

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Date: December 2, 2025

9:00 a.m.

Place: Commissioners Room, Courthouse, Caledonia, MN

Members Present: Cindy Wright, Eric Johnson, Kurt Zehnder, Robert Schuldt, and Greg Myhre

Others Present: Interim Auditor/Treasurer Polly Heberlein, Fillmore County Journal Reporter Charlene Selbee, The Caledonia Argus Associate Editor Kaita Gorsuch, Coordinator Brent Parker, Deputy Auditor/Treasurer Amy Sylling, Finance Director Carol Lapham, Public Health and Human Services Director John Pugleasa, Financial Assistance Supervisor Karen Kohlmeyer, Public Health Supervisor Jordan Knoke, Public Health Educator Bri Ceaser, Environmental Services Director Amelia Meiners, OneEnergy Renewables Associate Director Development Beth Esser, Andy Allen, Sheri Allen, Mike Huizenga, Ryan Herman and Mark A. Klinski

Presiding: Chairperson Johnson

Call to order.

Pledge of Allegiance.

Motion was made by Commissioner Zehnder, seconded by Commissioner Schuldt, motion unanimously carried to approve the agenda.

Motion was made by Commissioner Schuldt, seconded by Commissioner Myhre, motion carried unanimously to approve the meeting minutes from November 25, 2025.

Public Comment:

OneEnergy Renewables Associate Director Development Beth Esser stated limiting solar to 25 acres or less and requiring agrivoltaics on prime farmland both protects prime farmland and landowner's rights. She asked the Commissioners to reconsider language to allow solar on prime farmland.

Sheri Allen stated landowners should be allowed to do what they want on their ag land regardless of the land being classified as prime or marginal.

Ryan Herman stated grazing sheep under solar panels is agriculture and the practice allows for more diverse opportunities for agriculture.

Mark A. Klinski asked if the wording Prime Ag Land would effectively kill any solar. In his opinion energy production was more important than crops.

Andy Allen echoed frustration that landowner's rights were being restricted. He stated in 30 years the ground under a solar array would be more fertile than it is now.

APPOINTMENTS

None.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Myhre moved, Commissioner Schuldt seconded, motion unanimously carried to approve the consent agenda. Approved items are listed below.

- 1) Accept the Minnesota Dept of Veterans Affairs, operational enhancement grant of \$10,000.

ACTION ITEMS

File No. 1 - Commissioner Myhre moved, Commissioner Schuldt seconded, motion unanimously carried to approve a CUP for Cloud 1 Services LLC to build a telecommunication tower in the Agriculture Protection District in Hokah Township.

File No. 2 – Prior to any motions being made Commissioners discussed with Environmental Services Director Amelia Meiners the proposed ordinance to regulate commercial solar and amend the Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) with the edits proposed. The proposed edits would allow solar on marginal land but not on prime ag land. The Planning Commission recommended approval at their November 20, 2025, meeting with a vote of five yes, one no, and one abstained. Commissioners Zehnder and Schuldt stated commercial solar applications on prime ag land should be allowed on a case-by-case basis. Commissioners Johnson and Wright stated Planning Commission recommendations are based on the ordinance. Commissioner Johnson moved, Commissioner Wright seconded, motion failed three to two to adopt the proposed ordinance to regulate commercial solar and amend the CLUP with the edits proposed. The Commissioners voted by roll. Commissioners Zehnder, Schuldt and Myhre, voted no. Commissioners Johnson and Wright voted yes.

File No. 3 - Commissioner Myhre moved, Commissioner Zehnder seconded, motion unanimously carried to accept a grant from Medica in the amount of \$10,000 to support Houston County Dental Access Program.

File No. 4 - Commissioner Zehnder moved, Commissioner Myhre seconded, motion unanimously carried to approve the Child Support Cooperative Agreement.

File No. 5 - Commissioner Schuldt moved, Commissioner Myhre seconded, motion unanimously carried to review and approve payments. Payments are below.

REQUEST APPROVAL FOR PAYMENT

2025/12/02 COMMISSIONER'S WARRANTS:

VENDOR NAME	AMOUNT
CALEDONIA OIL CO INC	5,827.50
DELTA DENTAL	7,447.04
H & R ENTERPRISES LLC	3,526.95
HISTORICAL SOCIETY/TREAS OF	23,750.00
HOUSTON COUNTY TREASURER	4,210.85
IUOE LOCAL 49 FRINGE BENEFIT FUNDS	26,605.00
MASTER'S TOUCH INC/THE	3,215.89
MEDICA	253,786.68
MN LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY	2,512.84
MORRIS ELECTRONICS INC	2,762.50
ROGICH BROTHERS CONCRETE LLC	25,457.50
SE MN AREA AGENCY ON AGING INC	2,000.00
SEMCAC	5,000.00
SOUTHERN MN INITIATIVE FOUNDATION	3,750.00
TRANSPO INDUSTRIES INC	19,312.00
TWIN CITY FILTER SERVICE	2,284.66
VERIZON WIRELESS	2,947.35
	<u>394,396.76</u>
17 VENDORS PAID LESS THAN \$2000.00	5,797.09
	<u>400,193.85</u>
PUBLIC HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES	35,510.98
	<u>435,704.83</u>

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Coordinator Parker said he will be bringing lots of MOUs to the Board before the end of the year regarding union contracts and MN Paid Leave. Also, the policy manual needs to be revised for verbiage in moving from administrator to coordinator. Commissioner Wright asked that an employee recognition policy be looked at again. Parker mentioned the RFP deadline for EDA services will be December 19th. Commissioner Johnson asked if Board of Adjustment and Planning Commission openings had been advertised. Parker said those are in the process of being advertised and an announcement had been made at their recent meetings.

The Commissioners discussed recent and upcoming meetings including AMC, Extension, Personnel, and TNT meeting.

Closing Public Comment:

None.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Schuldt, seconded by Commissioner Myhre, motion unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 10:08 a.m. The next meeting would be a regular meeting on December 16, 2025.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

HOUSTON COUNTY, MINNESOTA

By: _____
Eric Johnson, Chairperson

Attest: _____
Brent Parker, Coordinator

Houston County Agenda Request Form

This form is not intended for the general public. It is intended for use by county department heads, representatives of other governmental units or vendors/agencies who contract with Houston County. Members of the public may address the Board during the Public Comment Period. (See Policy for Public Comment Period).

Date Submitted: 12/10/25 for the 12/16/25 Board Meeting

Person requesting appointment with County Board: Jeremy Burt

Issue:

Present the 2026-2027 MPCA Feedlot Program Delegation Agreement Work Plan

Attachments/Documentation for the Board's Review:

26-27 MPCA Delegation Agreement Work Plan

Justification:

Present to the board for approval.

Action Requested:

Board Approval

For County Use Only

Reviewed by:

_____ County Auditor	_____ County Attorney	_____ Zoning Administrator
_____ Finance Director	_____ County Engineer	_____ Environmental Services
_____ IS Director	_____ Other (indicate dept)	_____

Recommendation:

Decision:

All agenda request forms must be submitted to the County Auditor by 4:00 p.m. on Monday in order to be considered for inclusion on the following week's agenda. The Board will review all requests and determine if the request will be heard at a County Board meeting.

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency County Feedlot Program Delegation Agreement Work Plan

(When completing this document, make sure to fill in the grey boxes and Xs with the specified information.)

Delegation Agreement Years: 2026 – 2027

County: Houston

County Feedlot Officer (CFO): Jeremy Burt

If CFO is employed solely by SWCD,
list designated County employee who
will sign permits/Grant Agreement: _____

Telephone number(s): 507-725-5800

Email address(es): JBurt@HoCoMN.gov

A. Strategies

Minn. R. ch. 7020.1600, subp. 3a. states a County must develop annual plans and goals in accordance with registration, inspection, compliance and owner assistance responsibilities as well as permit goals, complaint response and staffing levels.

Registration Strategy

See Appendix A for additional clarifying information regarding Registration of feedlots.

- Please indicate the method(s) the County will use to provide a feedlot owner, who does not have an email address, with a registration receipt within 30 days of the county entering the registration information into the online registration service: (Double-click on checkbox and select "checked." Select all that apply.)**
 - A registration receipt letter or mailing copy of record.
 - An inspection letter that contains confirmation about registration/re-registration.
 - A permit and/or a permit cover letter that contains confirmation of registration/re-registration.
 - The County will document the dated 30-day registration receipts, as described below:
Click or tap here to enter text.
- Please indicate how the County will register sites using the online registration service. Select all that apply or provide a narrative if the County is planning to conduct registrations in another manner than those provided below:**
 - The County will advise feedlot owners to use the online registration service to register new feedlots or update existing feedlot registration information.
 - The County will request feedlot owners complete and submit a registration data collection sheet. Upon receiving completed registration data collection sheets, the County will enter registration information into the online registration service for feedlot owners.

- The County will collect registration information during site inspections and will enter registration information into the online registration service for feedlot owners.
- The County will use information provided by feedlot owners on permit application forms and/or Notices of Construction forms and will enter registration information into the online registration service for feedlot owners.

Click or tap here to enter text.

3. The County will address facilities that upon re-registration show an increase in animal units, a change or addition to animal types, or a change or addition to manure storage (i.e., liquid storage not previously included) by contacting the feedlot owner to verify the information provided in the updated registration and determine if other actions (i.e. site inspection, permitting, enforcement action or update of NMP) are needed to address the changes in the registration.

4. Please describe the strategy and timeline the County shall follow to address facilities that are not registered/re-registered in the current and/or prior four-year registration cycle. *Select all that apply:*

- Register/re-register sites throughout the four-year registration cycle.
- Register/re-register sites early in the fourth year of the registration cycle.
- Sites required to be registered that do not have a current registration (registered prior to January 1, 2026) Date will be inspected or contacted to verify animal numbers so registration can be updated.
- Other (Example: How the county will address multiple AIs/sites that have the same address. Describe below:)

Click or tap here to enter text.

Inspection Strategy

For assistance with completing this part of the Delegation Agreement Work Plan please see Appendix A. A County must have an inspection strategy for the purpose of identifying pollution hazards and determining compliance with discharge standards, rules and permit conditions.

Note: At least half of the required seven percent inspections need to be "Compliance" inspections. However, stockpile and manure storage area closure inspections conducted on their own do not count towards the County's minimum seven percent inspection rate.

Required Inspection Strategies

Strategy	Year 1	Year 2
Conduct compliance inspections at existing sites that have not had an inspection within the last year and have submitted permit applications proposing construction or expansion to ensure that the appropriate permit is issued.	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

The County's inspection strategy shall include goals for conducting a majority of inspections at high risk/high priority sites. The strategy may also include goals for low risk/low priority sites. The County may choose from the provided examples and/or write an alternative strategy in the space provided in the below sections.

High risk/High priority sites (check all that apply):

- Sites within shoreland, a Drinking Water Supply Management Area (DWSMA), or other prioritized impaired waters.
- Sites that have open lot area(s) without runoff controls.
- Sites that have never been inspected that fall into the first two checkboxes.
- Sites that, according to previous inspections, have not been maintaining adequate land application records and/or manure management plans.
- Sites constructing Manure Storage Areas (MSA) and open lot runoff controls.
- Conduct phosphorus inspections within a formally designated area. *Sites within high nitrate vulnerable areas or that may apply manure to high nitrate vulnerable areas. Refer to the Nutrient Management Planning Map and the Vulnerable groundwater area layer link: <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/b99690542f364a6dace31df6fab2e55a>*
- Alternative Strategy (explain alternative strategies below):

Click or tap here to enter text.

Low risk/Low priority sites (check all that apply):

- Sites within a specified size category (i.e., 300-499 AU). *Please explain/describe your inspection strategies in the text box below.*
- Sites within a watershed, township or other formally designated area.
- Conduct phosphorus inspections within a specific watershed, township or other formally designated area.
- Conduct in-field land application inspections within a specific watershed, township or other formally designated area.
- Conduct phosphorus inspections as part of a compliance inspection.
- Conduct in-field land application inspections as part of a compliance inspection or at non-NPDES sites >300 AU.
- Conduct inspections at all sites in the County on a five year or less rotating basis.
- Conduct inspections at sites required to be registered that have never been inspected.
- Alternative Strategy (explain alternative strategies below):

Click or tap here to enter text.

Inspection Strategies

Inspection Strategy	Inspection Goal Year 1*	Inspection Goal Year 2*
Conduct Inspections at existing sites that have submitted permit applications proposing construction or expansion.	2	2
Sites that have not been keeping adequate land application records.	3	3
Sites required to be registered that have never been inspected including those with open lot areas without runoff controls and in 1W1P.	4	4
Sites within Root River & WinLaC One Watershed One Plan (1WP) and other priority watersheds (TMDL & WRAPS) including but not limited to portions of Bee Creek, Bear Creek, Crooked Creek, Root River-South Fork, Money Creek, Pine Creek, Thompson Creek, and the Root River.	12	12
Total:	21	21

*Enter the number of inspections the County predicts will be completed for each category.

Note: Numbers entered for in-field land application goals must be quantified by feedlot sites and not individual farm fields.

At least seventy five percent (75%) of inspection data shall be entered into Tempo within 120 days of the inspection. Minimally funded counties may enter data less frequently.

- Yes, I agree No I do not agree (*discuss with MPCA staff*)

Note:

- Counties need to enter data from all feedlot inspections at feedlots required to be registered into Tempo by no later than **February 1** of the year following the end of the program year.
- Counties that enter ninety percent (90%) of inspection data within 60 days of the inspection date will receive four (4) Performance Credits.

Be sure to read and understand Appendix A for required inspection documentation.

Compliance Strategy

1. Please state the various initial method(s) and practice(s) the County will use in response to compliance inspections that result in non-compliance: (Blatant violations will be referred to MPCA as soon as possible in accordance with Appendix C.)
 - Include corrective actions with completion deadlines in the inspection results notification letter.
 - Issue a Letter of Warning (LOW) or a Notice of Violation (NOV) that will include corrective actions and deadlines.
 - Issue an interim permit that includes timelines for corrective actions.
 - Other (describe below):
Click or tap here to enter text.

2. Please indicate the various initial method(s) and practice(s) the County will use in response to land application inspections that result in non-compliance: (Blatant violations will be referred to MPCA as soon as possible in accordance with Appendix C.)

- Address non-compliance at the same time the facility non-compliance is addressed. See above.
- Include corrective actions with completion deadlines in the inspection results notification letter.
- Issue an LOW or NOV that will include corrective actions and deadlines.
- Other (describe below):

When conducting land application inspections, Houston County will handle these inspections separate from facility inspections or as complaint inspections (if complaint is received).

3. Notification of inspection results, including corrective action(s) and completion deadlines, shall be sent to feedlot owners. For compliance inspections and/or desktop N & P record reviews the notification of results will be sent to feedlot owners within 30 days of a compliance determination. County intends to follow-up with feedlot owners to evaluate progress.

- Yes, I agree No I do not agree (discuss with MPCA staff)

4. Explain how the County will escalate enforcement action when progress is not being made on corrective actions. (Note: See Appendix C – MPCA memorandum on CFO referral to MPCA.)

A. Upon completion of a site inspection, a written notification of inspection results will follow within 30 days informing producers of areas of non-compliance and/or concern.

B. Follow-up contact and compliance resolution may vary depending on the nature of the noncompliance. An open channel of communication will be maintained, and the frequency of communication will be adjusted as necessary to accommodate the schedule for corrective actions. The sequence for addressing noncompliance will be as follows:

a. Informing the feedlot owner of technical and financial assistance programs that may be available.

b. Monitoring to verify that agreed upon corrective actions are proceeding according to schedule. Checking with partner organizations to see if the feedlot owner has contacted them about technical or financial assistance.

c. Notifying the owner when a compliance remedy has not been proposed or is unsatisfactory.

d. Giving written notice when a feedlot owner has not responded adequately to prior communications within an acceptable period of time. This may be done with a Letter of Warning or Notice of Violation stating that the County or MPCA may initiate enforcement actions.

- e. Involving an MPCA representative when a feedlot owner fails or refuses to initiate required corrective actions.
- f. **Requiring a producer to submit an application for an Interim Permit.**
- g. Involving an MPCA representative when a feedlot owner fails or refuses to apply for an Interim Permit or fails to comply with the terms of the Interim Permit.
- h. Involving the Houston County Attorney to address feedlot related violations of the Houston County Zoning Ordinance.

Owner Assistance Strategy

1. Please describe the type and number of activities you plan to conduct during the term of this DAWP and how you will track the number of producers reached. (Example: group education events, newsletters, newspaper articles, producer surveys, distribution of manure sample containers, help with MMP writing, social media posts.

Type: Assistance will be provided to individual feedlot owners on a one-on-one setting, as needed. Producers may be referred to SWCD for technical assistance. Houston County hopes to partner with neighboring counties to provide producer trainings. If staff numbers permit, we may have a booth at the Fair. Newsletters have been sent out in the past and its possible newspaper articles may be written as well.

Number: Previous trainings have been poorly attended. It is expected that 5-25 producers might attend future activities, depending on the topic. Records requirements is probably the most important topic for us to educate on right now.

How tracked: An office/phone log will be kept that documents all interactions. Interactions exceeding 10 minutes will be logged into a budget tracking document in intervals of 15 minutes.

Counties are pre-approved to conduct publicity based on their Owner Assistance Strategy. Counties need to add "Paid for by a grant from the State of Minnesota" to any originally created Minn. R. ch. 7020 information intended for distribution.

2. Provide assistance to feedlots applying manure within MDA Level 2 DWSMAs in the county. Assist those feedlots with 300+ AU with MMP development and record keeping within the Nutrient Management Tool. Assist feedlots under 300 AU to understand and implement the "Small Farm MMP" and record keeping forms provided by the MPCA. Please explain how the County plans to provide this assistance for these feedlots, below.

Not Applicable (There are no Level 2 DWSMA's within the County.)

Click or tap here to enter text.

Communication strategy (The communication strategy is intended to ensure that effective communication occurs between CFOs and MPCA regional representatives. Below are opportunities for connecting face to face or virtually. Describe how intentional communication will occur over the two-year work plan.)

1. Please describe the strategy the County intends to follow to communicate updates and needs with MPCA over the 2-year work plan cycle. (Double-click on checkbox and select "checked." Select all that apply.) Examples are below:

- Attend regional meetings.
 - Attend the MACFO Conference.
 - Have quarterly check-ins with MPCA Regional Rep, using designated check-in form.
 - Submit permit review documents to MPCA regional rep prior to issuing.
 - Attend a live U of MN training (MinnFARM, Nutrient Management).
 - Review first two inspections of the year with MPCA regional rep.
 - Alternative Strategy (describe below):
Houston County Feedlot Officer will keep in contact and reach out to MPCA when needed.
- The check-in form to be used is in the Feedlot Folder in Tempo Help.

B. Delegated County Minimum Program Requirements (MPRs)

Minn. Stat. § 116.0711, subd. 2. (c) states that 25% of the total appropriation must be awarded according to the terms and conditions of the following MPRs.

Inspection MPRs

A County must inspect seven percent (7%) or more of their State required registered feedlots annually, as determined by the table in Appendix B, to be eligible for the Inspection MPR award. A full compliance inspection, a construction inspection, a desktop nitrogen and phosphorus record inspection (desktop N & P) or an in-field land application inspection may only count once towards the minimum seven percent inspection rate. A second inspection done at the same site in the same year would be counted towards performance credits. At least half of the seven percent (7%) inspections need to be compliance inspections. The remaining half can be a combination of construction inspections, desktop nitrogen and phosphorus record inspections or in-field land application inspections. **Note:** the stockpile and manure storage area closure inspections, on their own, do not count towards the minimum seven percent inspection requirement.

