevier County Government and are eligible for FMLA leave, they may be limited to a combined total of twelve (12) workweeks of leave for:

- The birth and care of a newborn child;
- Placement of a child for adoption or foster care; or
- Care of a parent with a serious health condition.

Spouses employed by Sevier County Government may also be limited to a combined total of twenty-six (26) workweeks of leave to care for a covered servicemember when both spouses are qualifying family members of the servicemember.

6.9.5 Intermittent Leave or Reduced Work Schedule

FMLA leave may be taken in a continuous block, intermittently, or on a reduced work schedule when medically necessary or otherwise permitted by law.

Sevier County Government may temporarily transfer an employee taking intermittent or reduced schedule leave to an alternative position with equivalent pay and benefits when permitted by law.

Intermittent or reduced schedule leave for the birth, adoption, or foster placement of a child requires approval by Sevier County Government and must be completed within one (1) year of the child's birth or placement.

Employees are expected to make reasonable efforts to schedule planned medical treatment so as to minimize disruption to County operations.

6.9.6 Employee Notice Requirements

Employees must provide at least thirty (30) days' advance notice when the need for FMLA leave is foreseeable. When thirty (30) days' notice is not practicable, employees must provide notice as soon as practicable under the circumstances.

Human Resources will provide employees with required eligibility notices, rights and responsibilities information, and any required certification forms in accordance with applicable law.

6.9.7 Documentation and Certification

Employees may be required to provide medical certification supporting the need for leave related to their own serious health condition or that of a qualifying family member.

In circumstances permitted by law, Sevier County Government may require a second medical opinion at the County's expense.

The County may also require reasonable documentation confirming a qualifying family relationship.

Employees returning from leave for their own serious health condition may be required to provide a fitness-for-duty certification before returning to work.

6.9.8 Designation of Leave

The Human Resources Department will determine whether leave qualifies for FMLA protection and will provide designation notices in accordance with applicable law.

6.9.9 Compensation During Leave

FMLA leave is generally unpaid. Employees may elect or may be required to use available paid leave balances concurrently with FMLA leave in accordance with applicable County leave policies and federal law.

Available leave options may include:

- Annual Leave;
- Sick Leave;
- Compensatory Time;
- Administrative Closure Leave, when applicable;
- Other approved leave balances; or
- Short-Term Disability benefits, when applicable.

If leave is related to a work-related injury or illness, workers' compensation benefits may run concurrently with FMLA leave when permitted by law.

Human Resources will provide employees with information regarding available leave options and benefit continuation during approved leave.

6.9.10 Return to Work and Employment Status

Employees are expected to return to work at the conclusion of approved FMLA leave.

Upon return from FMLA leave, employees will generally be restored to their previous position or an equivalent position with equivalent pay, benefits, and terms and conditions of employment, unless otherwise permitted by law.

Employees returning from leave due to their own serious health condition may be required to provide a healthcare provider's release identifying the employee's ability to return to work and any applicable restrictions.

If an employee is unable to return to work at the conclusion of FMLA leave, Sevier County Government will evaluate whether additional leave or accommodations may be required under applicable law.

Employees engaging in activities inconsistent with the stated purpose of the leave or providing false or misleading information may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

6.9.11 Interpretation of Terms

Terms used in this policy, including “serious health condition,” “covered servicemember,” “qualifying exigency,” “spouse,” “child,” and “parent,” will be interpreted in accordance with the Family and Medical Leave Act and applicable regulations.

6.10 Tennessee Parental Leave Act

Eligible full-time employees who have completed at least twelve (12) consecutive months of service may take up to four (4) months of unpaid leave for adoption, pregnancy, childbirth, or nursing an infant in accordance with applicable Tennessee law.

Leave under this section will run concurrently with Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leave when applicable.

Employees may elect or may be required to use available paid leave balances concurrently with parental leave in accordance with applicable County leave policies and law. Available leave options may include:

- Annual Leave;
- Sick Leave;
- Compensatory Time;
- Administrative Closure Leave, when applicable;
- Other approved leave balances; or
- Short-Term Disability benefits, when applicable.

Employees should provide advance notice of the need for leave whenever practicable, including the anticipated start date, expected duration, and intent to return to work. Failure to provide advance notice will not affect an

employee's rights under applicable law when notice is not practicable due to medical circumstances, adoption placement timing, or other qualifying reasons.

Employees returning from approved parental leave will generally be restored to their previous position or a comparable position with equivalent pay, benefits, status, seniority, and length of service as required by applicable law.