Inspection MPRs	Year 1	Year 2
<p>1. Agency-approved number of feedlots required to be registered by the State.</p> <p>(For Year 1, enter the "Feedlots Eligible for Funding" number for your county found in Appendix B. For Year 2, the Agency-approved number of feedlots for each county will be determined by the MPCA around April 1, 2026. Counties will need to determine the number of inspections that need to be conducted to meet their 7% inspection rate based on the number of Agency-approved feedlots at that time.)</p>	299	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The 2027 MPCA approved number of feedlots is to be added by the county in 2026.
<p>2. County-Agency agreed upon inspection rate.</p> <p>(Enter "7%" unless a different inspection rate percentage was negotiated.)</p>	7%	7%

3. County–Agency agreed upon inspection number for the identified time period. (Calculate 7% of the number from item 1. If not a whole number, round up to the nearest 0.5 and enter it here. Example: 12.0 =12.0, 12.1 thru 12.5 = 12.5, 12.6 thru 12.9 = 13.0)	21	[XXX To be added by the county in 2026.
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Non-Inspection MPRs

Registration MPRs	Yes	No
1. The County will register and maintain registration data in the Tempo database (Minn. R. ch. 7020.0350, subp. 1 and 7020.1600, subp. 2. C). <i>Instructions for entering registration information into the online registration system are available in Tempo HELP/Feedlot folder/Registration Information folder/ "Online Registration FAQs.docx"</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The County issues a registration receipt to the feedlot owner within 30 days of entering registration information into the online registration service if the site owner does not have an email address (Minn. R. ch. 7020.0350, subp. 5). <i>A file review should indicate the County has fulfilled the registration receipt requirement as stated in their Delegation Agreement Work Plan Registration Strategy.</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The County acknowledges the following: a. The MPCA will run a report on or about January 30, 2026 to determine the number of feedlots the County will receive funding for during 2027 and 2028. b. In order for feedlot sites to count for funding purposes for 2027 and 2028 they must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a locked registration in Tempo, • Have a registration Effective Start Date of January 1, 2022 or later; and • Be required to register: 10 or more AU in shoreland areas or 50 or more AU outside shoreland areas. 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inspection MPRs	Yes	No
3. The County maintains a record of all compliance inspection results, including land application inspections, conducted at feedlots required to be registered. At a minimum, counties must maintain on file (electronic or paper) inspection documentation as outlined in Appendix A (Minn. R. ch. 7020.1600, subp. 2.H.). <i>A file review should indicate that the County uses and maintains on file inspection documentation as stated in their Delegation Agreement Work Plan Inspection Strategy.</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The County enters data from all feedlot inspections at feedlots required to be registered into Tempo no later than February 1 of the year following the end of the program year (Minn. R. ch. 7020.1600, subp. 2.H) and at least seventy five percent (75%) of inspection data shall be entered into Tempo within 120 days of the inspection. Minimally funded counties may enter data less frequently. <i>A Tempo database query should indicate that inspection checklist data was entered into Tempo within required parameters.</i> <i>Instructions for entering an inspection into Tempo are available in Tempo HELP/Feedlot folder/ Inspection Information folder.</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Inspection MPRs	Yes	No
<p>The County acknowledges the following:</p> <p>a. For inspections to count toward the required seven percent (7%) inspection rate they must*:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be at sites that are required to register: 10 or more AU in shoreland areas or 50 or more AU outside shoreland areas. • Have a locked inspection in Tempo; and • Have occurred during the CFO Annual Report reporting year. <p>*If at the time of inspection a site has a current (January 1, 2022 or later) locked registration with animal numbers that require registration (10 or more AU in shoreland or 50 or more AU outside of shoreland), and as a result of the inspection the registration information is updated to animal numbers that no longer require registration, the inspection shall count toward the seven percent (7%) inspection rate.</p> <p>b. Inspections at feedlot sites will not count toward the required seven percent (7%) inspection rate if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspection information is not entered into Tempo, or • Inspections entered into Tempo are not locked. 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>5. The County's Inspection Strategy has been approved by the agency (Minn. R. ch. 7020.1600, subp. 3a.B(1-2)).</p> <p><i>The County's CFO Annual Report should indicate the County initiated inspection plans and goals as stated in their Delegation Agreement Work Plan Inspection Strategy.</i></p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Compliance MPRs</p>	Yes	No
<p>6. The County will notify the producer, in writing or via email, of the results of any inspection. The notification must include a completed copy of the Minnesota Feedlot Inspection Checklist (wq-f3-45e). (Minn. R. ch. 7020.1600, subp. 3a.B(5)(a)). For compliance and desktop N & P inspections the written or emailed inspection notification shall be within 30 days of a compliance determination.</p> <p><i>A file review should indicate the County has notified the producer(s) of compliance inspection results. Notification must be in writing or via email.</i></p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>7. The County will bring feedlot operations into compliance through the implementation of scheduled compliance goals as stated in the County's Delegation Agreement Work Plan Compliance Strategy (Minn. R. ch. 7020.1600, subp. 3a.B(5)).</p> <p><i>A file review should indicate that the County brought non-compliant feedlots into compliance as stated in their Delegation Agreement Work Plan Compliance Strategy.</i></p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>8. The County maintains documentation and correspondence for any return to compliance from a documented non-compliance status (Minn. R. ch. 7020.1600, subp. 2.H).</p> <p><i>When a County records a corrective action in Tempo, the file should contain documentation verifying the corrective action. Tempo should indicate that the audit data screen is correctly filled out for partial or complete upgrades and the Violations screen in Tempo has been updated to reflect the return to compliance.</i></p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Permitting MPRs	Yes	No
<p>9. The County will issue permits within the 60/120-day time period according to Minn. Stat. § 15.99 (Minn. R. ch. 7020.0505, subp. 5.C).</p> <p><i>A file review should indicate that the County date stamps all application components and, if applicable, uses letters to notify producers of incomplete applications. An application component received by the County electronically (via email) does not need a date stamp provided the dated email is saved with the document.</i></p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>10. The County will make sure all permit applications are complete. (Minn. R. ch. 7020.1600, subp. 2.C).</p> <p><i>A file review should indicate that the County uses the most recent agency-approved permit application checklist, verifying the information contained in the application is complete and accurate. When required a complete and accurate Manure Management Plan (MMP) must be submitted with the permit application. Note: upon UMN extension N recommendation changes, being incorporated into the MPCA's Nutrient Management Tool, (NMT), the county will encourage/promote the use of Online NMT when feedlot owners are required to develop MMP's as part of a permit application.</i></p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>11. The County will ensure producer compliance with required notifications (Minn. R. ch. 7020.2000, subp. 4 and subp. 5).</p> <p><i>Public notifications for new or existing feedlots with a capacity of ≥ 500 AU proposing to construct or expand must include the following information:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a. Owner(s) name(s) or legal name of the facility;</i> <i>b. Location of facility - county, township, section, quarter section;</i> <i>c. Species of livestock and total animal units;</i> <i>d. Types of confinement buildings, lots, and areas at the animal feedlot; and</i> <i>e. Types of manure storage areas.</i> <p><i>Public notification is completed by equal or greater notification of one of the following:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a. Newspaper (affidavit in file);</i> <i>b. Delivery by mail or in person; or</i> <i>c. As part of a county/township permitting process (Conditional Use Permit);</i> <i>d. A copy of the newspaper including date of publication;</i> <i>e. A printed copy of the notification from the newspaper website including date of publication.</i> 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>12. The County will issue the appropriate permit after completion of required notifications (Minn. R. ch. 7020.2000, subp. 4, 5).</p> <p><i>A file review should indicate that permits have been issued more than twenty (20) business days after public notifications.</i></p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Permitting MPRs	Yes	No
<p>13. The County will ensure that manure management plan (MMP) conditions have been met according to Minn. R. ch. 7020.2225, subp. 4.D prior to permit issuance (Minn. R. ch. 7001.0140).</p> <p>Upon UofM Extension nitrogen recommendation changes, incorporation of the changes into MPCA's NMT and MPCA providing notice to the Delegated Counties, the county will require (Change or remove/reword) <i>use of MPCA online services for submittal of nutrient management plan development for CSF permit applications at sites with 300 AU or more & for Interim permit applications.</i></p> <p><i>A file should contain either a an NMP and a completed NMP review checklist for any interim permit issued for a site 100 or >100 AU; an NMP and a completed MMP review checklist for any CSF (construction short form) permit issued for a feedlot over 300 AU; A file review will confirm that a copy of the most recent Agency-approved MMP review checklist is in the permit file and verify that the NMP is complete, accurate and meets feedlot rule requirements as verified through the use of Tableau reports (i.e., Nutrient Management Tool Plan Reviewer) and the NMP review checklist.</i></p>	☒	☐
<p>14. The County will ensure that a producer who submits a permit application that includes a liquid manure storage area (LMSA) meets the requirements in Minn. R. ch. 7020.2100.</p> <p><i>A file review should indicate that MPCA engineering staff reviewed nonconcrete LMSAs, and for LMSA not requiring MPCA engineering staff review, the County uses the most recent Agency-approved LMSA checklist and that LMSA plans and specifications are complete, accurate and meet feedlot rule requirements as verified using the LMSA checklist.</i></p>	☒	☐
<p>15. The County will ensure that any pollution problems existing at a producer's site will be resolved before the permit is issued or will be addressed by the permit (Minn. R. ch. 7020.0535, subp. 7 and 7001.0140).</p> <p><i>A file review should indicate the County issues interim permits in appropriate situations and conducts an inspection at existing sites within one year prior to permit issuance.</i></p>	☒	☐
Complaint Response MPR	Yes	No
<p>16. The County maintains a record of all complaint correspondence. (Minn. R. ch. 7020.1600, subp. 2.H. and subp. 2.J.(6))</p> <p><i>The County maintains a complaint log and promptly reports to the MPCA any complaints that represent a possible health threat, a significant environmental impact or indicate a flagrant violation. The complaint log should include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a. Type of complaint;</i> <i>b. Location of complaint;</i> <i>c. Date and time complaint was made;</i> <i>d. Facts and circumstances related to the complaint; and</i> <i>e. A statement describing the resolution of the complaint.</i> 	☒	☐

Owner Assistance MPR	Yes	No
<p>17. The County's Owner Assistance Strategy has been approved by the agency. (Minn. R. ch. 7020.1600, subp, 2.J.(5) and subp. 3a.B.(7))</p> <p><i>A review should indicate the County initiated their plan as stated in their Delegation Agreement Work Plan Owner Assistance Strategy.</i></p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staffing Level and Training MPR	Yes	No
<p>18. The CFO (and other feedlot staff) attend training necessary to perform the duties of the feedlot program and is consistent with the agency training recommendations. (Minn. R. ch. 7020.1600, subp. 2.K.)</p> <p><i>The County should complete a minimum of 18 continuing education units (CEUs). Each unit consists of one hour of training related to Minn. R .ch. 7020 competency areas: regulating new construction, conducting inspections and evaluating compliance, handling complaints and reported spills, responding to air quality complaints, resolving identified pollution problems, communicating with farmers and the agricultural community.</i></p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Air Quality MPR	Yes	No
<p>19. The County maintains a record of all notifications received from feedlot owners claiming air quality exemptions including the days exempted and the cumulative days used. (Minn. R. ch. 7020.1600, subp. 2.I.)</p> <p><i>The County should maintain a pumping notification log. The log should include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a. Names of the owners/legal facility name;</i> <i>b. Location of the facility (county, township, section, quarter);</i> <i>c. Facility permit number; and</i> <i>d. Start date and number of days to removal.</i> 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Web Reporting Requirement	Yes	No
<p>20. The County maintains an active website listing detailed information on the expenditure of County program grant funds and measurable outcomes as a result of the expenditure of funds. (86th Legislature, MN Session Laws 2009, Chapter 37 – H. F No. 2123, article 1, section 3, subdivision 1)</p> <p><i>As of July 1 of the current program year, the CFO Annual Report and MPCA Financial Report from the previous program year should be posted on the County's website:</i></p> <p><i>https://www.revisor.mn.gov/laws/?Year=2009&type=0&doctype=Chapter&id=37</i></p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix A

2026-27 Delegation Agreement Work Plan Guidance

This Delegation Agreement Work Plan applies to feedlots that are required to be registered under Minn. R. ch. 7020.

If a Delegated County (County) will not be able to meet their registration, inspection, compliance and/or owner assistance strategies during the year the County needs to communicate this with the MPCA in a timely manner and work with MPCA to determine an acceptable alternative. If a County is unable to achieve the strategies of the Delegation Agreement Work Plan, they risk losing funding. A County that does not meet the minimum seven percent inspection rate may be at risk for losing funding.

1. Data Practices

Any data requested that is part of the Tempo warehouse data dump, MPCA's "What's in my Neighborhood" and a submitted permit application and Manure Management Plan is public information. As such the county is not required to immediately notify the MPCA and is does not need to await direction on whether the county can disseminate this data to the public. The county can release this public data because this statement is a blanket approval for the county to do so.

2. Registration

a) Producer contact information

- If a feedlot owner provides contact information (phone / email) it needs to be entered. Counties should not enter their own contact information if a feedlot owner has provided contact information.
- If a feedlot owner does not provide contact information an effort should be made by the CFO to gather/obtain feedlot owner contact information (phone/email) before entering registration information so, if possible, the feedlot owner's contact information is entered rather than the contact information of the CFO.
- Entering CFO contact information (phone/email) as part of a feedlot's contact information should only be done as a last resort, meaning that either:
 - The feedlot owner does not have phone/email contact information.
 - The feedlot owner is unwilling to provide contact information.

b) Collected registration information

- If a feedlot owner submits registration information to the county (i.e., Registration Data Collection sheet or permit application) so that the county can enter the registration information into the on-line registration service, the submitted information needs to be retained (attached in Tempo or in county file).

c) Registration receipt

- If a feedlot owner does not provide email contact information and CFO email contact information is entered as contact information for the feedlot, the CFO needs to clearly document receipt of registration back to the feedlot owner. Acceptable forms of documentation include:
 - Dated registration receipt letter;
 - Dated inspection letter that indicates registration was updated;

- o Dated permit cover letter that indicates registration was updated; or
 - The County will document the dated 30-day registration receipts as described in the Registration Strategy above.
- d) Register / Update feedlot registration information when permits are issued
- When a feedlot owner submits an application for a feedlot permit or Notice of Construction, the CFO needs to ensure that:
 - New feedlot sites are registered based on the information submitted; and
 - Registration information is updated for existing feedlot sites based on the information submitted.

6. Types of Inspections

Please refer to the Minnesota Feedlot Inspection Checklist (Checklist) to learn more about a feedlot inspection. All inspections must be documented.

Compliance Inspection is an onsite, full facility inspection during which all parts of the feedlot are inspected. When inspecting a site registered for ≥ 100 AU, the nitrogen section of the Checklist must be filled out for the inspection to be complete. When entering an inspection of this type into Tempo, select *FE Compliance Inspection* as the Compliance Evaluation Type and load applicable checklist.

Construction Inspection is an onsite inspection completed at a feedlot site that is constructing. A construction inspection typically involves just inspecting the construction activity that is taking place and does not require inspection of other parts of the feedlot. When entering an inspection of this type into Tempo, select *FE Construction Inspection* as the Compliance Evaluation Type and load applicable checklist.

Complaint Inspection is an inspection conducted in response to a complaint. A complaint inspection typically involves just inspecting the portion of the feedlot, land application site, manure stockpile or other areas relating to the complaint and does not require inspection of any other area not directly related to the complaint. When entering an inspection of this type into Tempo, select *FE Complaint Inspection* as the Compliance Evaluation Type.

Stockpile Inspection is an onsite inspection conducted to inspect one or more stockpiles. A stockpile inspection typically involves just inspecting the portion of the feedlot relating to the stockpile(s) and does not require inspection of other parts of the feedlot. The stockpile section(s) of the Checklist must be filled out for the inspection to be complete. When entering an inspection of this type into Tempo, select *FE Stockpile Inspection* as the Compliance Evaluation Type and load the applicable checklist portions.

Manure Storage Area Closure is an inspection that has been conducted at a facility and the inspector has evaluated the site's compliance with manure storage area closure requirements. If you have received a notification of manure storage area closure and did not inspect the facility, follow the procedure for "How to enter Notification of Manure Storage Area Closure" located here (<file:///pca.state.mn.us/xdrive/Tempo/Feedlot/>).

Note: *The stockpile and manure storage area closure inspections, on their own, do not count towards the minimum seven percent inspection requirement.*

Land Application Inspections

- **Phosphorus Inspection** is an inspection of the phosphorus portion of land application records that is conducted in conjunction with a compliance inspection of a site registered for ≥ 300 AU. The phosphorus section of the Checklist must be filled out for the inspection to be complete. Feedlot owners are required to maintain three (3) years of field records when fields do not have sensitive features and six (6) years when fields do contain sensitive features. **Please see phosphorus inspection guidance found on the MPCA County Feedlot Officers webpage for more information.**
- **Desktop Nitrogen & Phosphorus Record Review** is an inspection of both nitrogen and phosphorus land application records of a site registered for ≥ 300 AU. This is an independent inspection conducted without inspecting other parts of the feedlot. The nitrogen and phosphorus sections of the Checklist must be filled out for the inspection to be complete. This inspection typically would be conducted in the office after requesting and receiving application records, but it could also be conducted onsite. When entering an inspection of this type into Tempo, select *FE Desk-top Nitrogen & Phosphorus Record Inspection* as the Compliance Evaluation Type and load the applicable checklist. **Note:** When a Desktop Nitrogen & Phosphorus Record Inspection is conducted, review of the phosphorus portion of the records must be completed in the same manner as described in the Phosphorus inspection above.
- **In-field Land Application Inspection** is an onsite/in-field inspection that focuses on land application practices including but not limited to discharges and setback requirements. The inspection should include a review of the MMP as applicable. The in-field land application inspection section of the Checklist must be filled out for the inspection to be complete. When entering an inspection of this type into Tempo, select *FE In-field Land Application Inspection* as the Compliance Evaluation Type and load the applicable checklist. In-field land application inspections should focus on fields that have sensitive features present.

A special note about inspections at facilities designated as a large CAFO or operating under an NPDES or SDS Permit:

County inspections conducted at NPDES/SDS/CAFO sites DO NOT count towards the minimum seven percent (7%) inspection rate. If the inspection was requested of the County by MPCA feedlot program staff the County can add that inspection to the CFO Annual Report to obtain performance credits.

7. Inspection Documentation

Required

Each compliance inspection must be documented. A Checklist must be used for all compliance inspections as applicable (MPR #3). The results of compliance and land application inspections are to be documented and communicated in writing or via email to the feedlot owner. For compliance inspections and desktop N & P record reviews results are to be communicated to the feedlot owner within 30 days of a compliance determination (MPR #6).

Both the Checklist and the written communication of inspection results to the feedlot owner need to be either in the County's file or uploaded into Tempo.

It is not necessary to document and communicate results to the feedlot owner for a construction or complaint inspection unless compliance issues are discovered as a result of the inspection.

For **Compliance** inspections at feedlot sites with ≥ 300 AU where **manure application records are kept**, documentation in the file must include:

- The Checklist;
- Written communication of the inspection results;
- A copy or photo of a representative sample of manure application records that were evaluated. Examples include manure and soil sample results, field maps with application rates, MPCA Manure Planner; (This is not tied to an MPR.)
- The County's evaluation of nitrogen rates (i.e., nitrogen rate worksheet). Include documentation used to make a nitrogen determination; and
- The County's evaluation of phosphorus rates (i.e., phosphorus rate worksheet), if an optional phosphorus inspection is conducted in conjunction with a compliance inspection.

The County can also include additional items (photos, site map, etc.) as part of the inspection file if they determine it is applicable or necessary to document the inspection.

For **Compliance** inspections at feedlot sites with 100-299 AU where **manure application records are required to be kept**, documentation in the file must include:

- The Checklist;
- Written communication of the inspection results;
- The County's evaluation of nitrogen rates (i.e., nitrogen rate worksheet). Include documentation used to make a nitrogen determination; and
- The County's evaluation of phosphorus rates (i.e., phosphorus rate worksheet), if an optional phosphorus inspection is conducted in conjunction with a compliance inspection.

The County can also include additional items (photos, site map, etc.) as part of the inspection file if they determine it is applicable or necessary to document the inspection.

For **Desktop N & P** inspections documentation in the file must include:

- The Checklist;
- Written communication of the inspection results;
- A copy or photo of a representative sample of manure application records that were evaluated; (This is not tied to an MPR.)
- The County's evaluation of the nitrogen rates (i.e., nitrogen rate worksheet); and
- The County's evaluation of phosphorus rates (i.e., phosphorus rate worksheet).

The County can also include additional items as part of the inspection file if they determine it is applicable or necessary to document the inspection.

For **Compliance inspections** at feedlot sites where manure application records are **not** required to be kept (sites with less than 100 AU) and other types of inspections, documentation in the file must include the Checklist, written communication of inspection results to the feedlot owner and at least one of the following suggested pieces of documentation.

Suggestions

The following are suggestions for documenting an inspection. This documentation should be either in the County's file or uploaded into Tempo.

- **Compliance Inspection** - aerial photos, maps, camera photos, notes (on non-compliance)
- **Construction Inspection** - aerial photos, maps, camera photos, notes, copies or photos of contents of the owner's feedlot files or records, as-built documentation
- **Complaint Inspection** - aerial photos, maps, camera photos, notes, copies or photos of contents of the owner's feedlot files or records, land ownership records, nitrogen and phosphorus record review worksheets, manure and/or soil test results

- **Stockpile Inspection** - aerial photos, maps, camera photos, notes, locations of nearby sensitive features requiring setbacks, soil information (slope/depth to seasonal water table/texture)
- **Land Application Inspections** - aerial photos, maps, camera photos, notes, copies or photos of contents of the owner's feedlot files or records, land ownership records, nitrogen and phosphorus record review worksheets, manure and/or soil test results
- **Manure Storage Area (MSA) Closure** - either a letter stating that the MSA was closed in accordance with rule requirements and/or photo documenting the closure

For all inspection types except Construction and Complaint:

- Checklist must be used.
- Results must be entered in Tempo.
- A follow-up letter needs to be sent to the feedlot owner. The letter should include Checklist section(s) where non-compliance was identified (or a copy of the entire Checklist) and corrective actions/time frames for addressing non-compliance if applicable. For Compliance and Desktop N & P inspections the follow-up letter is to be sent to the producer within 30 days of compliance determination.
- Inspection documentation needs to be in County files or uploaded into Tempo.

For Construction and Complaint inspections:

- Inspection checklist can be used.
- Results must be entered in Tempo.
- Inspection documentation should be in County files or uploaded into Tempo.

How the minimum 7% inspection rate is determined and calculated:

1. A minimum of 7% of sites required to be registered must be inspected before any PCs are earned.
 - Only sites that received a Compliance, Construction, Desktop N&P, or In-field Land Application inspection can be used to satisfy the 7% minimum.
2. The following multipliers are used when using site inspections to satisfy the 7% minimum:
 - Sites that received a Compliance Inspection are counted as one (1.0) inspection.
 - Sites that received a Construction inspection are counted as one (1.0) inspection.
 - Sites that received a Desktop Nitrogen & Phosphorus Record inspection are counted as one (1.0) inspection.
 - Sites that received an In-field Land Application inspection are counted as one half (0.5) of an inspection.

How Performance Credits (PCs) are calculated

- Counties must meet or exceed 85% of the Minimum Program Requirements (MPRs) and the 7% minimum site inspection rate to be eligible to receive PCs.
- At least half of the site inspections used to satisfy the 7% minimum need to be **Compliance** inspections. The remaining half can be a combination of inspection types including Compliance, Construction, Desktop Nitrogen & Phosphorus Record Inspection, or In-field Land Application.
- PCs are not earned for inspections that satisfy the 7% minimum.

- Inspections are applied to the 7% minimum in the following order:
 1. Compliance
 2. Construction
 3. Desktop Nitrogen & Phosphorus
 4. In-field Land Application
- PCs are awarded for any inspection(s) not used to satisfy the 7% minimum based on the PC multipliers in the CFO Annual Report.

Examples

A county has 100 feedlots required to be registered. A minimum 7% inspection rate means a minimum of seven (7) feedlot sites need to be inspected and at least three and a half (3.5) of these inspections need to be Compliance inspections.

1. If the county inspects eight feedlot sites (8 Compliance inspections), they would receive 3 PCs for the extra Compliance inspection.
2. If the county inspects eight feedlot sites (7 Compliance and 1 Construction), they would receive 2 PCs for the extra Construction inspection.
3. If the county inspects nine feedlot sites (3 Compliance and 6 Construction), they would receive 0 PC. Only three Compliance inspections were done and that is not at least half (3.5) of the required 7% (7).
4. If the county inspects 13 feedlot sites (4 Compliance, 2 Construction, 1 Desk-top Nitrogen & Phosphorus and 6 In-field Land Application), they would receive 6 PCs.
 - 4 Compliance, 2 Construction, and 1 Desktop N&P inspections satisfy the 7%.
 - What is left goes towards PCs: 6 In-field Land Application x 1 = 6 PCs.
5. If the county inspects 18 feedlot sites (8 Compliance, 2 Construction, 1 Desk-top Nitrogen & Phosphorus and 7 In-field Land Application), they would receive 17 PCs.
 - The first 7 Compliance inspections go towards the 7%.
 - What is left goes towards PCs: one Compliance x 3 = 3 + two Construction x 2 = 4 + one Desktop N&P x 3 = 3 + seven In-field Land Application x 1 = 7 for a total of 17 PCs (3 + 4 + 3 + 7).
6. If the county inspects 15 feedlot sites (4 Compliance, 1 Construction, and 10 In-field Land Application), they would receive 6 PCs.
 - Four Compliance, one Construction, and four In-field Land Application inspections go towards the 7% (4 + 1 + {4 x 0.5=2} = 7).
 - What is left goes towards PCs: six In-field Land Application x 1 = 6 PCs.

How inspections count towards the minimum seven percent (7%) inspection rate:

Compliance and construction inspections count toward the minimum 7% inspection rate, each as one (1) inspection.

Desktop Nitrogen & Phosphorus Record Review (conducted independent of a compliance inspection) at a feedlot site ≥ 300 AU counts as one (1) inspection. Credit will be given only if there are records available and if those records are sufficient to make a compliance determination on the nitrogen and phosphorus record and rate requirements. Therefore, looking at both nitrogen and

phosphorus records during a desk-top nitrogen and phosphorus inspection counts as one (1) inspection.

In-field Land Application Inspection at a feedlot site that is required to be registered or at a feedlot site that receives manure from a site required to be registered counts as one half (0.5) an inspection. In order for the in-field land application inspection to count towards the minimum 7% inspection rate, the feedlot that is the source of the manure should not be considered a large CAFO or operating under an NPDES or SDS permit.

It is important to note that only one inspection can be counted toward the minimum 7% inspection rate for any given feedlot site during the program year. For example, if a County completes a compliance inspection and an in-field land application inspection at the same feedlot site during the same program year, the in-field land application inspection cannot be counted towards the minimum 7% inspection rate. However, any additional inspections completed for the same feedlot site during the same program year may count towards performance credits.

If at the time of inspection, a site has a current (January 1, 2022 or later) locked registration with animal numbers that require registration (10 or more AU in shoreland or 50 or more AU outside of shoreland) and as a result of the inspection the registration information is updated to animal numbers that no longer require registration, the inspection shall count toward the 7% inspection rate.

8. Inspection Strategy

As part of developing a realistic inspection strategy the County needs to consider all of their strategies (compliance and land application) and the time commitment required. The County should not design their inspection goals to simply meet the minimum 7% inspection rate. Rather, the County is urged to set inspection goals according to their inspection needs such as feedlots that have never been inspected. The County needs to be realistic with their inspection strategy because they will be required to initiate and work towards these strategy goals (MPR #5).

Recommended Approach for Developing an Inspection Strategy

Step 1. The first step is to calculate the number of feedlots the County intends to inspect annually. The County needs to set a goal of inspecting at least 7% of the total number of feedlots required to be registered in the County. Given this formula, a County with 300 feedlots would need to conduct 21 compliance inspections or a combination of 21 compliance/construction/desk-top nitrogen and phosphorus record/in-field land application inspections annually. One in-field land application inspection counts as one half (0.5) inspection towards the minimum 7% inspection rate.

Step 2. The second step is to decide how many inspections the County can conduct in each of the high risk/low risk categories over the next two years. Counties are encouraged to inspect sites in the BWSR One Watershed One Plan (see link below). Remember that inspections require follow-up and possible enforcement for non-compliant sites. Follow-up calls, letters, assistance and enforcement do not count towards the minimum 7% inspection rate.

9. BWSR ONE WATERSHED ONE PLAN (1W1P): <http://bwsr.state.mn.us/planning/1W1P/index.html>

APPENDIX B

Delegated County	County Vendor Number	Location	Feedlots Eligible for Funding	Minimal Funding	Base Grant Award (County must match)	MPR Award	Total Award
Big Stone	0000197278	2	53	Yes	\$7,500.00		\$7,500.00
Blue Earth	0000197279	2	327		\$27,848.67	\$12,310.57	\$40,159.24
Brown	0000197280	1	319		\$27,167.35	\$12,009.40	\$39,176.75
Carver	0000197282	1	160		\$13,626.26	\$6,023.52	\$19,649.78
Clay	0000197285	1	79		\$6,727.97	\$2,974.11	\$9,702.08
Cottonwood	0000197287	1	186		\$15,840.53	\$7,002.34	\$22,842.87
Douglas	0000197326	2	250		\$21,291.03	\$9,411.75	\$30,702.78
Feribault	0000197291	1	250		\$21,291.03	\$9,411.75	\$30,702.78
Fillmore	0000198178	1	561		\$47,777.07	\$21,119.97	\$68,897.04
Freeborn	0000197292	1	198		\$16,862.50	\$7,454.11	\$24,316.60
Goodhue	0000197327	1	445		\$37,898.03	\$16,752.92	\$54,650.95
Houston	0000197295	2	300		\$25,549.24	\$11,294.10	\$36,843.34
Jackson	0000197297	1	278		\$23,675.62	\$10,465.87	\$34,141.49
Kandiyohi	0000197330	1	274		\$23,334.97	\$10,315.28	\$33,650.25
Kittson	0000195228	1	18	Yes	\$7,500.00		\$7,500.00
Lac qui Parle	0000197331	1	172		\$14,648.23	\$6,475.29	\$21,123.51
Lake of the Woods	0000197332	1	19	Yes	\$7,500.00		\$7,500.00
Le Sueur	0000197299	1	147		\$12,519.13	\$5,534.11	\$18,053.24
Lincoln	0000197300	1	366		\$31,170.07	\$13,778.81	\$44,948.87
Lyon	0000197301	1	282		\$24,016.28	\$10,616.46	\$34,632.74
Marshall	0000197334	1	50	Yes	\$7,500.00		\$7,500.00
Martin	0000197302	1	489		\$41,645.25	\$18,409.39	\$60,054.64
McLeod	0000197362	1	229		\$19,502.58	\$8,621.17	\$28,123.75
Meeker	0000197303	1	273		\$23,249.80	\$10,277.63	\$33,527.44
Morrison	0000197305	1	529		\$45,051.82	\$19,915.27	\$64,967.09
Mower	0000197306	1	304		\$25,889.69	\$11,444.69	\$37,334.38
Murray	0000197307	1	425		\$36,194.75	\$15,999.98	\$52,194.73
Nicollet	0000197335	1	278		\$23,675.62	\$10,465.87	\$34,141.49
Nobles	0000197336	1	458		\$39,005.17	\$17,242.33	\$56,247.50
Norman	0000197308	1	46	Yes	\$7,500.00		\$7,500.00
Pennington	0000197338	1	32	Yes	\$7,500.00		\$7,500.00
Pipestone	0000197311	1	414		\$35,257.94	\$15,585.86	\$50,843.81
Polk	0000197339	1	54	Yes	\$7,500.00		\$7,500.00
Pope	0000197340	1	145		\$12,348.80	\$5,458.82	\$17,807.61
Red Lake	0000197341	1	31	Yes	\$7,500.00		\$7,500.00
Renville	0000197312	1	263		\$22,398.16	\$9,901.16	\$32,299.33
Rice	0000197343	1	237		\$20,183.90	\$8,922.34	\$29,106.24
Rock	0000197313	1	541		\$46,073.79	\$20,367.03	\$66,440.82
Stearns	0000194398	1	1328		\$113,097.95	\$49,995.23	\$163,093.18
Steele	0000197345	1	190		\$16,181.18	\$7,152.93	\$23,334.11
Stevens	0000197317	1	110		\$9,368.05	\$4,141.17	\$13,509.22
Swift	0000197318	1	138		\$11,752.65	\$5,195.29	\$16,947.94
Todd	0000197346	1	701		\$59,700.05	\$26,390.56	\$86,090.60
Traverse	0000197319	1	36	Yes	\$7,500.00		\$7,500.00
Wadena	0000197364	2	68		\$5,791.16	\$2,560.00	\$8,351.16
Waseca	0000197320	2	228		\$19,417.42	\$8,583.52	\$28,000.94
Watsonwan	0000197322	1	162		\$13,796.59	\$6,098.82	\$19,895.40
Winona	0000197348	1	460		\$39,175.49	\$17,317.63	\$56,493.12
Wright	0000197323	1	220		\$18,736.11	\$8,282.34	\$27,018.45
Yellow Medicine	0000197349	1	225		\$19,161.93	\$8,470.58	\$27,632.50
Total			13,348	9	\$1,175,400.00	\$489,750.00	\$1,665,150.00

APPENDIX C CFO referral of enforcement to MPCA



www.pca.state.mn.us

Policy memo: Referral of enforcement cases from delegated counties to MPCA

DATE : June 21, 2006 (updated June 1, 2021)
TO : MPCA and County Feedlot Staff
FROM : Randall G. Hukriede, Feedlot Program Manager
PHONE : 320-295-2227

Goal: To provide criteria to promote statewide consistency regarding acceptance of feedlot enforcement referrals from delegated counties to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) where there is a persistent failure by a feedlot owner to correct pollution hazards. Referral of cases from the delegated counties to the MPCA should be done infrequently and only for very serious cases. This memo does not apply to situations where a county feedlot officer (CFO) discovers a blatant violation (e.g., acute discharging, pumping, piping, dumping manure to waters of the state). These situations should be referred to the MPCA immediately.

Situations where referrals may be accepted:

- Conflict of interest between producer and county/CFO;
- Serious environmental harm/potential for harm;
- Pollution problems and/or investigations involving multiple counties; and
- Other cases as determined appropriate by the MPCA.

Requirements for the county before cases are referred:

- County must have issued a Notice of Violation (NOV);
- County must have tried to refer the case to its county attorney if its previous enforcement action was not successful in resolving the case;
- County must send a letter to the MPCA describing what it has done to resolve the case and why it wants to refer the case to the MPCA; and
- County must agree to continue to work with the MPCA as needed to resolve the case.

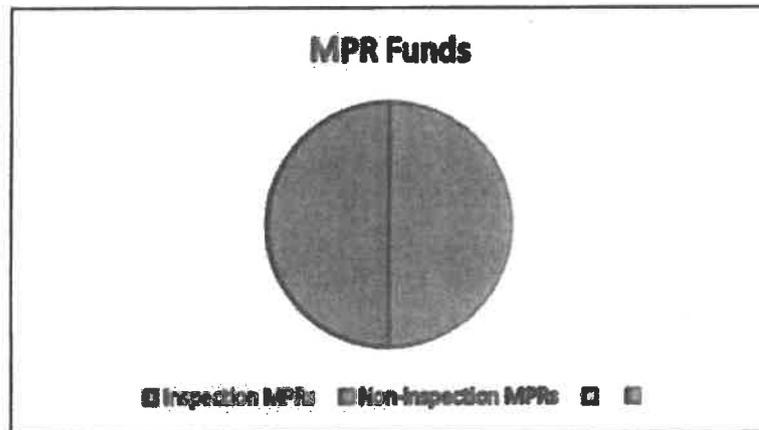
Requirements for the MPCA:

- Incorporate enforcement requirements by reference into county workplans and delegation agreements.
- Staff meet with supervisor and compliance coordinator to approve acceptance of the referral.
- Continue to conduct enforcement training for CFOs and/or county attorney as needed.
- Maintain a NOV and Letter of Warning to be used by counties.

Appendix D MPCA Feedlot Program

Minimum Program Requirements Scoring System Checklist

Minimum Program Requirement (MPR) funds are awarded when a county meets both inspection and non-inspection MPRs. Minn. Stat. § 116.0711, subp. 2 (c) states a county can lose 50% of MPR funds for not meeting inspection MPRs (7% inspection requirement). The MPCA has determined that if a county does not meet non-inspection MPRs, the county can also lose MPR funds. Therefore, half of the MPR funds can be lost for not meeting inspection MPRs (as per Statute) and half can be lost for not meeting non-inspection MPRs. To earn the total MPR fund amount, a county must meet inspection MPRs (7% inspection requirement) and at least 80% of their non-inspection MPRs.



FAILURE TO MEET INSPECTION MPRs (Minimum 7% inspection rate)

Fully Funded County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lose Performance Credits (PC) • Lose 100% of inspection MPR funds (50% of total MPR funds)
Minimally Funded County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lose PCs • Lose \$937.50 (half of 25% of \$7500)

Year 1 - See above, plus:

- MPCA County Program Lead sends letter (in addition to year-end review letter) to CFO's immediate supervisor copying CFO; and
- MPCA requires CFO to schedule one formal check-in with MPCA County Program Lead and MPCA Regional Representative to make sure the county is on track to meet requirements in subsequent year.

Year 2 – See above, plus:

- MPCA County Program Lead sends letter (in addition to year-end review letter) to a county staff person higher up the chain of command than the CFO's immediate supervisor (e.g., department head, county administrator, county board chair); and
- MPCA schedules a meeting with county program leadership to discuss and plan for success.

Year 3 – See above, plus:

- MPCA County Program Lead sends letter (in addition to year-end review letter) to a county staff person higher up the chain of command than the CFO’s immediate supervisor (e.g., department head, county administrator, county board chair); and
- MPCA schedules a meeting with county leadership to discuss issues, delegation, and a plan for county success or exit.