In limited circumstances permitted by law, reinstatement may not be guaranteed.

Employees with questions regarding parental leave should contact the Human Resources Department.

6.11 Paid Maternity Leave

Eligible employees who give birth may receive up to four (4) weeks of paid maternity leave following childbirth, subject to applicable County procedures and approval requirements.

Paid maternity leave under this section will run concurrently with Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leave, Tennessee Parental Leave Act leave, and any other applicable leave entitlements where permitted by law.

Employees must provide reasonable notice of the need for leave and coordinate leave scheduling with their supervisor and the Human Resources Department whenever practicable. Paid maternity leave under this section is intended to be taken continuously following childbirth unless otherwise approved.

Employees may be required or permitted to use available paid leave balances concurrently with paid maternity leave in accordance with applicable County leave policies and law.

Benefits, including health insurance, will generally continue during approved paid maternity leave under the same conditions applicable to active employees.

Employees returning from leave are expected to resume regular job duties. Requests for transitional work restrictions or accommodations following childbirth will be evaluated in accordance with applicable law.

Sevier County Government will administer this leave in compliance with applicable federal and state laws, including the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), the Tennessee Parental Leave Act, the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA), and applicable anti-discrimination laws.

6.12 Non-FMLA Medical Leave

Sevier County Government may grant medical leave beyond Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leave for qualifying medical conditions when additional leave is determined to be appropriate and not otherwise required by law. Unless otherwise required by applicable law or approved as a reasonable accommodation, non-FMLA medical leave is generally limited to a cumulative maximum of six (6) months within a rolling twelve (12) month period.

Intermittent leave under this section is generally not permitted unless approved as a reasonable accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

6.12.1 Eligibility

Employees who are not eligible for FMLA leave or who have exhausted available FMLA leave and who experience a qualifying medical condition requiring an absence of five (5) or more consecutive workdays may request leave under this section.

6.12.2 Requesting Leave

Employees should provide at least thirty (30) days' advance notice of the need for leave whenever practicable. If thirty (30) days' notice is not possible, notice must be provided as soon as practicable under the circumstances.

Medical documentation supporting the need for leave may be required and must be submitted to the Human Resources Department within applicable deadlines established by the County. Failure to provide required documentation may result in denial of leave or the absence being treated as unauthorized.

6.12.3 Compensation During Leave

Employees may be required to use available paid leave balances and applicable disability benefits concurrently with non-FMLA medical leave in accordance with applicable County leave policies and law. Once available paid leave balances and applicable benefits are exhausted, the remaining leave period will generally be unpaid.

6.12.4 Employment Status After Leave

Non-FMLA medical leave does not guarantee job restoration or continued employment beyond rights provided by applicable law. However, Sevier County Government will generally attempt to return employees to their prior position or an equivalent position with similar pay and benefits when operationally feasible.

If reinstatement is not possible, the employee will be notified accordingly.

Employees on leave are expected to maintain reasonable communication with their supervisor and the Human Resources Department regarding their anticipated return-to-work status and any changes affecting the leave period.

6.12.5 Returning from Leave

Employees are expected to return to work at the conclusion of approved leave unless additional leave or accommodation has been approved.

Before returning from leave due to the employee's own medical condition, employees may be required to provide a healthcare provider's release identifying the employee's ability to return to work and any applicable restrictions.

If an employee returns with medical restrictions, Sevier County Government will evaluate whether the restrictions can be reasonably accommodated in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

If an employee is unable to return to work at the conclusion of approved leave and no additional protected leave or reasonable accommodation is available, employment may be separated in accordance with applicable law and County policy.

Failure to return to work as scheduled or failure to maintain communication regarding leave status may result in disciplinary action, up to and including separation from employment.

6.13 Employee Benefits During Leave

Sevier County Government will maintain employee health benefits during approved leave at the same level and under the same conditions as if the employee had remained actively employed, unless otherwise provided by applicable law, benefit plan requirements, or County policy. Benefit accruals during leave will be administered in accordance with applicable County policies, benefit plans, and law.

During periods of paid leave, insurance premium deductions will continue through normal payroll deductions.

During periods of unpaid leave, employees are responsible for paying required insurance premiums directly to the Finance Department by the fifteenth (15th) day of the following month. Coverage may be suspended or terminated if premium payments become more than thirty (30) days delinquent. Sevier County Government will provide any required notice prior to termination of coverage in accordance with applicable law and benefit plan requirements.