FAILURE TO MEET NON-INSPECTION MPRs

Both fully funded and minimally funded counties need to meet 90% of MPRs to obtain PCs (per statute).

If a county meets _ of non-inspection MPRs	County receives _ of non-inspection MPR funds
>80%	100% (50% of total MPR funds)
60-79.9%	50% (25% of total MPR funds)
<60%	0%

Year 1 – If a county meets <80% non-inspection MPRs, see above, plus:

- MPCA requires that the CFO schedule two formal check-ins with MPCA County Program Lead and the county’s MPCA Regional Representative to make sure the county is on track to meet requirements in subsequent year; and
- MPCA County Program Lead sends letter (in addition to year-end review letter) to CFO’s immediate supervisor and copies CFO.

Year 2 – If a county meets <80% non-inspection MPRs, see above, plus:

- MPCA requires that the CFO schedule three formal check-ins with MPCA County Program Lead and the county’s MPCA Regional Representative to make sure the county is on track to meet requirements in subsequent year.
- MPCA County Program Lead sends letter (in addition to year-end review letter) to a county staff person higher up the chain of command than the CFO’s immediate supervisor (i.e., department head, county administrator, county board chair); and
- MPCA schedules a meeting with county program leadership to discuss and plan for success.

Year 3 – If a county meets <80% non-inspection MPRs, see above, plus:

- MPCA requires that the CFO schedule three formal check-ins with MPCA County Program Lead and the county’s MPCA Regional Representative to make sure the county is on track to meet requirements in subsequent year,
- MPCA County Program Lead sends letter (in addition to year-end review letter) to a county staff person higher up the chain of command than the CFO’s immediate supervisor (i.e., department head, county administrator, county board chair); and
- MPCA schedules a meeting with county leadership to discuss issues, delegation, and plan for success or exit.

For minimally funded counties, MPR funds are equal to 25% of \$7,500.00 or \$1,875.00. Half of this amount (\$937.50) can be lost for not meeting the required 7% inspection rate (inspection MPRs) and up to half (\$937.50) can be lost for not meeting non-inspection MPRs.

Houston County Agenda Request Form

Date Submitted: 12/11/2025

Person requesting appointment with County Board: John Pugleasa, Director Public Health & Human Services

Will you be doing a power point or video presentation: Yes NO

Issue:

Recognize Public Health Nurse, Mary Zaffke on being awarded the MDH Betty Hubbard Maternal & Child Health Leadership award for 2025.

Attachments/Documentation for the Board's Review:

MDH invitation to ceremony

Justification:

Action Requested:

For County Use Only			
<u>Reviewed by:</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> County Auditor	<input type="checkbox"/> County Attorney	<input type="checkbox"/> Zoning/Environmental Service
	<input type="checkbox"/> Finance Director	<input type="checkbox"/> County Engineer	<input type="checkbox"/> HR/Personnel
	<input type="checkbox"/> IS Director	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (indicate dept)	
<u>Recommendation:</u>			
<u>Decision:</u>			

All agenda request forms must be submitted to the County Auditor by 4:00 p.m. on Monday in order to be considered for inclusion on the following week's agenda. The Board will review all requests and schedule appointments as appropriate.



YOU ARE INVITED TO THE

2025 Betty Hubbard Maternal & Child Health Leadership Award Ceremony

The Commissioner of Health and the Maternal and Child Health Advisory Task Force invite you to the presentation of the 2024 Betty Hubbard Maternal & Child Health Leadership Award Ceremony in honor of

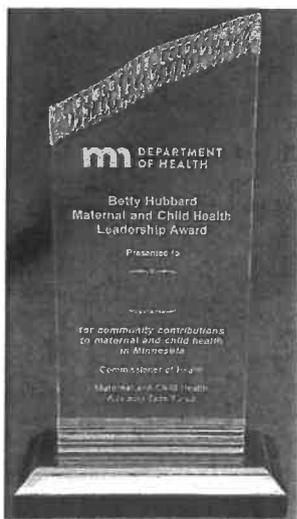
Mary Zaffke

for statewide leadership and advocacy on behalf of mothers and children in Minnesota.

Date: Friday, December 12, 2025

Time: 10:30 a.m. – 12 Noon

Location: Stassen Building, Room 2000
600 North Robert Street, St. Paul, MN



A reception will follow the presentation.
For more information, contact health.mch@state.mn.us.

About this award:

Betty Hubbard was a longtime advocate for health needs of mothers, children, and families. The task force and Commissioner honor her work and her memory by presenting this award each year.

Learn more about this award at [Betty Hubbard Award - MN Dept. of Health \(state.mn.us\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/mch/mchatf/award.html)
(www.health.state.mn.us/communities/mch/mchatf/award.html).

Houston County Agenda Request Form

Date Submitted: 12/11/2025

Person requesting appointment with County Board: John Pugleasa, Director Public Health & Human Services

Will you be doing a power point or video presentation: Yes NO

Issue:

Social Worker Internship agreement with Winona Stae University.

Attachments/Documentation for the Board's Review:

Soft copy for review, hard copy for signature

Justification:

Action Requested:

Approve and sign agreement as presented.

For County Use Only			
<u>Reviewed by:</u>	_____ County Auditor	_____ County Attorney	_____ Zoning/Environmental Service
	_____ Finance Director	_____ County Engineer	_____ HR/Personnel
	_____ IS Director	_____ Other (Indicate dept)	_____
<u>Recommendation:</u>			
<u>Decision:</u>			

All agenda request forms must be submitted to the County Auditor by 4:00 p.m. on Monday in order to be considered for inclusion on the following week's agenda. The Board will review all requests and schedule appointments as appropriate.



NURSING AND ALLIED HEALTH CLINICAL AFFILIATION MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

This Agreement is entered into between the State of Minnesota, acting through its **Board of Trustees of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (Minnesota State)**, on behalf of Winona State University (hereinafter "College/University") and Houston County Public Health & Human Services, 304 S Marshall St, Room 104, Caledonia, Minnesota 55921 hereinafter "Facility". This Agreement and any amendments and supplements thereto, shall be interpreted pursuant to the laws of the State of Minnesota.

WITNESSETH THAT:

WHEREAS, the College/University has established a Practical Nursing Program, Nursing Assistant Program, Associate Degree Program in Nursing, Baccalaureate Program in Nursing, Baccalaureate Program in Nursing for Registered Nurses, Nurse Refresher Program, Graduate Programs in Nursing and other allied health programs including but not limited to: Health, Exercise and Rehabilitative Sciences (i.e., Athletic Training, Clinical Exercise Science, Movement Science, Strength and Conditioning, Exercise Science, Public Health and Health Education); Recreation, Tourism and Therapeutic Recreation; Social Work (Bachelor and Master); Counselor Education (Master's); Healthcare Leadership and Administration for qualified students preparing for or engaged in nursing and other allied health careers; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Trustees of Minnesota State is authorized by Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 136F to enter into Agreements regarding academic programs and has delegated this authority to the College/University; and

WHEREAS, the Facility has suitable clinical facilities in general nursing and allied health for the educational needs of the nursing and allied health programs(s) of the College/University; and

WHEREAS, it is in the general interest of the Facility to assist in educating persons to be qualified or better qualified nursing and allied health personnel; and

WHEREAS, the College/University and the Facility are desirous of cooperating to furnish a clinical experience program for students of nursing and allied health programs enrolled at the College/University; and

NOW, THEREFORE, it is mutually agreed by and between the College/University and the Facility:

1. COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. The College/University, which is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, is responsible for offering one or more of the following programs: a Practical Nursing Program; a Nursing Assistant Program; an Associate Degree Program in Nursing; a Baccalaureate Program in Nursing; a Baccalaureate Program for Registered Nurses; a Nurse Refresher Program and/or Graduate Programs in Nursing. Allied health programs include but are not limited to: Health, Exercise and Rehabilitative Sciences (i.e., Athletic Training, Clinical Exercise Science, Movement Science, Strength and Conditioning, Exercise Science, Public Health and Health Education); Recreation, Tourism and Therapeutic Recreation; Social Work (Bachelor and Master); Counselor Education (Master's); Healthcare Leadership and Administration. Each program shall be: 1) approved by the Minnesota Board of Nursing; and or 2) approved by the Minnesota Department of Health, and or, 3) if applicable, by another required accreditation body.
- b. The College/University will supervise its students during the clinical experience program at the Facility, unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the parties. For nursing, the College/University will provide its nursing faculty to effectively implement the clinical experience program at the Facility. The College/University will provide at least one nursing faculty member for approximately every ten (10) students while the students are in the clinical experience program at the Facility. The College/University faculty so assigned will hold current R.N. licensure valid in the State of Minnesota.
- c. The College/University faculty will be responsible for planning, directing and evaluating the students' learning experiences. The College/University faculty will attend the Facility's orientation for clinical experience instructors as deemed necessary by the College/University and the Facility.
- d. The College/University will provide the Facility, at its request, with objectives for the clinical experience program. Implementation of those objectives will be accomplished by the College/University in cooperation with the Facility's designated representative.
- e. The College/University will provide the Facility with a list of the students who are participating in the clinical experience program, the units within the Facility where they are assigned, and the dates of each student's participation in the program.
- f. The College/University will inform its faculty and students of the Facility's policies and regulations which relate to the clinical experience program at the Facility.
- g. The College/University will inform its faculty and the students who are participating in the clinical experience program that they are encouraged to carry their own health insurance and are responsible for carrying their own professional liability insurance if professional liability insurance is not provided by the College/University.
- h. The College/University will maintain a record of students' health examinations and current immunizations and shall obtain students' permission to submit data regarding their health status to the Facility.

- i. The College/University agrees and represents that it will require all students and faculty to have completed a background study conducted in accordance with Minnesota Statutes Chapter 245C, Human Services Background Studies, as a pre-condition to participation in the clinical experience. The College/University will not assign a student or faculty member to the Facility if their background study documents are ineligible to have direct contact with Facility's patients or residents under applicable law or regulations. If requested, the College/University shall provide the Facility with documentation regarding the completion or results of the background study pursuant to the written consent of the subject.

2. FACILITY RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. The Facility will maintain current accreditation by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organizations (d/b/a "The Joint Commission") or any other appropriate and required accrediting body.
- b. The Facility is responsible for the safety and quality of care provided to its patients by the students who are participating in the clinical experience program at the Facility. In order to effectively fulfill that duty, it is agreed that Facility has ultimate control over all persons involved in the program and may immediately terminate the participation in the program of any of the students enrolled in the program where an emergency exists involving health and safety; and in all other (non-emergency) instances, Facility shall consult with the College/University before taking any action to terminate the participation of a student.
- c. The Facility will provide the College/University with a copy of its policies and regulations which relate to the clinical experience program.
- d. The Facility will permit the College/University faculty and students to use its patient care and patient service facilities for clinical instruction according to a mutually-approved plan.
- e. The Facility will allow a reasonable amount of Facility staff time for orientation and joint conferences with the College/University faculty, for planning with the College/University faculty, and for such other assistance as shall be mutually agreeable.
- f. When available, physical space such as offices, conference rooms, and classrooms of the Facility may be used by the College/University faculty and students who are participating in the clinical experience program.
- g. The College/University faculty and students participating in the clinical experience program will be permitted to use the Facility's library in accordance with the Facility's policies.
- h. The Facility will make locker or cloak room facilities available for the College/University faculty and students during assigned clinical experience program hours. These facilities may be shared by other faculty and students.
- i. The Facility assumes no responsibility for the cost of meals, uniforms, housing, parking or health care of the College/University faculty and students who are participating in the clinical experience program. The Facility will permit the College/University faculty and

students who are participating in the clinical experience program to use any cafeteria on the same basis as employees of the Facility. The Facility will permit the College/University faculty to use Facility parking spaces under the same policies governing Facility personnel.

- j. The Facility recognizes that it is the policy of the College/University to prohibit discrimination and ensure equal opportunities in its educational programs, activities, and all aspects of employment for all individuals regardless of race, sex, color, creed, religion, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, sexual orientation, veteran status, marital status, age, disability, status with regard to public assistance, familial status, membership or activity in a local human rights commission or inclusion in any group or class against which discrimination is prohibited by federal, state, or local laws and regulations. The Facility agrees to adhere to this policy in implementing this Agreement.
- k. **AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) COMPLIANCE**
The Facility agrees that in fulfilling the duties of this Agreement, the Facility is responsible for complying with the American with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. Chapter 12101 et seq., and any regulations promulgated to the Act at the Facility. The College/University is not responsible for issues or challenges related to compliance with the ADA at the Facility beyond its own routine use of facilities, services and other areas covered by the ADA.

3. MUTUAL RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. The College/University and the Facility assume joint responsibility for the orientation of the College/University faculty to Facility policies and regulations before the College/University assigns its faculty to the Facility.
- b. **Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).** Solely for the purposes of defining the students' and faculty roles in relation to the use and disclosure of the Facility's protected health information, the College/University and faculty engaged in activities pursuant to this Agreement are members of the Facility workforce, as that term is defined in 45 CFR 160.103. The College/University students and faculty are not, and shall not be construed to be, employees of Facility.

The College/University shall cooperate with Facility in complying with its obligations as a HIPAA covered entity, including, but not limited to, complying with its policies and procedures under the HIPAA Privacy Regulations, 45 CFR parts 160 and 164. Prior to placement at Facility, the College/University shall instruct its students and faculty to comply with Facility's policies and procedures governing the use and disclosure of individually identifiable health information.

- c. Personnel of the College/University and the Facility will communicate regarding planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of the clinical experience program. The communication may include but not be limited to:
 - i. Communication to familiarize Facility personnel with the clinical experience program's philosophy, goals and curriculum;
 - ii. Communication to familiarize the College/University faculty with the Facility's philosophy, policy and program expectations;

- iii. Communication to keep both parties and the parties' personnel who are assigned to the clinical experience program informed of changes in philosophy, policies and any new programs which are contemplated;
- iv. Communication about jointly planning and sponsoring in-service or continuing education programs (if appropriate);
- v. Communication to identify areas of mutual need or concern;
- vi. Communication to seek solutions to any problems which may arise in the clinical experience programs; and
- vii. Communication to facilitate evaluation procedures which may be required for approval or accreditation purposes or which might improve patient care or the nursing curriculum of the College/University.

d. **INSURANCE.** Each party, at its sole expense and at all times during the term of this Agreement, shall secure and maintain the following insurances (or comparable coverage under a program of self-insurance) covering itself and its employees who perform any work, duties or obligations in connection with this Agreement.

i. **Commercial General Liability Insurance**

The College/University will maintain Commercial General Liability insurance in conformance with the Tort Claims limits set forth in Minn. Stat. 3.736, subd. 4, with limits not less than \$500,000 per person and \$1,500,000 per occurrence for bodily injury and property damage.

The Facility will maintain Commercial General Liability insurance with limits not less than \$1,500,000 per occurrence and \$1,500,000 annual aggregate for bodily injury and property damage.

ii. **Professional Liability Insurance**

The College/University will maintain Professional Liability insurance for participating students (and faculty, if applicable) or cause any student participating in the program to maintain Professional Liability insurance, with limits not less than \$2,000,000 each claim and \$3,000,000 aggregate.

The Facility will maintain Professional Liability insurance covering itself and its employees, agents or assigns with limits not less than \$1,500,000 each claim and \$1,500,000 aggregate.

If insurance covered by claims-made policies is discontinued, then extended reporting period coverage must be obtained and evidence of such coverage shall be provided to the other party.

iii. **Additional Conditions:**

An Umbrella or Excess Liability insurance policy may be used to supplement the Facility's policy limits to satisfy the full policy limits required by the Agreement.

Each party shall provide the other party upon request certificates of insurance or self-insurance evidencing the required coverage.

If Facility receives a cancellation notice from an insurance carrier affording coverage herein, Facility agrees to notify the State of Minnesota within five (5) business days with a copy of the cancellation notice, unless Facility's policy(ies) contain a provision that coverage afforded under the policy(ies) will not be cancelled without at least thirty (30) days' advance written notice to the College/University.

Each party, at its sole expense, shall provide and maintain Workers' Compensation insurance as such party may be required to obtain by law. The College/University is self-insured for Workers' Compensation purposes, and any such insurance extends only to employees of the College/University, not to students.

4. STUDENT REQUIREMENTS. The College/University will inform the students of the following:

- a. Each student may be required, as a condition for participation in the clinical experience program, to submit the results of a health examination to the College/University and, if requested, to the Facility, to verify that no health problems exist which would jeopardize student or patient welfare. The health examination may include an update of required immunizations including but not limited to a Mantoux test or chest x-ray and verification of immunity for rubeola and rubella. A list of those students with positive Mantoux or negative rubeola/rubella results may, at the request of the Facility, be provided to the Facility.
- b. Students participating in the clinical experience program shall be encouraged to carry their own health insurance if not provided by the College/University.
- c. Students participating in the clinical experience program shall be responsible for carrying their own professional liability insurance if professional liability insurance is not provided by the College/University.

5. EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE & INFECTIOUS DISEASE EXPOSURE

- a. Any emergency medical care available at the Facility will be available to the College/University faculty and students participating in this experience at the Facility while at the Facility. The College/University faculty and students will be responsible for payment of charges attributable to their individual emergency medical care at either the Facility or the College/University.
- b. Any College/University faculty member or student who is injured or becomes ill while at the Facility will be informed by the College/University and the Facility that they must immediately report the injury or illness to the Facility and receive treatment (if available) at the Facility as a private patient or obtain other appropriate treatment as they choose. Any hospital or medical costs arising from such injury or illness shall be the sole responsibility of the College/University faculty member or student who receives the treatment and not the responsibility of the Facility or the College/University.
- c. The Facility shall follow, for the College/University faculty and students exposed to an infectious disease at the Facility during the clinical experience program, the same policies and procedures which the Facility follows for its employees.

- d. The College/University faculty and students contracting an infectious disease during the period of time they are assigned to or participating in the clinical experience program will be informed by the College/University and the Facility that they must report the fact to their College/University and to the Facility. Before returning to the Facility, such a College/University faculty member or student must submit proof of recovery to the the College/University or Facility, if requested.

6. LIABILITY

Each party agrees that it will be responsible for its own acts and the results thereof to the extent authorized by law and shall not be responsible for the acts of the other party and the results thereof. The liability of the College/University shall be governed by the Minnesota Tort Claims Act, Minnesota Statutes § 3.736, and other applicable laws.

7. TERM OF AGREEMENT

This Agreement is effective on the later of January 1, 2026 or when fully executed, and shall remain in effect until December 31, 2030. This Agreement will not extend beyond five (5) years from the effective date. No automatic renewal provisions are allowed. This Agreement may be terminated by either party at any time upon one-year written notice to the other party. Termination by the Facility shall not become effective with respect to students then participating in the clinical experience program.

8. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATION

- a. The College/University and the Facility shall each bear their own costs associated with this Agreement and no payment is required by either the College/University or the Facility to the other party, except that, where applicable, the Facility shall pay the tuition and other educational fees of students it places in the clinical experience program.
- b. The Facility is not required to reimburse the College/University faculty or students for any services rendered to the Facility or its patients pursuant to this Agreement.
- c. If applicable, in the event the Facility provides student(s) any paid clinical experiences, such paid experiences, including any employment, tax and other legal obligations (including but not limited to provision of worker's compensation insurance) are solely between the Facility and the student(s). Such arrangements are separate and apart from this Agreement between the College/University and the Facility.

9. AMENDMENTS

Any amendment to this Agreement shall be in writing and signed by authorized officers of each party.

10. ASSIGNMENT

Neither the College/University nor the Facility shall assign or transfer any rights or obligations under this Agreement without the prior written consent of the other party.

11. STATE AUDIT

The books, records, documents and accounting procedures and practices of the Facility relevant to this Agreement shall be subject to examination by the College/University and the Legislative Auditor.

12. DATA PRIVACY

The requirements of Minnesota Statutes § 13.05, subd. 11 apply to this contract. The Facility and the College/University must comply with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, Minnesota Statutes Chapter 13, as it applies to all data provided by the College/University in accordance with this contract, and as it applies to all data, created, collected, received, stored, used, maintained, or disseminated by the Facility in accordance with this contract. The civil remedies of Minnesota Statutes §13.08 apply to the release of the data referred to in this clause by either the Facility or the College/University.

In the event the Facility receives a request to release the data referred to in this clause, the Facility must immediately notify the College/University. The College/University will give the Facility instructions concerning the release of the data to the requesting party before the data is released.

The parties additionally acknowledge that the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. 1232g and 34 C.F.R. 99, apply to the use and disclosure of education records that are created or maintained under this agreement.

- 13. OTHER PROVISIONS:** This agreement is intended to address all health professional programs offered by Winona State University, which includes but is not limited to programs in nursing; graduate nursing; counselor education; clinical laboratory science; social work; health exercise and rehabilitative sciences; and recreation tourism and therapeutic recreation. Clinical responsibilities may not apply to non-clinical settings.

The rest of this page intentionally left blank. Signature page to follow.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have caused this contract to be duly executed intending to be bound thereby.

APPROVED:

1. FACILITY:

The Facility certifies that the appropriate person(s) have executed the contract on behalf of Facility as required by applicable articles, by-laws, resolutions, or ordinances.

By: (authorized signature and printed name)
Title:
Date:

By: (authorized signature and printed name)
Title:
Date:

2. MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES: WINONA STATE UNIVERSITY

By: (authorized signature and printed name) Brian Zeller
Title: Dean – College of Nursing and Health Sciences
Date:

By: (authorized signature and printed name) Brenda Kowalewski, PhD
Title: Provost
Date:

3. AS TO FORM AND EXECUTION:

By: (authorized signature and printed name) Lori Mikl
Title: Director of Legal Affairs
Date:

Houston County Agenda Request Form

Date Submitted: 12/11/2025

Person requesting appointment with County Board: John Pugleasa, Director Public Health & Human Services

Will you be doing a power point or video presentation: Yes NO

Issue:

Approve Biennial Healthcare Access Plan 2026-2027.

Attachments/Documentation for the Board's Review:

Soft copy of Biennial Health Care Access Plan for review

Justification:

Action Requested:

Review and approve plan as presented. No signature required.

For County Use Only			
Reviewed by:	<input type="checkbox"/> County Auditor	<input type="checkbox"/> County Attorney	<input type="checkbox"/> Zoning/Environmental Service
	<input type="checkbox"/> Finance Director	<input type="checkbox"/> County Engineer	<input type="checkbox"/> HR/Personnel
	<input type="checkbox"/> IS Director	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (indicate dept)	
Recommendation:			
Decision:			

All agenda request forms must be submitted to the County Auditor by 4:00 p.m. on Monday in order to be considered for inclusion on the following week's agenda. The Board will review all requests and schedule appointments as appropriate.



Local County and Tribal Agency Biennial Health Care Access Plans

Effective: January 1, 2026, through December 31, 2027

Local county or Tribal agency	
Person (first and last name) responsible for development of the biennial health care access plans: Karen Kohlmeyer	Telephone number: 507-725-5811 ext 1305
Person (first and last name) responsible for coordination of health care nonemergency medical transportation and related ancillary services: Helen Olson	Telephone number: 507-725-5811 ext 1301

General Purpose Statement

To ensure that applicants or enrollees of Medical Assistance (MA), and MinnesotaCare pregnant people and children under 19 years of age, are provided with or reimbursed for the appropriate level of needed transportation and other travel related expenses to enable them to access necessary medical treatment. Local county and Tribal agency nonemergency medical transportation (NEMT) services are available to transport the enrollee to and from medically necessary services received from participating providers of covered services under the MA and MinnesotaCare.

Local county and Tribal agencies are required to comply with all the requirements found in law and in the Minnesota Health Care Programs (MHCP) Provider Manual.

Transportation to non-participating health care providers shall also be paid under this plan if:

- the medically necessary service is covered under the MA state plan; and
- the non-participating medical or dental provider could be a participating provider if an application was made; and
- the transport results in the proper, efficient, and cost-effective administration of MHCP services.

Part I. Cost Effectiveness

According to federal regulations, transportation for each trip made by an enrollee must be by the most cost-effective means available that meets the needs of the enrollee.

1. The local county or Tribal agency must document or describe the method or process of establishing the "least costly" appropriate method of transportation.

2. The local county or Tribal agency must document or describe the process used in establishing the appropriate level of transport and related ancillary services approved, authorized, or denied to the enrollee.
3. The local county and Tribal agencies shall direct enrollees to utilize all available sources of free transportation services (such as relatives, friends, other public options if available) if it meets the needs of the enrollee.
4. The next most cost-effective means of transportation under this plan is transport by the enrollee vehicle. Includes vehicles provided by other individuals with a “vested interest” in the enrollee.
5. Reimbursement will not be made to an enrollee or other person if the mode of transportation used or related travel expenses are furnished at no cost to the enrollee.
6. Transport for a covered medical service that is obtained from a primary care provider is limited to 30 miles from the enrollee’s home or residence for local county or Tribal agency and state administered NEMT.
7. Transport for a covered medical service obtained from a specialty care provider is limited to 60 miles from the enrollee’s home or residence for local county or Tribal agency and state administered NEMT.
8. Prior authorization to exceed the 30 or 60-mile transport limits for all NEMT must be:
 - requested by the MHCP enrollee for review by the local county or Tribal agency;
 - authorized or denied by the local county or Tribal agency;
 - based on medical necessity with no other provider capable of providing the level of care needed closer than the requested destination provider location, and
 - documented and have documentation maintained as part of the transportation record by the local county or Tribal agency.
9. Reimbursement will not be made for trips or mileage traveled without an enrollee in the vehicle (no load miles).

Part II. Transportation and Related Travel Costs

Enrollees or applicants must use the most cost-effective method of transportation available to them. Whenever appropriate, the enrollee’s own vehicle must be used.

A. Services available

For enrollees receiving medical care from an MA-enrolled or other appropriate non-enrolled medical or dental provider:

1. Mileage reimbursement:
 - 22 cents per loaded (enrollee in the vehicle) mile when transported in a vehicle provided by an individual including but not limited to a family member, self, neighbor, and so on or other individual with vested interest. Billing code A0090.
 - Reimbursement for personal mileage includes a possible rural urban commuting area (RUCA) add-on adjustment based on the enrollee’s residence zip code as rural or super rural and the transport distance from origination (pick-up) to destination (drop-off) locations (one way

- distances of 1 to 17 miles + 25 percent, 18 to 50 miles + 12.5 percent, and 51 miles or more no RUCA adjustment is applied.
- The local county or Tribal agency must calculate all personal mileage RUCA add-on adjustments using the same criteria and process for all individuals.
- Up to 100 percent of the Internal Revenue Services (IRS) business mileage deduction rate effective for the date-of-service (DOS) for NEMT using a vehicle provided by a **volunteer driver** (individual or organization) with no vested interest (billing code A0080) and for **licensed foster parents** (billing code/modifier A0090 UC).
- Reimbursement for personal mileage of the licensed foster parent and volunteer driver includes a possible RUCA add-on adjustment based on the enrollee's residence zip code as rural or super rural and the distance from origination (pick-up) to destination (drop-off) locations. For one way transport distances of 1 to 17 miles + 25 percent, 18 to 50 miles + 12.5 percent and for distances in excess of 50 miles no RUCA adjustment is applied.
 - The local county or Tribal agency must calculate all licensed foster parent personal mileage and volunteer driver mileage RUCA add-on adjustments using the same criteria and process for all individuals.
- New NEMT fuel adjuster starting January 1, 2024, effective for the first day of each calendar quarter in which the price of gasoline as posted publicly by the United States Energy Information Administration exceeds \$3.00 per gallon, the commissioner shall adjust the rate paid per mile (base rate) by one percent up or down for every increase or decrease of ten cents for the price of gasoline.
- The increase or decrease must be calculated using a base gasoline price of \$3.00. The percentage increase or decrease must be calculated using the average of the most recently available price of all grades of gasoline for Minnesota as posted publicly by the United States Energy Information Administration.
 - Managed care organizations (MCOs) must also provide a fuel adjustment when fuel exceeds \$3 per gallon.
2. Parking fees and tolls are reimbursed at actual cost (billing code A0170). Receipts are required when available to the enrollee.
 3. Reimburse volunteer drivers at the MHCP and Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) maximum reimbursement rate, up to 100 percent of the IRS business deduction rate in place on the DOS.
 4. Unassisted Transport including bus and light rail (billing code A0110 or monthly pass A0110 U7) and other commercial carrier fares such as air travel (billing code A0140) are reimbursed the standard rider fare of the transportation provider. Reimbursement is considered at cost with reduction for excluded costs related to transportation. Reimbursement for the standard fare transports DO NOT include a possible RUCA add-on adjustment
 5. Unassisted Transport (billing code A0100) is reimbursed the standard rider fare or the MHCP allowable, whichever is less.
 - Reimbursement for unassisted transport (A0100) **curb-to-curb transports** includes a possible RUCA add-on adjustment for the base (pick-up) service code based on the enrollee's residence zip code classification as super rural.
 - The RUCA add-on adjustment for transport base service charges is 11.3 percent.

6. Reimbursement for unassisted transports includes a possible RUCA add-on adjustment for mileage (S0215) based on the enrollee’s residence zip code as rural or super rural and the distance from origination (pick-up) to destination (drop-off) locations. For one way transport distances of 1 to 17 miles + 25 percent, 18 to 50 miles + 12.5 percent and for distances in excess of 50 miles no RUCA adjustment is applied.
7. Assisted Transport includes **door-to-door and door-through-door ambulatory transports** where the enrollee has been certified by MHCP and the DHS medical review agent as requiring this level of transport.
 - Reimbursement for assisted transports includes a RUCA adjustment for the base (pick-up) service code (T2003) based on the enrollee’s residence zip code as super rural.
 - The RUCA add-on adjustment for transport base service charges is 11.3 percent.
 - Reimbursement for assisted transports includes a RUCA adjustment for mileage (S0215) based on the enrollee’s residence zip code as rural or super rural and the distance from origination to destination locations. For one way transport distances of 1 to 17 miles + 25 percent, 18 to 50 miles + 12.5 percent, and distances in excess of 50 miles no RUCA adjustment is applied.
8. NEMT rate increase for Modes 3-5 as summarized in the following table:

Nonemergency medical transportation	Base rate		Per mile	
	Old	New	Old	New
Unassisted transport (public transit)	\$11.00	\$12.10	\$1.30	\$1.43
Assisted transport	\$13.00	\$14.30	\$1.30	\$1.43
Lift-equipped or ramp transport	\$18.00	\$19.80	\$1.55	\$1.70

9. Meals: The maximum reimbursement for meals (billing code A0190) is:
 - Breakfast: \$5.50; Must be in transit or at the medical appointment prior to 6:00 a.m.
 - Lunch: \$6.50; Must be in transit or at the medical appointment 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
 - Dinner: \$8.00; Must be in transit or at the medical appointment after 7:00 p.m.
 - Time taken to eat the meal is not part of travel time consideration.
10. Lodging: **Authorization prior to incurring this cost is required.** Limited to \$50.00 per night unless a higher rate is prior authorized by the local county or Tribal agency (billing code A0180).
11. When another individual is necessary to accompany the enrollee or to be present at the site of a health service in order to make health care decisions, the accompanying individual will be reimbursed for the cost of meals, transportation, and lodging at the same standard as the enrollee. Reimbursement may be made for more than one person if required by the health care provider’s written treatment plan.
12. Transportation and other related travel expenses of family members of enrollees in covered treatment programs, such as mental health, if the family member's involvement is part of the enrollee’s written treatment plan.
13. If the enrollee had travel and ancillary service expenses and is later found to be MHCP eligible (could include up to three retroactive MA months), they may be eligible for reimbursement of allowed transportation and ancillary services at the reimbursement rates appropriate for the DOS as indicated in this plan.

14. Transportation and related travel expenses to out-of-state medically necessary services requires prior authorization by the county or Tribal local agencies for the fee-for-service (FFS) (straight MA) enrollees.
 - Transport and related ancillary services are only provided or reimbursed when the fee-for-service out-of-state medical service has been authorized by the DHS contracted medical review agent. Out-of-state services are medically necessary services obtained at a provider or facility location that is outside of Minnesota or its local trade area. NEMT transports and related ancillary services are provided to the enrollee and when necessary one responsible person or attendant.
15. Transportation and other related travel expenses to out-of-state medically necessary services require prior authorization or referral of the medical services by the health plan for enrollees with a health plan. Transport and related ancillary services are only provided or reimbursed when the out-of-state medical service has been authorized by the health plan. Out-of-state services are medically necessary services obtained at a provider or facility location that is outside of Minnesota or its local trade area. NEMT transports and related ancillary services are provided to the enrollee and when necessary one responsible person or attendant.
16. Counties or Tribal local agencies are responsible for all out-of-state NEMT transports and related ancillary services for transport Modes 1-4.

B. Procedures to obtain services

1. Authorization to incur NEMT and related ancillary service costs may be arranged in writing, by telephone or online depending upon the specific county or Tribal agency process established. Documentation of authorization of NEMT and related ancillary services must be maintained. **Prior authorization to incur transport and ancillary service costs from the county or Tribe is required for or when:**
 - Lodging and meal expenses for an MA enrollee or responsible person accompanying the MA enrollee
 - The local county or Tribal agency has determined transportation and ancillary services have been misused. For example; An able-bodied individual living at a location with access to a public bus route uses a taxicab rather than the bus to access medical services available by bus transport.
 - Transportation and related costs are necessary for the enrollee to receive DHS fee-for-service contracted reviewer or health plan authorized out-of-state medically necessary services.
2. NEMT transport services to the primary care provider within 30 miles of the enrollee's residence and 60 miles from the enrollee's residence for specialty care **DOES** require prior authorization by Houston County Public Health and Human Services to incur the transportation service cost(s).

C. Emergency needs procedure

Authorization to incur NEMT and related ancillary service costs is not required in emergency situations. In an emergency situation, enrollees or applicants must secure transportation and related ancillary services using the most cost effective and medically appropriate transportation and ancillary services. Enrollees or applicants are required to notify Houston County Public Health and Human Services immediately after the emergency for

consideration of reimbursement of the expenses. Transportation and related ancillary service costs that would otherwise require receipts for reimbursements do apply in the emergency situations.

D. Billing and payment procedures

- DI.** Providers of transportation and other travel-related services must submit bills for services to **Houston County Public Health and Human Services** for payment. The bill should include date of service, origination (pick-up) and destination (drop-off) points, and mileage by the most direct route. Transport must be to a covered service in order for the bill to be paid under this plan.
- DII.** Enrollees and other persons eligible for reimbursement for costs of transportation and other related services shall submit to **Houston County Public Health and Human Services** actual receipts, when available, or signed, dated, and itemized statements of mileage and/or other allowed expenses.
- DIII.** All bills will be paid by **Houston County Public Health and Human Services** within 30 calendar days of receipt. Financial workers may choose to provide an enrollee with a voucher for transportation or other travel-related service.

E. Service restrictions

1. Payment shall be made for the most cost-effective available means of transportation which is suitable to the enrollee's medical needs. As mentioned in Section I.B., prior authorization to incur costs of transportation and other related travel expenses may be required except when there is an emergency or in cases of retroactive eligibility.
2. When the enrollee's attending physician makes a referral or the enrollee requests to be transported to a medical provider location that is not within the 30 and 60-mile transport limits, prior authorization by the county or Tribal agency is required.
3. When the enrollee's attending physician makes a referral or the enrollee requests transport to a medical provider location not within the 30 and 60-mile transport limits or is not the closest provider capable of providing the level of care beyond the mileage limits, prior authorization by the county or Tribal agency for transport and ancillary services should not be made.
4. The county or Tribe will not reimburse the enrollee for transportation provided at no cost to the enrollee.
5. Transportation by a transport provider must follow all regulations, including being an enrolled driver in MHCP.

Part III. ADA and Meaningful Access to Services

A. Services available

Houston County Public Health and Human Services will provide interpreter services to Deaf, blind, hard of hearing and persons, and individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) who are seeking or receiving assistance from the county or Tribal agency.

Houston County Public Health and Human Services will provide other assistance or services such as training, videos, pamphlets or other services to individuals seeking or receiving assistance from **Houston County**.

Medical Assistance (MA) or other service providers, regardless of size, shall provide interpreter services to Deaf, blind, hard of hearing and Deafblind persons; and individuals with LEP who are seeking or receiving assistance as soon as the Deaf, hard of hearing, Deafblind person or individual with LEP makes the request or the when the need is determined. If subsequent appointments are necessary, interpreter services also need to be arranged prior to appointment.

Providers must offer this service at no cost and in a timely manner to the enrollee in accordance with state and federal laws. This service only applies when interpretation is provided in conjunction with another covered service, is provided during the completion of the cash, food support, medical, or MnCHOICES eligibility or re-certification meetings with the applicant. Interpreter services are not available for scheduling or arranging medical service appointments.

PART IV. Procedures to Obtain Services

A. Authorization of services

Authorization to incur a non-emergency medical transportation and related ancillary service cost may be arranged in writing, by telephone or online depending upon the specific county or Tribal process established. Documentation of authorization of transportation and related ancillary services must be maintained.

Prior authorization to incur transportation and related ancillary services costs from the county or Tribe is required for:

1. Lodging and meal expenses for an MA enrollee or responsible person accompanying the MA enrollee
2. When the agency has determined transportation and ancillary services have been misused. For example, an able-bodied individual living at a location with access to a public bus route uses a taxicab rather than the bus to access medical services available by bus transport.
3. Transportation and related costs to receive DHS contracted reviewer or health plan authorized out-of-state medically necessary services.

County and Tribal local agency administered and state administered NEMT and related ancillary services for the MA fee-for-service enrollee is limited to a primary care provider within 30 miles of the enrollee's home and specialty care provider within 60 miles of the enrollee's home. All fee-for-service NEMT transports and related ancillary services beyond the respective 30 or 60-mile distances **require** prior authorization by **Houston County Public Health and Human Services**. Authorization is based on medical necessity and having no the level of care needed within the mileage limits or a provider closer than the provider location requested.

For the MA fee-for-service enrollee, authorization for state administered NEMT and related ancillary service beyond the respective 30 or 60-mile distances must be obtained by the enrollee from the local county or

Tribal agency. Authorization is based on medical necessity and having no provider capable of providing the level of care needed within the mileage limits or a provider closer than the provider location requested.