6.14 Leave Recordkeeping

Employees are responsible for accurately documenting leave usage using County-approved forms or the Human Resources Information System (HRIS), as applicable.

Completed leave documentation must be submitted in accordance with applicable County procedures to the employee's Official, Senior Director of Division, or Director of Department.

Leave records will be maintained by Sevier County Government in accordance with applicable record retention requirements and County procedures.

Employee Benefits and Programs

Sevier County Government offers eligible employees a variety of benefit programs designed to support employee health, financial security, and wellness.

Detailed information regarding eligibility, enrollment procedures, coverage levels, premiums, exclusions, limitations, claim procedures, continuation rights, and other plan provisions is provided in the applicable Summary Plan Descriptions (SPDs), benefit guides, plan documents, insurance contracts, and enrollment materials. Employees are responsible for reviewing these materials and complying with applicable enrollment and reporting requirements.

In the event of any conflict between this handbook and the applicable benefit plan documents or insurance contracts, the official plan documents will control.

Sevier County Government reserves the right to interpret, modify, amend, suspend, or terminate any benefit plan, contribution, premium structure, eligibility provision, or program at any time in accordance with applicable law.

7.1 Benefits Eligibility and Enrollment

7.1.1 Eligibility

Regular, full-time employees, defined as employees regularly scheduled to work at least thirty (30) hours per week, are generally eligible to participate in County-sponsored benefit programs unless otherwise approved by the County Mayor or required by law.

Part-time, temporary, seasonal, and other non-regular employees are generally not eligible for County-sponsored benefits unless specifically provided by the applicable plan documents or required by law.

Benefit eligibility may vary depending on the specific plan or program. Employees should refer to applicable plan documents or contact the Human Resources Department for additional information.

Employees rehired within six (6) months of separation generally will not be required to complete a new benefits waiting period and may resume eligibility in accordance with applicable plan provisions.

7.1.2 Effective Dates

Unless otherwise specified by the applicable plan, benefit coverage generally becomes effective on the first (1st) day of the month following completion of sixty (60) days of continuous full-time employment.

7.1.3 Enrollment Process

Eligible employees must complete the required enrollment process within thirty (30) days of becoming eligible for benefits. Failure to timely enroll may result in forfeiture of coverage until the next open enrollment period unless the employee experiences a qualifying life event consistent with applicable plan rules.

Enrollment may be completed through the County's Human Resources Information System (HRIS) or through other County-approved enrollment procedures.

7.1.4 Dependent Coverage

Eligible employees may enroll qualifying dependents in certain benefit plans in accordance with applicable plan documents.

Eligible dependents generally include:

- Legal spouse;
- Dependent children up to twenty-six (26), including biological children, stepchildren, adopted children, children placed for adoption, or children under legal guardianship; and
- Children who qualify for continued dependent coverage due to disability in accordance with applicable plan provisions.

Employees are responsible for notifying the Human Resources Department within thirty (30) days of any change affecting dependent eligibility, including marriage, divorce, birth, adoption, or loss of other coverage.

Sevier County Government may require documentation verifying dependent eligibility in accordance with applicable plan requirements

7.1.5 Open Enrollment and Qualifying Events

Sevier County Government conducts an annual open enrollment period during which eligible employees may enroll in, modify, or cancel benefit elections.

Outside of open enrollment, benefit changes are generally permitted only following a qualifying life event in accordance with applicable law and plan requirements.

Qualifying events may include:

- Marriage or divorce;
- Birth, adoption, or placement of a child;
- Death of a dependent;
- Loss or gain of other insurance coverage; or
- Other qualifying events recognized under applicable law or plan rules.

Employees may be required to provide supporting documentation and complete all required enrollment changes within applicable deadlines.

7.1.6 Additional Information

Employees are encouraged to review applicable plan documents and annual enrollment materials for detailed information regarding coverage options, premiums, deductibles, exclusions, and claim procedures.

7.2 Group Health Insurance and Wellness Benefits

Sevier County Government offers group health insurance coverage to eligible employees and eligible dependents in accordance with applicable plan provisions.

7.2.1 Fair Share Provision

To assist with management of healthcare costs, Sevier County Government maintains a Fair Share provision applicable to employees who enroll spouses in the County's health insurance plan.

If an employee's spouse is eligible for employer-sponsored health insurance and declines that coverage while enrolling in the County's plan as primary coverage, an additional premium surcharge may apply. Employees whose spouses maintain primary coverage through another employer-sponsored plan may enroll the spouse in the County's plan as secondary coverage without the surcharge, subject to applicable plan requirements.