Health plan enrollees must access primary care services from a provider within 30 miles of their residence and specialty care services within 60 miles of their residence. Authorization for transport and related ancillary services provided and reimbursed by the county or tribal local agency to a provider location exceeding the respective distances, must be obtained by the enrollee from the local county or Tribal agency. Prior authorization is based on referral by the health plan for the enrollee to access covered medical services from the provider at the specific location requested.

B. Emergency needs procedure

Prior authorization to incur NEMT and related ancillary services costs is not required for emergency situations. In emergency situations, enrollees or applicants must secure transportation and related expenses, using the most cost effective and medically appropriate transportation method and related ancillary services. Enrollees or applicants are required to notify the local county or Tribal agency immediately after the emergency to secure consideration of reimbursement for the expenses. Appropriate receipts are required.

C. Billing and payment procedures

Houston County Public Health and Human Services will negotiate fees with the referral agency or interpreter. **Houston County Public Health and Human Services** will pay the interpreter for the service and charge the expense to reimbursement purposes. All bills will be paid by **Houston County Public Health and Human Services** within 30 days of

D. Service restrictions

Local county or Tribal agency provide summary of any specific restrictions here.

1. Payment shall be made for the most cost-effective available means of transportation which is suitable to the recipients needs.
2. The county/tribe will not reimburse recipients for transportation that was provided at no cost to the recipient.
3. Transportation providers must follow all regulations, included being enrolled with MHCP.

Part V. Access to Appeal Hearing Services

A. Services available

1. Reimbursement for reasonable and necessary expenses of applicant or enrollee attendance at an appeal hearing, such as meals, lodging, parking, transportation, and child care costs.
2. Assistance from **Houston County Public Health and Human Services** staff in locating transportation.

B. Procedures to obtain services

Applicants or enrollees shall contact their worker at Houston County Public Health and Human Services if assistance in transportation or reimbursement for transportation or child care expenses will be needed to ensure the attendance of an applicant or enrollee at an appeal hearing.

C. Billing and payment procedures

Transportation expenses will be reimbursed according to the same criteria established in **Part II**. Providers of transportation services must submit dated, itemized bills for service to Houston County Public Health and Human Services for payment. Applicants or enrollees and other persons eligible for cost of transportation services shall submit to **Houston County Public Health and Human Services** actual receipts, when available, or signed, dated, and itemized mileage. All bills will be paid by **Houston County Public Health and Human Services** within 30 days of receipt. County choose to provide an enrollee with a voucher for transportation.

Child care costs are reimbursable to the applicant or enrollee for the time duration of the hearing, including travel to and from the child care provider. Child care will be reimbursed at the current Child Care Program hourly rate. **Houston County Public Health and Human Services** will reimburse applicants or enrollees directly for their and/or child care costs and then charge the expense to the MA Program administrative account for reimbursement.

D. Service restrictions

Houston County Public Health and Human Services will not pay for child care if services are provided at no charge to the applicant or enrollee.

Part VI. County and Tribal Vouchers

<p>What is the county's or Tribe's plan for enrollees who cannot afford to pay up-front for a bus pass or taxi? Houston County will contact the provider and set up a payment agreement with them.</p>
<p>Do you provide bus passes or taxi vouchers to enrollees? Houston County has limited public transportation. It is not a common practice for our county.</p>

Part VII. Administration of Common Carrier

Do you contract for common carrier services? Yes No (select one)

If yes, please email a copy of your 2026 through 2027 contract with your access plan documents to: brian.ombongi@state.mn.us

Brian Ombongi
 Health Improvement and Benefit Design Division

Minnesota Department of Human Services
540 Cedar Street
St. Paul, MN 55164-0984
651-431-4828
brian.ombongi@state.mn.us

Part VIII. Notification to MA Enrollees of Health Care Access Services

1. The local county or Tribal agency shall inform enrollees of the health care access services plan. Enrollees must be informed of available services at the time of application and recertification. They must also be made aware of changes to the non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) or related ancillary services benefits, reimbursements, coverage, policies and procedures made by the local agency, due to federal action, adjustments to state statute or rule or administrative decisions by the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS).

<p>What is the process or procedures of the local agency for informing the enrollee or responsible person of changes to the access plan, local agency processes, procedures, rates, documentation and so on at times other than application and recertification? Applicants approved via MAXIS receive the information with their managed care enrollment packet. If they are exempt, we will send them the information. If there are updates, we include the information with their most recent mileage reimbursement check. We also include the information on our website.</p>
<p>What is the process of informing the enrollee or responsible person of the access plan benefits and polices or procedures when eligibility is established through the MNsure process? Applicants receive the information in their managed care enrollment packet. If there are updates, we include the information with their most recent mileage reimbursement. We also include the information on our website.</p>

2. **Include with your biennial access plan submission** a copy of all documents given to applicants or enrollees informing them of NEMT and related ancillary service availability. Include the local county or Tribal agency Insert version of **Attachments B – Notice of access service availability to eligible Minnesota Health Care Program enrollees**, include other documents provided to the enrollees or responsible person for access plan administration.
3. **Local county and Tribal agency must ensure the correct information is on trip logs. Trip logs must meet all the requirements found in law.**

Part IX. Other County or Tribe Specific Policies, Procedures and Conditions

<p>What are the identified gaps, issues, and barriers for transportation services in your area? Houston County has limited access to the number of transportation providers. We also have limited public transportation available to our residents.</p>
<p>What coordination efforts are the county or Tribal agency involved in to provide transportation services to its members such as regional transportation planning initiatives? We work with our local SEMCAC agency and other local provider to find transportation options.</p>
<p>In the space below, please communicate any policies and procedures not covered in the DHS Requests Biennial Health Care Access Plans for Calendar Years 2026 through 2027 bulletin and attachment documents that reflect county or Tribal agency administration of access services.</p>

Part X. Outside Provider Contracting

Counties or Tribes entering into a contract with an **outside organization or provider** for providing transportation services or coordination activities for county or Tribal administered NEMT provided to and for the MHCP enrollee **MUST** submit to DHS:

1. A copy of the **ALL contract(s)** with outside entities related to county or Tribal administered NEMT.
2. A statement of the per trip rate(s) or administration fee paid to the provider or coordinator.
3. Documentation to show how the rates for transport or administrative fees were established.

Counties or Tribes utilizing an outside provider or coordinator to provide access transportation or administration should not enter into such contracts and provide reimbursement until they have submitted their contracts to DHS for review of program policy and procedure consistency. Issues will be addressed.

Local county or Tribal agencies are required to electronically send contracts to: brian.ombongi@state.mn.us

➤ **No paper copies will be accepted.**

Brian Ombongi
 Health Improvement and Benefit Design Division
 Minnesota Department of Human Services
 540 Cedar Street
 St. Paul, MN 55164-0984
 651-431-4828
brian.ombongi@state.mn.us

Part XI. Plan Termination

Upon a 60-day notice, DHS may terminate this plan at any given time with the local county or Tribal agency.



Notice of Access Service Availability to Eligible Minnesota Health Care Programs Enrollees

Houston County Public Health and Human Services
304 S Marshall St, Rm 104
Caledonia, MN 55921
507-725-5811

You may be able to get paid for expenses to help you get medical care or to attend an appeal hearing. You may also receive reimbursement when your eligibility is made retroactive.

Please read this information carefully.

The **Houston County's** Minnesota Health Care Programs Biennial Health Care Access Plans will pay for the most cost-effective form of transportation to get you to a primary care provider within 30 miles of your residence and a specialty care provider within 60 miles of your residence. Transport beyond those respective distances will require a referral based on medical necessity or a health plan referral and approval from the county or Tribe. If you have your own vehicle and can drive, you must use it whenever possible.

- If you drive your car or have a friend, someone in your household or a relative that may drive your car for you, you will be paid at a rate of 22 cents per mile.
- If a volunteer driver provides transportation, the volunteer driver will be paid up to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) business deduction rate effective on the date the access transportation service was provided.
- Bus, light rail, or other similar commercial carrier standard rider fares will be reimbursed at the rate charged. You **must have** authorization from your worker to receive reimbursement for these transportation and ancillary service costs.
- If your doctor says that you must have medical care which you cannot get within 30 miles of your residence for primary care or 60 miles from your residence for specialty care, you may be eligible for transportation, meals, lodging, and parking reimbursements to help you get care. Services must not be available from a closer provider capable of providing the level of care needed. This would include there not being another provider within the 30 or 60-mile limits from your residence capable of providing the level of care needed.

- If someone must go with you to get necessary medical care, they may also be reimbursed meals and lodging costs when also approved for you at the same rate.
- You may also be eligible for reimbursement of transportation and related expenses during the months you were found to be eligible before the date you applied.
- If you appeal a decision on your Medical Assistance (MA) or MinnesotaCare case, you are eligible for reimbursement of transportation, related ancillary service expenses and, if necessary, child care costs incurred while you are attending the appeal hearing.

To Get Paid

You must get prior authorization for costs before you get certain non-emergency medical transportation or ancillary service. Authorization may be in writing, telephone or online. You may contact us at 507-725-5811 (Monday- Friday from 8:00am- 4:30pm), write us at the address above or email us as dhssingés@hocomn.gov to get prior authorization.

To get paid you must submit a completed mileage reimbursement voucher and provide all required verifications.

Bring or send your appointment slip and a letter from your doctor that says you need to exceed the 30 or 60-mile limits for medically necessary care because there are no providers within 30 or 60 miles or closer than the referred-to provider capable of providing the medically necessary level of care needed by the enrollee. **The appointment slip and letter must be provided to your local county or Tribal agency worker before reimbursement approval.** Attach the appointment slip to the signed voucher.

You must provide receipts for meals, lodging, and parking, except for parking meters, with the signed voucher. Provide mileage and state whether your, or another individual's, car was used.

- Meals are paid up to the following amounts: breakfast: \$5.50, lunch: \$6.50, dinner: \$8.00.
- Lodging must be prior authorized and is limited to \$50.00 per night unless authorized by the local agency or Tribe for a greater amount.
- Parking fees will be paid at actual cost. The least costly parking option must be utilized. For example, single entry or exit rate versus weekly permit rate versus monthly permit rate and so on, as necessary for the health care appointment or services.

If you choose to get medical care from a provider that is not within 30 miles for primary care or 60 miles for specialty care from your residence, you may have to pay for your own transportation and ancillary service costs. This includes emergencies when you can get the services needed at a closer location.

If you have a medical emergency contact your worker immediately after the emergency to make arrangements for reimbursement of allowed expenses.

Important reminder: If you want to be paid, you must get authorization to incur costs before you get certain non-emergency medical transportation or related ancillary services. Prior authorization to incur a transportation or ancillary service cost is not required for emergencies, retroactive eligibility, and appeal hearings. Reporting, billing, and receipt documentation is still required.

**HOUSTON COUNTY
AGENDA REQUEST FORM
December 16, 2025**

Date Submitted: 12/11/2025

By: Brent Parker, County Coordinator

ACTION

- **Consider Initiating a competitive search for a 1 FTE Child Support Officer (B24)**
- **Consider Initiating a competitive search for a 1 FTE Child Protection Social Worker (C41)**

APPOINTMENT REQUEST

- **9:05 a.m. Public Hearing, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes § 375A.1205, Subdivision 1. The purpose of the hearing is to consider making the positions of Auditor / Treasurer and Recorder positions appointed.**

HR CONSENT AGENDA REQUEST

- **Change the employment status of Emma Walter, Deputy Recorder, from probationary to regular, effective December 30, 2025.**
- **Accept the resignation of Nicole Lemke, Child Support Officer, effective December 19th, 2025, with thanks for her 2 years of service to the residents of Houston County.**
- **Hire Kohl Betcher as a 67-day temporary/casual Drop Site Supervisor, at a pay rate of \$17.50 per hour.**
- **Accept the resignation of Abigail Bendel, Child Protection Social Worker, effective December 31st, 2025, with thanks for her 2 years of service to the residents of Houston County.**
- **Consider approving resolution 25-44 adopting Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual.**

Reviewed by:

_____ HR Director

_____ Sheriff

_____ Finance Director

_____ Engineer

_____ IS Director

_____ PHHS

(Indicate

other dept)

_____ Recorder

_____ County Attorney

_____ Environmental Svcs

Recommendation:

Decision:

Abigail Bendel

Resignation Letter

Bethany Moen
Houston County Public Health and Human
Services, Social Services Supervisor
304 S. Marshall St.
Caledonia, MN 55921

12/10/2025

To Bethany Moen, Social Services Supervisor:

Kindly accept this letter as my formal resignation as Child Protection Social Worker at Houston County Public Health and Human Services. My last day is expected to be on December 31, 2025.

I am thankful for the opportunities that I have been given in this career. I would also like to thank you for being supportive of my professional and personal growth.

Let me know how I can help in making the transition of responsibilities as seamless as possible for everyone involved.

Sincerely,

Abigail Bendel

Abigail Bendel



Houston County

MINNESOTA

Human Resources

304 South Marshall Street - Room 206
Caledonia, Minnesota 55921
Phone: (507) 725-5822
Fax: (507) 725-5550

Justification to Fill Vacancy

Department: Public Health & Human Services

Position Title: Child Protection Social Worker

Position Classification / Band: Social Worker (CPS)/C41

Date Vacancy Occurred: 12/31/2025

Section 1: Vacancy Details

1. Reason for Vacancy (check one):

- Resignation
- Retirement
- Termination
- Internal Promotion/Transfer
- New Position Previously Approved
- Other: _____

2. Is this a budgeted position?

- Yes
- No (explain funding source) _____

Section 2: Operational Impact

1. What essential services or functions are impacted by this vacancy?

Statutorily mandated child protection services that include: On-Call rotation, Child Protection Assessments & Investigations, Parent Support Outreach Program (PSOP), Child Welfare (CW), and Child Welfare Targeted Case Management (CW-TCM).

2. What risks exist if this position is not filled (e.g., compliance, safety, service delivery delays)?

This position directly impacts several critical and legally mandated child protection functions. Child Protective services are time-sensitive, and the absence of this position limits our ability to meet state timelines, ensure child safety and support Houston County families. Statutory timelines/requirements affected:



**Houston
County**
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304 South Marshall Street - Room 206
Caledonia, Minnesota 55921
Phone: (507) 725-5822
Fax: (507) 725-5550

- *24-hour response for screening reports
- *24-hour response for screened in investigations
- *5-day contact requirement for family assessments
- *Timely completion of CP investigations
- *Required monthly face-to-face contact with children and parents
- *Case and court documentation within required timelines
- *24/7 On-call rotation

Additionally, reducing this position would increase the demand for the remaining staff.

3. Can these duties be absorbed by current staff?

Yes (explain how) _____

No (explain why) Current caseloads and time-sensitive/mandated work will continue to be managed by staff and they will also be covering 24/7 on-call with one less person in the rotation while waiting for this position to be filled.

Section 3: Alternatives Considered

1. Have you explored restructuring or redistribution of duties?

Yes (describe results) We continually look at how work should be and can be done. We have made changes in our unit to make our work more effective and efficient. Such as the adjustments we made to licensing which led to moving a social worker from the Children's Mental Health Unit to licensing (this decreased CMH staff from four to three).

No (explain why) _____

2. Could this position be reduced to part-time, seasonal, or contract?

Yes (explain) _____

No (explain) Child Protection is a 24/7-time sensitive position with the mandate of on-call services outside of regular daily needs. This is not a seasonal or part-time position.

Section 4: Financial Considerations

1. Estimated annual cost (salary & benefits): \$ <=/ C41 Step 4 \$36.85 per hour plus on-call compensation and benefits (see below).

\$76,648.00 Salary (Step 4)

\$26,500 Benefits (estimated)

\$2,725.84 On-Call Pay (estimated)



Houston County

MINNESOTA

Human Resources

304 South Marshall Street - Room 206

Caledonia, Minnesota 55921

Phone: (507) 725-5822

Fax: (507) 725-5550

\$105,873.84 Total

2. Funding source / budget line: Combination of state/federal reimbursement and county levy – multiple budget lines.
3. Will overtime, service delays, or other costs increase if left vacant?
 Yes (explain) The current rotation of CP staff will need to cover cases as they come in as well as the now open on-call shifts. Being down staff makes the rotation smaller and the need to pick up on-call shifts and new cases more frequent while working their already existing caseload and newly assigned cases.
 No

Section 5: Department Head Recommendation

Provide a summary justification for why this position should be filled:

The Child Protection Social Work position is essential to fulfilling MN statutory requirements to protect children and support families. This role ensures timely response to maltreatment reports, completion of assessments and investigations, ongoing case management and compliance with court, permanency and documentation requirements.

The learning curve for this position is two years or more. Required Child Protection CORE training will take time for a new hire to complete, which draws out the length of time that the child protection unit will be at full staff capacity. This is an important and needed hire for us. Without it, workloads will increase and our ability to meet timelines without overtime and/or burnout will be impacted.

Department Head Signature: _____

Date: _____

[Handwritten Signature] *12/10/2025*

Karen Kohlmeyer,

Please accept this letter as my formal resignation from my role as a Child Support Officer with Houston County, effective December 19th, 2025.

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve the community in this capacity. I appreciate your guidance, flexibility, and willingness to create success for the team.

Over the next two weeks, I am committed to ensuring a smooth transition and will assist in transferring responsibilities or providing any needed information to support my duties.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be part of Houston County. I wish the team continued success moving forward.

Sincerely,

Nicole Lemke



**Houston
County**
MINNESOTA

Human Resources

304 South Marshall Street - Room 206
Caledonia, Minnesota 55921
Phone: (507) 725-5822
Fax: (507) 725-5550

Justification to Fill Vacancy Form

Department: Public Health and Human Services

Position Title: Child Support Officer

Position Classification / Band: B24

Date Vacancy Occurred: December 19, 2025

Section 1: Vacancy Details

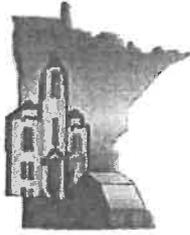
1. Reason for Vacancy (check one):
 - Resignation
 - Retirement
 - Termination
 - Internal Promotion/Transfer
 - New Position Previously Approved
 - Other:
2. Is this a budgeted position?
 - Yes
 - No (explain funding source)

Section 2: Operational Impact

1. What essential services or functions are impacted by this vacancy?

The Child Support Officer works directly with families who have requested or required to work with our local child support agency. The role is imperative in ensuring we are meeting state and federal timelines around processing cases. They work directly with families, employers, attorney's and the courts. They establish, enforce and collect child support payments for those receiving child support services.
2. What risks exist if this position is not filled (e.g., compliance, safety, service delivery delays)?

Delays in families receiving the child support they are entitled to. If there are delays in establishing paternity or establishing a court order, families will not have funds they are court ordered to receive. There are also compliance and audit implications. The work of child support does have timelines they need to meet in order to stay in compliance. The work is laid out in statute and law. We also have to be in compliance with the courts and their timelines. Meeting deadlines may impact our ability to draw down incentive dollars if we do not remain in compliance.



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3. Can these duties be absorbed by current staff?