Employees are required to certify spouse coverage eligibility and status during open enrollment or as otherwise required by the County.

7.2.2 Prescription Drug Program and Reimbursement Arrangements

Eligible employees and dependents enrolled in the County medical plan may have access to prescription drug benefits and certain County-sponsored reimbursement arrangements in accordance with applicable plan provisions.

Available reimbursement arrangements may include employee-funded or employer-funded programs for eligible medical, dental, vision, prescription, or wellness-related expenses as determined by the County and applicable plan documents.

7.2.3 Group Life and Disability Benefits

Eligible employees may have access to County-sponsored life insurance and long-term disability benefits in accordance with applicable plan provisions.

Long-term disability benefits do not guarantee continued employment or job restoration rights beyond those otherwise required by law.

7.2.4 Sevier County Wellness Clinic

The Sevier County Wellness Clinic is available to eligible employees and dependents enrolled in the County medical plan in accordance with applicable clinic guidelines and plan provisions.

7.2.5 Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Sevier County Government provides an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) designed to assist employees with personal or work-related issues that may affect well-being or job performance.

The EAP provides confidential counseling, referral, and support services in accordance with applicable program guidelines. Information regarding employee participation in the EAP is maintained confidentially to the extent permitted by law.

7.3 Voluntary Supplemental Benefits

Sevier County Government may offer eligible employees access to voluntary and supplemental benefit programs through payroll deduction or County-sponsored funding arrangements.

Available programs may include dental insurance, vision insurance, disability insurance, life insurance, flexible spending accounts, reimbursement arrangements, supplemental medical coverage, wellness-related programs, emergency transport coverage, and other optional benefits.

Participation in voluntary or supplemental benefit programs is subject to applicable eligibility requirements, enrollment procedures, premiums, plan limitations, exclusions, and claim procedures established by the applicable plan documents, insurance contracts, and enrollment materials.

7.4 Sevier County Fitness Center

Sevier County Government provides eligible employees, retirees, and approved family members access to the Employee Fitness Center in support of employee health and wellness initiatives.

Access to the Fitness Center is a privilege and may be modified, suspended, or revoked at any time in accordance with County policy.

7.4.1 Eligibility and Access

Fitness Center access may be available to:

- Full-time employees of Sevier County Government or the Sevier County Highway Department;
- Spouses and dependents ages fourteen (14) through twenty-one (21) of eligible employees, provided the employee maintains active Fitness Center access;
- Retirees who actively utilized the Fitness Center for at least two (2) years immediately prior to retirement and who elected continued access at the time of retirement; and
- Other individuals approved by the County Mayor or their designee.

7.4.2 Access Procedures

Eligible users must complete all required waiver forms, payment requirements, and access procedures established by the Human Resources Department.

To obtain Fitness Center access, eligible users must:

1. Complete the required Fitness Center waiver documentation;
2. Submit the required access fee to the Trustee's Office; and

3. Provide the signed waiver and payment receipt to the Human Resources Department.

The Human Resources Department will coordinate access with Information Services. Existing access control badges or fobs may be updated to include Fitness Center access. Individuals without an existing access credential may be issued a separate Fitness Center access card or fob.

7.4.3 Annual Renewal

Annual renewal is required for all non-employee users, including spouses, dependents, retirees, and other approved users.

Renewal requirements include:

- Submission of an updated waiver form;
- Payment of the required annual access fee; and
- Completion of all renewal requirements by January 31st of each year.

Failure to complete renewal requirements by the deadline may result in suspension or loss of Fitness Center access. Retirees who fail to timely renew may permanently lose eligibility for continued access.

7.4.4 User Responsibilities

Fitness Center users are responsible for:

- Using equipment safely and appropriately;
- Reporting damaged or malfunctioning equipment;
- Maintaining a current waiver on file with the Human Resources Department; and
- Complying with all posted Fitness Center rules and County policies.

Users who fail to maintain current waiver documentation or otherwise fail to comply with Fitness Center requirements may have access suspended or revoked without notice.

7.4.5 Additional Requirements

Sevier County Government reserves the right to establish additional Fitness Center procedures, operational requirements, access controls, fees, and safety rules as necessary for administration of the facility.

Questions regarding access, badges, cards, or Fitness Center administration should be directed to the Human Resources Department.

7.4.6 Definitions

For purposes of this policy:

- **Employee:** Any full-time employee of Sevier County Government or the Sevier County Highway Department eligible for Fitness Center access.
- **Dependent:** A spouse, child between the ages of fourteen (14) and twenty-one (21), or other legal dependent of a current eligible employee approved for Fitness Center access.
- **Retiree:** A former Sevier County Government employee utilizing the County insurance plan until Medicare eligibility and meeting the eligibility requirements outlined in this policy.
- **Other User:** Any individual granted Fitness Center access by the County Mayor or designee.

7.5 Retiree Insurance Benefits

Sevier County Government provides retiree insurance benefits for eligible employees and Officials who retire from Sevier County Government through the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System (TCRS), subject to applicable County policies, plan provisions, and eligibility requirements.

7.5.1 Retiree Eligibility

Employees eligible for retiree insurance coverage must:

- Complete at least fifteen (15) consecutive years in regular, full-time status with the County immediately preceding the official date of retirement; and
- Be at least fifty-five (55) years of age at retirement, but not yet sixty-five (65) or Medicare eligible, whichever occurs first.

7.5.2 Spouse Eligibility

Spouses of employees may qualify for coverage if they:

- Are the spouse of an employee who has completed at least fifteen (15) consecutive years in regular, full-time status with the County immediately preceding the official date of retirement;

- Are the spouse of an employee who is at least fifty-five (55) years of age at retirement,
- Are at least fifty-five (55) years of age at the employee's retirement, but not yet age sixty-five (65) or Medicare eligible, whichever occurs first;
- Have been covered under the employee's County health insurance coverage for at least two (2) consecutive years immediately preceding the official date of retirement;
- Are not employed by Sevier County Government; and
- Are not eligible for another group health plan.

Other dependents are not eligible for coverage under this program.

An eligible spouse who is properly enrolled at the time of the employee's retirement may continue coverage until reaching age sixty-five (65) or becoming Medicare eligible, whichever occurs first, even if the retired employee subsequently loses eligibility due to reaching age sixty-five (65) or becoming Medicare eligible.

Effective January 1, 2027, in order for a spouse to be eligible, the employee must meet the employee eligibility requirements as listed in Section 7.5.1 above at time of retirement.

7.5.3 Election

Eligible employees must elect retiree coverage for themselves and/or an eligible spouse on or before the official retirement date. Failure to timely elect coverage will result in forfeiture of eligibility.

Employees electing retiree coverage for themselves only may not later add a spouse to the plan.

7.5.4 Coverage Continuation and Termination

7.5.4.1 Employee Coverage

Retiree insurance coverage for an eligible employee will terminate at the end of the month in which:

- The employee reaches age sixty-five (65) or becomes Medicare eligible, whichever occurs first;
- The employee enrolls in another group health plan; or
- The employee voluntarily terminates coverage.

If coverage is terminated due to eligibility for another group health plan, eligibility for County retiree coverage will not be restored if the other coverage later ends.

If the retired employee dies, coverage for both the employee and eligible spouse will terminate at the end of that month.

7.5.4.2 Spouse Coverage

Eligible spouse coverage will terminate at the end of the month in which:

- The spouse reaches age sixty-five (65) or becomes Medicare eligible, whichever occurs first;
- The spouse becomes eligible for another group health plan;
- The employee voluntarily terminates coverage; or
- The retired employee dies.

If spouse coverage terminates due to eligibility for another group health plan, eligibility will not be restored if the other coverage later ends.

Nothing in this section shall be interpreted to terminate an otherwise eligible spouse's coverage solely because the retired employee reaches age sixty-five (65) or becomes Medicare eligible.

7.5.5 Premium Responsibility

Eligible retirees are responsible for payment of any required fees or premiums associated with this benefit as determined by the County.

Failure to remit payment within thirty (30) days of the due date may result in cancellation of the benefit. Once terminated for non-payment, the benefit will not be reinstated.

7.5.6 Officials Eligibility

County Officials, including County Commissioners, who satisfy the same eligibility requirements applicable to employees may participate in the retiree insurance program.

Service as a regular employee immediately preceding service as an eligible Official may be counted toward the service requirement if there is no break in service.

State officials are not eligible for this benefit.

7.6 Retiree Wellness Clinic Benefit

The Sevier County Government Retiree Insurance Program provides benefits for eligible employees who retire from Sevier County Government through the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System prior to Medicare eligibility.