- Yes Explain Why: Staff in the child support unit are newer to the work and aren't able to absorb all of the work. New processes have added to the time it takes to work cases.
- No

Section 3: Alternatives Considered

1. Have you explored restructuring or redistribution of duties?

- Yes Explain Why: We look at caseload size and demographics with each new hire.
- No

2. Could this position be reduced to part-time, seasonal, or contract?

- Yes Explain Why: No, caseload size and duties are at a level that would require this to be a full time position.
- No

Section 4: Financial Considerations

- 1. Estimated annual cost (salary & benefits): \$97,605
- 2. Funding source / budget line: federal and state reimbursement
- 3. Will overtime, service delays, or other costs increase if left vacant?
 - Yes Explain Why: There will not be enough staff to cover the caseload and properly work cases.
 - No

Section 5: Department Head Recommendation

Provide a summary justification for why this position should be filled:

Child Support Officers have a wide range of duties when setting up a child support case. They work with multiple parties and the learning curve is steep for this position. It is imperative I replace this person so they will have time to learn their duties and the different facets of child support work. The staff in child support are all fairly new and not replacing this would be a detriment to our clients. I also have another retirement in the unit within less than a year. This will leave the unit with very new staff and any time they have with a long term employee is going to be extremely beneficial.

Department Head Signature:

Date:

12/10/2025

Submit Form



Houston County

MINNESOTA

POLICIES & PROCEDURES MANUAL

304 SOUTH MARSHALL ST. SUITE 208
CALEDONIA, MN 55921

Policies & Procedures Manual – Table of Contents

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Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Purpose

SECTION:	Policy Manual Introductory Sections Section A-1	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

The purpose of the ***Policies & Procedures Manual*** is to provide a uniform, comprehensive and efficient system of personnel administration in Houston County, Minnesota. The policies and related procedures define the County's terms and conditions of employment. These policies are not intended as a binding employment contract or an offer of employment conditions other than those of an at-will employee.

These policies, as a whole or in part, are subject to change, revocation, modification or amendment at any time at the County's sole discretion with or without advance notice. The County intends to keep the ***Policies & Procedures Manual*** current, but there may be times when policies or the law will change before these materials are updated. It is the further purpose of these Personnel Policies to ensure that:

1. Recruitment, selection and advancement of employees shall be based on job-related factors such as relevant education, experience, ability, knowledge and skill.
2. Positions with similar duties and responsibilities shall be classified and compensated on the basis of comparable compensation for comparable work, consistent with attraction and retention considerations.
3. The County acknowledges that equal opportunity for all people is a fundamental human value. Therefore employment opportunities and policies shall be enforced to ensure equal employment opportunity without discrimination, favor or harassment on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, genetic information, veteran or military status, status with regard to public assistance, pregnancy, familial status, local Human Rights Commission activity, arrest or conviction records, or on the basis of any other characteristic protected by law, except in the instance of a bona fide occupational qualification necessary to effectively perform the job. The County prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the aforementioned factors. The County requires that all applicants and current employees be considered on the basis of individual qualifications, ability, knowledge and skills without discrimination or favor.

4. Employees shall be protected from coercive partisan political practices. Employees are prohibited from using their official authority to interfere with or affect the result of an election or nomination for office.
5. Consistent workforce management practices established within these policies are based on the recognized value of, and respect due to all employees contributing to their skills in County employment. Additionally, sound management practices enhance the effective delivery of public services, serving the members of our community.
6. The County complies with state and federal law throughout its policies, and if a conflict should arise between policies and law, the law shall prevail.

Savings Clause

If any of these policies shall be held to be contrary to law by a court or state or federal administrative agency of competent jurisdiction from whose final judgment or decree no appeal has been taken within the time provided, such provision shall be voided and the remainder of these policies, other than that which has been held invalid, shall not be affected.

Management Rights

The County Board of Commissioners (County Board) has the sole authority to approve, modify, reject, or approve as modified these policies.

The County Board retains the full and unrestricted right to: operate and manage all staff, facilities and equipment; establish functions and programs; set and amend budgets; determine the utilization of technology; establish and modify the organizational structure; select and direct personnel; establish work schedules; and to perform any inherent managerial function not specifically limited by current state and federal law, county ordinances, collective bargaining agreements, these policies, and County Board resolutions.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Adoption and Amendment

SECTION:	Policy Manual Introductory Sections Section A-2	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

These policies and procedures were prepared and recommended by the County Coordinator / HR Director, approved by the County Board at a regular board meeting on [date] in accordance with Minnesota Statutes §§ 375.56 – 375.71 and have subsequently been amended as indicated below.

Adopted: [date]

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Administration

SECTION:	Policy Manual Introductory Sections Section A-3	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

These policies and procedures shall be administered by the County Coordinator / HR Director. The County Coordinator / HR Director shall develop and provide the necessary forms, procedures, and instructions for the implementation of these policies.

Copies of these policies and procedures shall be provided to all department heads and current employees and are made available on Houston Counties Help Desk site. A copy of these policies is provided to each new employee as a part of the new employee orientation process. Printed copies of these policies shall be available for public review upon request to the County Coordinator / HR Director.

Departmental Rules

Each department head may establish rules and procedures for the express administration of Human Resources matters unique to that Department. Such rules shall be approved by the County Coordinator / HR Director prior to implementation and shall be filed with the Personnel Department and made available to all Department employees.

Indemnification

In accordance with Minnesota Statutes Chapter 466, the County declares its intent to defend, save harmless and indemnify any of its officers and employees against tort claim or demand, arising out of an alleged act or omission occurring in the performance of a duty, except that of malfeasance in office or willful or wanton neglect of duty.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Application

SECTION:	Policy Manual Introductory Sections Section A-4	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

These policies and procedures apply to all employees paid by Houston County, Minnesota except when they are in conflict with law or collective bargaining agreements.

Department Heads:

A department head is an elected or appointed official who is responsible for management of a department as determined by law or the County Board. Department heads include the following:

- County Assessor
- County Attorney
- County Auditor / Treasurer
- County Coordinator / HR Director
- County Engineer
- County Recorder
- County Sheriff
- County Surveyor
- Environmental Services Director
- Finance Director
- Information Technology Director
- Public Health and Human Services Director
- Veterans Services Officer

Unclassified Positions:

The County Board may create positions referred to as unclassified positions, for which the sections of these policies pertaining to selection and termination do not apply. Subject to applicable law, appointment for such positions shall be made by the County Board or an existing appointing authority and employment and termination shall be at the will of the Appointing Authority.

Application in Relation to Collective Bargaining Agreements:

These policies and procedures shall apply to all County employees except as specifically modified by a collective bargaining agreement or by the specific language of these policies. The

County retains the full and unrestricted right to perform any managerial function not specifically limited by current collective bargaining agreements, these policies, and County Board resolutions.

Employee Responsibilities:

Employees subject to these policies and procedures shall comply with, and carry out, the provisions of these policies. Any employee who fails to comply with any of the provisions of these policies may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Definitions

SECTION:	Policy Manual Introductory Sections Section A-5	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

Certain terms used in this *Policies and Procedures Manual* are defined for consistency and clarity of meaning. Unless otherwise indicated, the below terms used in these personnel policies shall have the meaning specified in this section.

Definitions

Administrative Leave – Paid time during which the employer may require an employee to be away from work, for example, during an investigation.

Appointing Authority – The official, commission, board, department head, or other individual(s) empowered to appoint or remove employees in the service of the County.

Appointment – A regular appointment to a paid position within the County service.

Class/Classification – A body of work performed, encompassing a group of jobs or positions, including jobs with a similar level of responsibility, duties, and qualifications. This is described by a classification description.

Class/Classification Description – A general description of a body of work. The classification description is sometimes referred to as a classification specification or class spec. Typically includes: a general summary of the work, distinguishing characteristics of the class, the essential duties of the class (nature of work), the knowledge and skills required at entry to the class, and licensing and special physical requirements.

County – Houston County, Minnesota

County Board – The Houston County, Minnesota Board of Commissioners

Days – Calendar days unless otherwise noted.

Demotion – A change of an employee's position from one classification to a position in another classification with lesser duties and/or compensation.

Discharge – A permanent separation from County employment as a result of the employee's inability to perform all the requirements of the assigned position and/or due to incompetence, misconduct, or failure to comply with job requirements and workplace expectations.

Dispute – A disagreement as to the interpretation or application of these Policies.

Department – County departments include the following:

- County Assessor's Department
- County Attorney Office
- County Auditor / Treasurer Department
- County DOT / Engineers Department
- County Recorder's Department
- County Sheriff's Office
- County Surveyor's Department
- Environmental Services Department
- Finance Department
- Information Technology Department
- Public Health and Human Services Department
- Personnel Department
- Veterans Services Department

Department Head – A department head is an elected or appointed official who is responsible for management of a department as determined by law or the County Board.

Elected Official – Those officials selected by vote of the constituency of the County.

Employee – A person in a paid position within the County service, as defined by Minnesota Statute §179A.

Employment Date – The date a person begins employment with the County in a regular position, or the most recent date hired if the individual is re-hired.

Exempt Employee – An employee excluded from the overtime pay provisions of the federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).

Hiring Authority – The official, commission, board, department head, or other individual(s) empowered to appoint or remove employees in the service of the County.

Incompetence – An employee's demonstrating inadequacy or unsuitability to meet job expectations with or without a reasonable accommodation; the inability or failure to perform; ineptitude.

Insubordination – An employee's willful disregard and/or defiance of established authority and/or a supervisor's direct orders. Inappropriate language may also constitute insubordination.

Interactive Process - An interactive process is a back-and-forth exchange or conversation between two or more parties to communicate, respond, and collaborate on finding a reasonable accommodation for an employee with a disability.

Job Analysis – The systematic process of evaluating jobs with regard to the duties, responsibilities, scope, complexity, and requirements necessary to perform in the job. Information may be gathered by questionnaire, interview, and/or observation.

Job – A position or set of positions performing similar work that are grouped in a broader classification.

Job Description – The written document that identifies the purpose, duties, responsibilities, requirements, and accountability of a job; and the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform the job; as well as any required credentials. Job descriptions may contain more detail and/or information specific to a particular job, as compared to a classification description.

Job Elimination – The removal of a position from the organizational structure.

Job Evaluation – The process of comparing and classifying the relative value of jobs in the County for the purpose of determining salary levels and ranges, and compliance with pay equity statutes and rules.

Layoff – A separation from employment due to lack of work, lack of funds, or other reason not attributable to employee performance or conduct.

Layoff List – A list of employees laid-off and eligible for recall.

Leave of Absence – An approved, temporary separation from active employment duties, which may be with, or without, compensation.

Misconduct – An employee's intentional, negligent, or indifferent conduct, on the job or off the job, that displays a serious violation of the standards of behavior the employer has the right to reasonably expect of the employee, and/or displays a substantial lack of concern for employment.

Non-Exempt Employee – An employee covered by the overtime pay and minimum wage provisions of the federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).

Overtime – All hours worked by non-exempt employees in excess of 40 hours in a week or in excess of another standard defined by the FLSA and adopted by the County.

Personnel Department – The County Coordinator / HR Director and staff responsible for the administration of these policies and associated processes.

Position – A set of duties and responsibilities assigned to an individual role requiring the part-time or full-time employment of at least one person.

Probationary Period – The first six (6) or twelve (12) month period following an employee's initial hiring or re-hiring when they are in active service in a position. The probationary period is designed to be an extended selection period to determine if regular status should be granted. Under certain circumstances, the probationary period may be extended.

Promotion – A change in an employee's status from a position in one class to a position in another class with more responsible duties and/or a higher salary range.

Reclassification – A change in the designated salary range level of a position as a result of approved changes in job duties which modify the responsibilities or decision making authority by raising it to a higher grade/classification or reducing to a lower grade/classification, based on a retrospective review of how the position has evolved.

Reemployment – Appointment of a former employee to a position with the County.

Reinstatement – Appointment of a former County employee to a position to which the employee was assigned prior to their termination or separation of employment, and within a specified duration of time from that separation.

Reorganization – A planned, prospective change in the jobs, reporting structure, or other significant factors regarding one or more positions and/or vacancies.

Resignation – Voluntary separation of employment from County service.

Severance Pay – Payout of benefits and compensation to regular employees leaving County employment in good standing.

Seniority – The duration of continuous employment from the employee's most recent date of hire.

Sick Time – Paid time off granted to eligible employees for absences due to personal illness, injury, medical or dental appointments, or other health related needs that prevent the employee from their job duties.

Trial Work Period – Trial periods serve as an extension of the selection process during the initial period following promotion, transfer, or voluntary demotion.

Vacation – Paid time off granted to eligible employees for the purpose of rest, relaxation, and attending to personal matters.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Equal Employment Opportunity

SECTION:	Staffing and Employment Practices Section B-1	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

Houston County is committed to equal employment opportunity (EEO), including compliance with all applicable federal and state laws, executive orders, and administrative policies. This policy of EEO and anti-discrimination applies to all aspects of the employment relationship.

Policy

To implement this policy, Houston County requires that all applicants and current employees be considered on the basis of individual ability and merit, without discrimination or favor.

Employment opportunities and policies shall be enforced to ensure equal employment opportunity without discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, creed, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, genetic information, veteran or military status, status with regard to public assistance, pregnancy, familial status, local Human Rights Commission activity, arrest or conviction records, or on the basis of any other characteristic protected by law, except in the instance of a bona fide occupational qualification necessary for proper and efficient government operations. Houston County prohibits any such discrimination or harassment based on the aforementioned factors.

In all instances, proper regard shall be provided for applicants' and employees' privacy and constitutional rights as citizens under federal and Minnesota law. Any employee with questions or concerns regarding equal opportunity is encouraged without fear of reprisal to contact the Personnel Department.

All managers and supervisors are responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy within the scope of their duties. Reports of alleged violations of this policy should be submitted to the Human Resources Director.

The County Coordinator / HR Director will review all the allegations of violation of this policy. The County Coordinator / HR Director will determine if the complaint requires further

investigation, and if so, will oversee the investigation to its conclusion. If the complaint involves the County Coordinator / HR Director, the report should be submitted to the County Attorney.

Houston County forbids retaliation against anyone who makes a good faith complaint of a suspected violation of this policy, and against anyone who serves as a witness or participates in an investigation. Acts of retaliation should be reported immediately and may be subject to additional investigation.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Recruitment and Selection

SECTION:	Staffing and Employment Practices Section B-2	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

The County's recruitment and selection procedures are designed and administered to provide open competitive processes for qualified candidates and to allow the County to evaluate job-related education, skills, and knowledge of candidates as compared to those factors required to successfully perform each County job. The County seeks to select individuals who are qualified to perform the duties and responsibilities of each job, and to deliver services to the public in an effective manner. The County will consider candidates presenting the most closely qualified match of education and experience to meet job-related knowledge, skills and abilities requirements, as determined through a consistent and relevant selection process.

The County shall conduct its recruitment and selection processes in a fair and equitable manner to recruit, select, and advance personnel on the basis of relative ability, knowledge, and skills, consistent with the law, free from discriminatory practices, and upholding equal employment opportunity. The County is committed to staff development, and it values the opportunity to promote from within the County to fill vacant positions. Regular employees are encouraged to seek promotional opportunities.

In order to provide the best possible services to the residents of Houston County, the Coordinator / HR Director will partner with County hiring managers, through the recruitment process. Department heads shall have the opportunity to participate in the selection process to fill employment vacancies as they occur.

Procedure

The Personnel Department will establish the forms and systems to identify vacant positions, post and advertise vacant positions, collect and screen applications, provide for, formulate and hold competitive employment examinations and interviews, design scoring systems based on job qualifications and duties, oversee background and reference checks, oversee job offers, and coordinate the pre-placement processes.

Filling Positions

The department head shall notify the County Coordinator / HR Director of their desire to fill a vacant position. The County Coordinator / HR Director approves filling vacancies with the Board of Commissioners' approval unless a specific exception exists (e.g., a lay-off list, hiring freeze, etc.). If such an exception exists, the County Coordinator / HR Director shall discuss with the department head to determine appropriate action.

Vacancies

A vacancy shall be defined as any unfilled position approved by the County Board as part of the regular budget process or approved by subsequent County Board action. Vacancies may be filled by reemployment, reinstatement, promotion, demotion, transfer, temporary, or new hire.

Recruitment

The Personnel Department shall prepare and publish a notice of the vacancy using internal and/or external sources in such a manner as to provide open competition of qualified applicants. The notice shall specify the position's title (or approved working title), salary range and/or hiring range, a description of the duties and responsibilities, essential functions, minimum qualifications, typical working hours, application procedure and other pertinent information. Such announcements shall be posted to allow a reasonable period of time for interested parties to apply. Vacancies will be posted for internal applicants, and in addition, may also be posted for external applicants. Postings shall be made available and applications accepted for a minimum period of three weeks.

Applications

An applicant for a vacancy shall complete an employment application and submit additional required forms, reports, or materials to provide information describing their skills, education, experience, licenses, other qualifications, documentation for veteran's preference, etc.

The application process will contain a certification by the applicant, attesting to the accuracy of the statements made and information submitted during the application process. Information provided in applications may be verified and previous employers may be contacted. The County Coordinator / HR Director may require presentation of transcripts, certificates, licenses and other evidence to substantiate qualifications claimed through the application process. Should it later be determined that statements made, or other information provided during the application process were false, the individual may be subject to immediate dismissal, regardless of length of service. Application data shall be maintained by the Personnel Department.

Screening

The Personnel Department shall receive and track applications. department heads and their designees and/or the County Coordinator / HR Director will screen applications for minimum qualifications. Incomplete or illegible applications may be considered as not meeting the minimum qualifications.

The appointing authority works with County Coordinator / HR Director to design a selection process which includes, at a minimum, an objective screening tool to evaluate applications for job-related knowledge, skills, experience, education, and training. The County Coordinator / HR Director shall oversee developing supplemental application questions to ascertain an applicant's minimum and preferred qualifications for a vacant position. The scores on the screening tool are used to determine which applicants will move forward in the selection process. The selection process may include competitive examinations, experience and training ratings, physical abilities assessments, medical and/or psychological examinations, performance tests, work samples, oral exams, and/or other valid selection techniques.

Accommodation for Applicants with a Disability

An individual with a disability may request a reasonable accommodation during the application and/or selection process by contacting the Personnel Department and providing information regarding the need for accommodation. To be considered for employment, an individual must be able to meet the minimum qualifications for the job, with or without a reasonable accommodation. An applicant or candidate for County employment who can be reasonably accommodated without creating an undue hardship or causing a direct threat to workplace safety will be provided a reasonable accommodation during the application and selection process. Such applicant/candidate will be given the same consideration for employment as other qualified applicants. Applicants who pose a direct threat to the health, safety and well-being of themselves or others in the workplace, when the threat cannot be eliminated by reasonable accommodation, will not be hired.

Veteran's Preference

As part of hiring processes where applicants may be eligible to receive veteran's preference, the County will incorporate notification of the availability of veteran's preference points and provide a process to request this preference along with procedure for submitting a copy of the veteran's Form DD214 or other appropriate documentation. Veteran's preference does not apply in selection processes for department head positions or temporary positions which meet requirements to be defined as either a department head or temporary position as relates to veteran's preference law.

Veteran's preference points shall be applied at a meaningful point in the selection process for all open competitive examinations, exclusive of department head and temporary positions as noted above, and in accordance with Minnesota Statutes § 197.455. Where a hiring process is open to the public, internal candidates are entitled to the same veteran's preference they would receive if they were an external candidate in that process.

In order to receive preference points, an individual must be a veteran or otherwise qualify for veteran's preference as defined by state guidelines, and must provide appropriate documentation. The veteran must also receive a passing score (e.g., meet minimum qualifications for the position) on the examination in order to have preference points applied.