7.6.1 Employee Eligibility

Employees are eligible for the Retiree Wellness Clinic Benefit if they:

- Complete at least forty-four (44) consecutive years in regular, full-time status immediately preceding the official date of retirement;
- Have been covered under the County health insurance coverage for at least ten (10) consecutive years immediately preceding the official date of retirement; and
- Retire on or after July 1, 2025.

7.6.2 Spouse Eligibility

Spouses of eligible employees may qualify if they:

- Are at least fifty-five (55) years of age at the employee's retirement; and
- Have been covered under the employee's County health insurance coverage for at least ten (10) consecutive years immediately preceding the official date of retirement.

Eligible spouses may continue participation until the death of the employee or as otherwise provided under applicable County rules and procedures.

Other dependents are not eligible for this benefit.

7.6.3 Election

Eligible employees must elect the Retiree Wellness Clinic Benefit for themselves and/or an eligible spouse on or before the official retirement date. Failure to timely elect the benefit will result in forfeiture of eligibility.

Employees electing the benefit for themselves only may not later add a spouse.

7.6.5 Premium Responsibility

Eligible employees are responsible for premium payments for this benefit as determined by the County. Non-payment will result in cancellation of coverage if non-payment extends to 30 days beyond the due date. The benefit will not be restarted at that date.

7.6.5 Officials Eligibility

The following Officials who satisfy the same forty-four (44) consecutive year service requirement applicable to employees may elect this benefit upon conclusion of service:

- County Mayor
- Trustee
- County Clerk
- Clerks of Court
- Assessor of Property
- Register of Deeds
- Sheriff
- Highway Superintendent
- General Sessions Judges
- County Commissioners

Service as a regular employee immediately preceding service as an eligible Official may be counted toward the forty-four (44) year requirement if there is no break in service. For example, if the Trustee's service is ending and the term ends August 30, 2026 with a total of twenty-four (24) years as Trustee (first elected September 1, 2002); however, the Trustee immediately prior without interruption of service was an employee of Sevier County Government from September 1, 1980 to August 31, 2000

State officials and officials not specifically identified above are not eligible for this benefit.

7.6.6 Benefit Details

This benefit includes practitioner access only. Any supplies or pharmaceuticals as provided by the clinic are not included and will not be supplied to the eligible employee or spouse. Practitioner may issue prescriptions that can be fulfilled at pharmacies or other suppliers with the associated costs paid by the individual and/or their insurance/Medicare.

7.7 Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System (TCRS)

Sevier County Government participates in the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System (TCRS), a defined benefit retirement plan administered by the State of Tennessee. Enrollment in TCRS is mandatory for all regular, full-time employees following the successful completion of a six (6) month initial employment period. Upon eligibility, employees are automatically enrolled in the plan and participate in accordance with applicable TCRS rules and requirements.

In addition to the mandatory TCRS defined benefit plan, Sevier County Government offers eligible employees the option to participate in a TCRS-sponsored 401(k) plan. Participation in the 401(k) is voluntary and allows employees to contribute pre-tax and/or post-tax earnings toward additional retirement savings. Employees may choose their contribution amount and investment options and may change their elections in accordance with applicable plan rules. The County does not currently provide a matching contribution.

For more information regarding TCRS benefits, retirement savings plans, contribution limits, investment options, and distribution rules, employees should contact Human Resources or visit RetireReadyTN.gov.

In the event of any conflict between this handbook and the applicable TCRS plan documents, the official plan documents will govern.

7.8 Workers' Compensation

Sevier County Government maintains workers' compensation coverage for employees for compensable work-related injuries and occupational illnesses in accordance with Tennessee law.

All work-related injuries or illnesses, regardless of severity, must be reported immediately to the employee's supervisor, the Human Resources Department, and the Director of Safety. Timely reporting helps ensure appropriate medical treatment and compliance with applicable workers' compensation requirements. Failure to timely report a work-related injury or illness may affect eligibility for benefits as provided by Tennessee law.

Employees are protected from retaliation, including discharge or discrimination, for reporting work-related injuries or illnesses, in compliance with applicable state and federal laws.

Fraudulent claims, including misrepresenting the cause, extent, or existence of an injury, are strictly prohibited and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment, as well as possible criminal prosecution under applicable workers' compensation fraud laws.

For questions regarding workers' compensation coverage or procedures, employees should contact the Human Resources Department.

7.9 COBRA Continuation Coverage

In accordance with the federal Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1986 (COBRA), eligible employees, spouses, and dependents may have the opportunity to continue group health insurance coverage following certain qualifying events that would otherwise result in a loss of coverage.

Qualifying events may include, but are not limited to:

- Termination of employment (other than for gross misconduct);
- Reduction in hours resulting in loss of eligibility;
- Divorce or legal separation;
- A dependent child ceasing to meet eligibility requirements under the plan;
- The employee's death;
- A determination of disability by the Social Security Administration; or
- A second qualifying event recognized under applicable law.

Employees and qualified beneficiaries are responsible for providing any required notices and documentation related to qualifying events within the timeframes required by applicable law and plan procedures. Failure to provide timely notice may result in the loss of continuation coverage rights.

Individuals who elect COBRA continuation coverage are responsible for payment of applicable premiums and any allowable administrative fees as permitted by law. Coverage may be retroactive to the date coverage would otherwise have been lost if elected and paid for within the required timeframes.

COBRA eligibility, continuation periods, premium obligations, election procedures, and termination of coverage are governed by applicable federal law and plan provisions. Employees and qualified beneficiaries should refer to their COBRA election notice and applicable plan documents for complete information regarding continuation coverage rights and responsibilities.

Questions regarding COBRA continuation coverage should be directed to the Human Resources Department.

Code of Conduct

Sevier County Government employees are expected to uphold the highest standards of honesty, integrity, impartiality, and professionalism to ensure effective operations and maintain public trust. This includes respecting the rights of others and avoiding behavior—whether on or off the job—that could negatively reflect on the employee, coworkers, or Sevier County Government.

Violations of established policies, rules, regulations, professional standards, or applicable laws may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

8.1 General Standards of Conduct

Employees shall comply with all applicable federal and state laws, County ordinances, resolutions, policies, procedures, and lawful directives issued by authorized supervisors.

Employees shall not engage in any action that could result in or give the appearance of:

- Using public office for private gain;
- Giving preferential treatment to any individual;
- Impeding the efficiency or economy of County operations;
- Making decisions outside official channels; or
- Undermining public confidence in Sevier County Government.

Employees who become aware of suspected fraud, theft, misuse of public resources, violations of law, or other significant misconduct are encouraged to promptly report the matter through appropriate supervisory, Human Resources, or other designated reporting channels.

An Official or employee - or their spouse or dependent residing in the same household – shall not solicit or accept any gift, gratuity, or favor from any person or entity other than the County if:

- It is offered in return for an action the employee would normally be expected to perform or refrain from performing in their duties; or

- A reasonable person would perceive it as intended to influence the employee's vote, action, or judgment in the conduct of County business.

8.2 Political Activity

Sevier County employees may engage in political activities in their personal capacity as permitted by applicable law. Employees seeking election to public office should be aware of potential conflicts of interest, conflicts with County duties, and any restrictions imposed by federal, state, or local law. If a conflict of interest arises, the Sevier County Commission Intergovernmental Committee will review the situation to determine whether a conflict exists and identify any necessary actions to resolve it.

8.2.1 Prohibited Political Activities

The Hatch Act imposes certain restrictions on employees of entities that receive federal funding and grants. Employees are responsible for complying with any applicable restrictions imposed by the Hatch Act and other laws governing political activity.

The following political activities are prohibited for Sevier County employees, including while on leave regardless of pay status:

- Using official authority or influence to interfere with or affect the results of an election or nomination for office. This includes threatening to deny promotion or take other employment actions against an employee based on political activity or voting preferences.
- Directly or indirectly coercing, attempting to coerce, commanding, or advising an employee to contribute to political activity.

8.3 Destruction and Tampering of Governmental Records

In accordance with T.C.A. § 39-16-504, it is unlawful for any person to:

- Knowingly make a false entry in, or false alteration of, a governmental record;
- Make, present, or use any record, document, or item, knowing it is false, with the intent that it be accepted as a genuine governmental record; or

- Intentionally and unlawfully destroy, conceal, remove, or otherwise impair the accuracy, legibility, or availability of any governmental record.

Employees shall preserve governmental records in accordance with applicable record retention schedules, the Tennessee Public Records Act, and County policies.

All employees must comply with Sevier County Government's *Open Records Policy*, which outlines the proper maintenance, storage, retention, and disposal of official records. Questions regarding record handling or disposal should be directed to the County Clerk or the Director of Archives and Records.

Additional Provisions

9.1 Severability

Each section, subsection, paragraph, sentence, and clause of this handbook is intended to be severable. If any provision of this handbook is determined to be invalid, unenforceable, or unlawful by a court of competent jurisdiction, that provision shall be deemed severed from the handbook to the extent necessary to comply with the law. The remainder of the handbook shall remain in full force and effect and shall not be affected by the invalidity of any individual part.

9.2 Other Policies

Sevier County Government, under the direction of the Sevier County Board of Commissioners and the County Mayor, has adopted additional operational policies and procedures to support efficient and consistent countywide operations. Employees are encouraged to consult these policies for guidance beyond the scope of this handbook.

The following policies have been formally adopted by the Sevier County Board of Commissioners upon recommendation of the Sevier County Intergovernmental Committee:

- Asset Management and Use Policy
- Classification and Compensation Policy
- Comprehensive Travel Policy
- Fleet Administration and Vehicle Use Policy
- Fleet Safety Policy
- Procurement Policy
- Solid Waste Operations Policy
- Volunteer and Internship Program Policy

These policies operate in conjunction with the policies outlined in this handbook. In the event of a conflict between this handbook and a formally adopted County policy, the more specific policy shall generally control unless otherwise prohibited by law. Copies are available through the Sevier County Clerk's Office.

Employees are responsible for complying with applicable department-, office-, and division-specific policies that have been properly issued by authorized leadership. For more information about department- or office-specific policies, employees should contact the appropriate office, division, or department.

9.3 Volunteer Handbook

Sevier County Government maintains a separate Volunteer Handbook that outlines policies, expectations, and procedures specific to individuals serving in volunteer roles. This handbook is designed to address the unique nature of volunteer service and provides guidance distinct from the policies that apply to paid employees.

Volunteer service does not create an employment relationship and volunteers are not entitled to employee wages, benefits, or other employment-related rights unless otherwise required by law.

While volunteers are not covered by the Employee Handbook, departments that utilize volunteers are responsible for ensuring that each volunteer receives a copy of the Volunteer Handbook and signs any required documentation related to their service.

Employees who supervise or coordinate volunteer efforts should consult the Volunteer Handbook to ensure consistent application of County standards. Copies of the Volunteer Handbook are available through the Human Resources Department.

Employee Handbook Acknowledgement

I hereby acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Sevier County Government Employee Handbook. I understand that it is my responsibility to read, become familiar with, and comply with the policies, procedures, and guidelines contained within.

I acknowledge that the handbook, along with all other written and verbal communications or materials provided to me, is intended for informational purposes only. These materials do not constitute, nor are they intended to create, an express or implied contract of employment, or any guarantee of continued employment, compensation, or benefits.

I understand that Sevier County Government reserves the right to interpret, revise, suspend, modify, or eliminate any policy, benefit, or practice described in the handbook at any time, with or without notice, consistent with applicable law.

I further understand and acknowledge that my employment with Sevier County Government is at-will. This means that either I or Sevier County Government may terminate the employment relationship at any time, with or without cause or notice, subject to applicable law. I understand that no representative of Sevier County Government has the authority to enter into any agreement for employment for a specified period of time or to make any promises or commitments contrary to the provisions of this acknowledgment or the handbook, unless such an agreement is in writing and signed by the County Mayor.

I acknowledge that current versions of officially adopted County policies are maintained by the Sevier County Clerk's office and are available for review during regular business hours. I understand that while I may typically receive notice of policy changes through my Official, Senior Director of Division, or Director of Department, it is ultimately my responsibility to stay informed regarding applicable policies, and policy changes may become effective regardless of whether I receive individual notice.

I understand that this handbook is intended to operate in conjunction with other formally adopted County policies and applicable department, division, or office procedures. In the event of a conflict between this handbook and applicable federal or state law, the law shall control.

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have received the Employee Handbook, understand the information contained within it, and agree to comply with all applicable County policies and procedures as a condition of my employment.

Employee's Name (Print)

Date

Signature

Employee Acknowledgement and Receipt of Harassment Policy

I acknowledge that I have received, read, and understood the Sevier County Government Harassment Policy. I understand that it is my responsibility to comply with the standards, expectations, and procedures outlined in the policy.

I understand my responsibility to promptly report harassment, discrimination, retaliation, or other conduct prohibited by the policy through the reporting procedures established by Sevier County Government. I also understand that Sevier County Government prohibits retaliation against individuals who make good-faith reports or participate in investigations.

By signing below, I affirm my commitment to uphold the values of respect, dignity, and professionalism in the workplace and to cooperate fully with Sevier County Government in maintaining a work environment free from harassment, discrimination, and retaliation.

Employee's Name (Print)

Date

Signature