Eligible disabled veterans may apply for veteran's preference points during an internal promotional examination, when applying for an initial promotion after entering public employment.

Pertinent Personal Relationships

No preference in hiring is given to immediate or extended family members of current employees or elected officials or to an applicant where the applicant will be the supervisor or subordinate of another employee or elected official with whom the applicant has a personal relationship, where the existence of such a relationship is highly likely to impair the organizational integrity of the work unit to which the applicant would be assigned, and/or the existence of which is highly likely to impair the job performance of the applicant or the employee or elected official.

Eligibility Lists

The County Coordinator / HR Director shall establish and maintain a list of eligible candidates for certain positions and determine the period of time an eligibility list shall remain in effect. The eligibility list shall not remain in effect for a period greater than one year.

Selection Processes

Based on the applicant scores on the final element of the selection process (interviews, tests, etc.) and after including any claimed veteran's preference points, the County Coordinator / HR Director shall certify the top qualified candidate for the position.

The Personnel Department or the hiring manager shall check employment references for the selected candidate. Acceptable reference sources should generally be in a position to have knowledge of the candidate's work product and/or skills and qualifications relevant to the job and will ideally include past or current supervisors or other individuals in a role overseeing the individual's work. The County may also require additional checks or verifications as relevant to the position, including drug testing, background checks, criminal history, credit checks, driver's license checks, professional license and academic verifications. Some positions also require Minnesota Statutes Chapter 604 civil liability verifications.

Job Offer

The County Coordinator / HR Director or designee shall extend a formal employment offer to the selected candidate including the starting date, salary, benefits, employment status and other conditions of employment, which shall be confirmed in writing. In the unusual circumstance that it is necessary to appoint a selected candidate to a position before all required information is gathered, the employment offer shall be conditional upon the satisfactory results from the

final information gathering process(es). In such cases, the selected candidate shall be required to sign a statement accepting a conditional appointment.

The Personnel Department shall promptly notify applicants not selected for a position, addressing the specific requirements of collective bargaining agreements and veteran's preference.

Upon arrival, the new employee will attend an orientation to County employment.

Reemployment

Reemployed individuals are normally considered new employees, with consideration of previous employment for purposes of pay, benefits, or seniority and shall serve a probationary period.

Temporary Appointments

Employment in a temporary appointment is for a limited period of time. Temporary employment are not subject to the requirements defined for recruitment and selection in open competitive processes as described above. No preference in hiring is given to relatives of current employees or elected officials. It is preferred that appointments be made from a relevant temporary employment eligibility list.

An individual temporarily appointed to a position shall be subject to removal at any time and shall acquire no tenure or seniority in the position to which they are temporarily appointed. If the individual is subsequently appointed to the position in a regular status role, the period of service under the temporary appointment shall not be counted as part of their probationary period.

When a position is filled by temporary appointment of a current County employee from another classification, such employee shall be compensated at a rate of pay appropriate to the classification of temporary appointment, but all other benefits shall be computed on the basis of the primary classification to which the employee is assigned.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Background Investigation

SECTION:	Staffing and Employment Practices Section B-3	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

To protect the County, community, and its assets, Houston County conducts background investigations to minimize potential risks.

Policy

It is the policy of Houston County to conform with Minnesota Statutes Chapter 364 relating to criminal offenders and rehabilitation, and state & federal regulations governing the process for background investigations, confidentiality of information gathered, and the protection of privacy of individuals undergoing background investigations.

The Personnel Department in consultation with the County's hiring managers, shall determine the appropriate level of background investigation for each classification.

Procedure

Background investigations shall be initiated after a conditional offer of employment and shall be completed prior to hiring an employee.

Background investigations on current employees may be completed prior to the effective date of a transfer, promotion, or demotion.

Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS) Security Policy background investigations shall be conducted for all personnel who have authorized access to FBI CJIS systems. This includes employees who have direct responsibility to configure and maintain computer systems and networks with direct access to FBI CJIS systems.

Authority

The Personnel Department is responsible for initiating background investigations.

The County Coordinator / HR Director in consultation with the County Attorney's Office shall determine the job relatedness of any criminal conviction.

The Sheriff's Office conducts extensive background investigations based on statutory obligations.

Retention and Accessibility of Background Investigation Records

The Personnel Department has the authority to maintain, store, use and disseminate records in accordance with County Retention Policies, Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, and applicable federal and state laws.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Probationary and Trial Periods

SECTION:	Staffing and Employment Practices Section B-4	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

The probationary period serves to ensure that employees newly assuming a County position along with its duties and responsibilities of public service are prepared to meet the performance and conduct expectations of the position. This timeframe provides opportunity for the employee to learn and adjust to the new role and to successful County employment, as well as demonstrating their willingness and ability to meet the requirements of the position. It provides opportunity for both the employee and supervisor to assess the new employment relationship and to establish effective workplace interactions. The probationary period is the final stage of the qualifying and selection process. In the case of initial new hire probationary periods, successful completion is necessary before an employee may attain regular status employment.

Policy

Trial Periods

A trial period is applied when a County employee moves from one position into a different position within County service, when the employee previously completed their original new hire probationary period and has attained regular employment status. Trial periods serve as an extension of the selection process during the initial period following promotion, transfer, or voluntary demotion.

Application

Newly hired, rehired, transferred, demoted, and promoted employees shall continue the qualifying and selection process through a probationary period or trial period designed to assess their ability to meet the required work standards, and performance and conduct requirements of the position. During such period, the employee may receive orientation, training, and learning opportunities related to the new role. The employee's work performance, methods, and approach will be observed and monitored, along with their demonstrated ability to learn, reflect positive and professional work interactions, follow work rules, policies and procedures, and meet work objectives and performance standards.

The employee's supervisor shall define the expectations during the probationary or trial period, communicate expectations to the employee, provide orientation and learning opportunities, monitor performance, and provide periodic feedback.

Duration of Probationary and Trial Period

The probationary or trial period shall begin when the employee reports for duty and shall normally continue for six months / 1040 hours of active service for non-supervisory positions and twelve months / 2080 for law enforcement, professional, and supervisory positions. Individuals shall be notified of the length of their probationary or trial period as a part of the employment offer.

Time served in a temporary or acting appointment prior to being hired to a regular position of employment shall not be considered as time counted toward completion of the required probationary or trial period. Only time worked and on approved paid leave during the probationary or trial period shall be counted toward completion of the required timeframe.

The department head shall determine if the probationary employee's conduct or job performance is such that the employee is eligible for regular status as outlined in section B-7. The department head shall certify to the County Coordinator / HR Director if the employee is to be granted regular status.

Promotion or Transfer During Initial New Hire Probationary Period

Newly hired employees who transfer to a different position or are promoted while serving a new hire probationary period shall begin a six (6) or twelve (12) month probationary period in the new position before being granted regular employment status. Employees subject to a new hire probationary period who have not yet been granted regular employment status may be dismissed at any time.

Extension of Probationary Period

In some instances, the newly hired employee may not meet all of the required performance and conduct expectations during the probationary period. The department head in consultation with the County Coordinator / HR Director may extend the probationary period for up to 3 months with the agreement of the probationary employee. In these cases, the department head and the Human Resources Office shall prepare a written statement for the employee's signature indicating the expectations required for successful completion of the extended probationary period. If the probationary employee does not agree to the extension of probation in these cases, the employee shall be dismissed.

Return to Former Position During Trial Period

During a trial period resulting from internal movement of a regular status employee to a different County position, the appointing authority or department head may return a promoted, transferred, or voluntarily demoted employee to their previous position.

A regular employee who is transferred, promoted or voluntarily demoted and does not successfully complete the trial period following that transfer, promotion, or voluntary demotion, may, upon the acceptance of the department head, be eligible for reemployment in the first available position in the job previously held. A transferred, promoted, or voluntarily demoted employee may initiate this process by submitting a request to revert to a formerly held job which may be considered by the department head and the County Coordinator / HR Director. An employee returned to a formerly held classification will generally return to the same seniority and salary as held prior to the promotion, transfer, or voluntary demotion.

Dismissal During Initial Probationary Period

The department head with approval of the County Coordinator / HR Director may dismiss a probationary employee at any time during the initial new hire probationary period if the department head determines that the employee's performance or conduct does not meet the required work standards. In addition, an employee may be dismissed during the initial new hire probationary period for reasons including but not limited to changes in departmental organization, elimination of a position, work stoppage, lack of work, or lack of financial resources.

Dismissal During Trial Period Following Attainment of Regular Employment Status

Promoted, transferred, or demoted employees serving a trial period in a new position who have previously completed a new hire probationary period and been granted regular employment status, may be removed from employment for just cause and under circumstances comparable to those warranting removal of a similarly situated regular status County employee.

Dismissal actions affecting a veteran will be processed in accordance with Minnesota Statute § 197.46. The department head shall consult with the County Coordinator / HR Director to determine appropriate action in the case of an employee failing to meet performance or conduct requirements during the trial period resulting from a promotion, transfer, or demotion.

Conclusion of the Probationary or Trial Period

For newly hired and rehired employees subject to an initial new hire probationary period, the department head shall determine whether regular employment status is to be granted or denied prior to the conclusion of the probationary period. The department head shall provide notice to the employee and the Personnel Department regarding their determination. Such determination is final and not subject to hearing, or grievance or appeal process when taken during the initial new hire probationary period.

For employees who were promoted, transferred, or demoted, the department head shall determine whether continued employment in the new position is appropriate. The department head shall communicate their determination to the Personnel Department prior to conclusion of the trial period. If the department head believes that continued employment in the position is not appropriate, they shall consult with the County Coordinator / HR Director to determine appropriate action in the case of an employee who has previously completed the initial new hire probationary period

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Separation from Employment

SECTION:	Staffing and Employment Practices Section B-5	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

The County and the employee have certain obligations when an employee ceases to work for the County. The purpose of this policy is to define those obligations and provide consistent methods for addressing them.

Policy

An employee may end their county employment by either voluntary or involuntary separation. The employee shall provide adequate notice of a voluntary resignation. The county shall provide the employee with adequate notice in the case of an involuntary termination.

Procedure

Voluntary Resignation:

Employees who wish to resign in good standing shall provide written notice to the immediate supervisor of their intent to resign. Depending on the situation, an employee may be required to complete certain forms at the time of their resignation.

A non-supervisory employee is expected to provide a ten (14) calendar day notice of their intent to resign. A supervisory employee is expected to provide twenty (30) calendar day notice.

The employee's supervisor shall notify the Personnel Department of the acceptance of the employee's resignation notice as submitted and provide written notification of acceptance to the employee. In some situations, the supervisor may assess that it is in the best interest of the County to allow a shorter notice period. In these cases, the supervisor shall discuss a waiver of the expected notice period with the Personnel Department.

An employee who does not submit a resignation in compliance with the provisions of these policies may be considered as having not resigned in good standing. An employee who does not resign in good standing shall: 1) be deprived of the opportunity to be considered for

reinstatement; 2) not be eligible for severance pay; and 3) have the fact recorded in the employee's record.

Employees shall not use accrued leave time to extend their length of employment or delay their resignation date.

No regular employee shall be required to retire from County employment solely for age, except in those positions where a bona fide occupation qualification exists.

Upon giving notice of resignation, every County employee is to be extended the courtesy of an exit interview with the County Coordinator / HR Director or a member of the Board of Commissioners. An Exit Interview Form will be completed by the interviewer and filed in the employee's personnel file. If an interview is not possible, the Personnel Department will send the exit interview form to the exiting employee, with a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

The information obtained by these interviews may be helpful in identifying, addressing, and/or correcting existing problems. This information may be shared with the Department Head/Supervisor as deemed necessary and appropriate.

The exiting employee will be advised of separation matters including, but not limited to, final pay, severance pay, COBRA coverage, pension benefits.

Involuntary Termination:

An employee may be discharged for cause consistent with the Discipline and Discharge Policy in cases where corrective and/or disciplinary action has failed to improve unacceptable performance, obtain compliance with policies or practices, or correct inappropriate conduct; or where the unacceptable conduct is determined severe so as to warrant discharge as the most appropriate disciplinary action including in cases without prior corrective action or discipline.

Under no circumstances shall an employee be discharged without having the County Coordinator / HR Director review the action. If removal from the work site is necessary, the employee shall be placed on paid administrative leave, pending review of the circumstances of the situation.

Resignation by Failure to Report to Work:

An employee who is absent from work for a period of three (3) days or more without notifying their immediate supervisor of the reasons for the absence and receiving permission to remain away from work, shall be considered as having resigned without notice and not in good standing. This rule shall also apply to an employee who fails to return within three (3) days of the expiration of an authorized leave. If the failure to contact the supervisor was caused by unavoidable circumstances, the supervisor may waive this provision.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Layoff

SECTION:	Staffing and Employment Practices Section B-6	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

When a reduction of the workforce is necessary, the County intends to follow consistent methods and inform employees regarding the process. The purpose of this policy is to define consistent methods and process in the event of a layoff.

Policy

The County may determine that workforce adjustments in terms of numbers and skills of employees are needed to meet the service requirements and fiscal responsibilities of the organization.

Procedure

Order of Layoff:

If it becomes necessary to reduce the workforce, the County shall implement a layoff by classification within a department, in inverse order of classification seniority. Where it is determined that two or more persons in the classification have equal seniority, the employee with the lowest rating on the most recent performance appraisal shall be placed on the layoff list first.

Layoff Notice:

Whenever possible the County will provide affected employees a notice of reduction in workforce at least 5 working days in advance of the effective date of the layoff.

Demotion or Transfer in Lieu of Layoff:

A regular employee about to be laid off may request to demote or transfer to replace an employee with less seniority in the same or lower classification, provided the affected employee has previously worked in that classification. Such request shall be submitted to the department head in writing. The request will be evaluated by the department head and the County Coordinator / HR Director to determine eligibility and appropriate action. Any employee who requests and receives a demotion or transfer to avoid a layoff shall be placed in the salary range of the new job classification into which they have demoted or transferred.

Recall List:

For a period of one (1) year, an employee affected by a layoff will be placed on a recall list for the classification most recently held. An employee exercising their right to demote or transfer to avoid a layoff shall be placed on the appropriate recall list related to the position from which they demoted or transferred, for a period of one (1) year.

Seniority:

Employees will retain the seniority they had accrued prior to layoff, but shall not accrue additional seniority during the time they are on layoff status.

Recall from Layoff:

Recall from layoff shall be by classification, in inverse order of layoff. When an individual accepts a recall, their name shall be removed from the recall list. Upon recall from layoff, the employee's seniority and leave accrual rate shall be reinstated to those in place immediately prior to the layoff.

Failure to Report to Work following Recall:

If an employee does not return to work upon recall, on the scheduled date as directed by the County, or an extended date mutually acceptable to the employee and the County, the employee shall automatically have terminated their employment.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Outside Employment

SECTION:	Staffing and Employment Practices Section B-7	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

In order to avoid conflicts of interest between County employment and other employment situations, the County requires employees to provide notification of any additional employment or contract work.

Policy

An employee shall not engage in any employment, private enterprise, participate in any professional activity or perform any act or service during or outside their employment with the County, which would negatively affect the employee's ability to perform the duties of their position with the County.

Procedure

Employees shall notify their department head, in writing, of their intent to seek outside compensated employment, including the nature, location, employer, and working hours. The department head shall determine whether the outside compensated employment or activity creates a conflict of interest with County employment.

An employee's failure to disclose non-County compensated employment may be grounds for disciplinary action, including suspension or termination.

Employees participating in non-compensated or volunteer activities are generally encouraged to continue in such participation. Non-compensated or volunteer activities for organizations that have a financial relationship with the County are subject to the same conflict of interest rules as compensated employment. The employee participating in the volunteer activity with such an organization shall discuss the activity with their department head.

If the employee and the department head do not agree on the potential for conflict, the County Coordinator / HR Director will make the final determination as to actual or apparent conflict of interest.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Personnel Records, Forms, and Transactions

SECTION:	Staffing and Employment Practices Section B-8	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

In order to produce required reports and maintain personnel records, the County Coordinator / HR Director shall implement the necessary forms and systems.

Policy

The Personnel Department shall develop, install or implement appropriate systems and forms to allow employees, applicants, supervisors, and other interested parties to submit and retrieve personnel information, to have records kept, and reports extracted. The County Coordinator / HR Director shall also provide assistance to supervisors, managers, department heads, and Elected Officials in the keeping of records regarding actions concerning employees in their area of responsibility.

Procedure

The Personnel Department shall establish and maintain files on each employee working for the County, and include: their application, selection process information, pre-placement assessment results, proof of initial qualifications, orientation checklist(s), training records, performance evaluations, compensation, benefits participation, promotions, discipline, commendations and other personnel records.

Employee Access to Records:

Employees have the right to review their personnel files and may do so in accordance in Minnesota statute 181.961.

Reference Requests:

Department heads and supervisors shall refer all requests from outside organizations for references on current or previous employees to the County Coordinator / HR Director.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Performance Management

SECTION:	Staffing and Employment Practices Section B-9	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

The County Administers effective performance management practices to support and guide employees in delivering quality work and cost-effective service; to assist employees in developing and advancing professional and job-related skills; and to recognize employees for the quality of their work and professional achievements.

Policy

Each employee is required to have a formal written performance evaluation at least once per year. Supervisors who do not complete evaluations in a timely manner may be subject to the disciplinary process. The performance management system is based on accurate classification and/or job descriptions, job skills and competencies, behavioral and conduct expectations, and results-oriented performance goals. The County's performance management approach will be designed and used to assist and encourage each employee to reach their maximum potential and enhance their delivery of the services provided by the County.

Procedure

The most important factors for the success of a performance management system and its effective functioning are clear communication between the supervisor and employee, and the accurate rating of employee performance, supported by on-going training, feedback, and guidance.

The performance evaluation will be used to clarify expectations and goals, to recognize excellence in work methods, accomplishments and results, to counsel employees in areas needing change, and to identify training and development needs and opportunities. Standards against which performance is to be measured will be specific, measurable, related to quality, quantity, reliability and timeliness of work, or other reasonable performance criteria determined by the supervisor. Annual performance evaluations will be completed by February 1st for the prior calendar year.

The Personnel Office will train County employees on the performance management system, notify them of evaluation deadlines and requirements, provide consultation on goal setting and evaluation methods, and retain copies of all formal evaluations, including employee comments, if any exist department heads will ensure that each employee receives formal and informal performance feedback from their immediate supervisor.

The department head or their designee will review the evaluations for consistency with County policy and approve the overall rating prior to the evaluation being shared with the employee.

The immediate supervisor assigns and directs the employee's work, checks or inspects work for proper methods and results, and is immediately responsible for the work of the employee.

The immediate supervisor will, at least annually, formally evaluate the performance of each employee, provide each employee feedback on their work performance and provide a written summary of that evaluation on the Performance Evaluation Form to the employee and to the Personnel Department.

The supervisor evaluating the performance of an employee must be familiar with the duties of the position and the work performed by the employee. In the case where an employee has had more than one immediate supervisor during the rating period, the supervisor at the time of the evaluation will prepare and deliver the evaluation, preferably, in consultation with the previous supervisor(s).

The supervisor conducting the evaluation will notify the employee in advance of the evaluation and solicit employee input to the evaluation, allowing the employee adequate time to assess their own performance, report their accomplishments, suggest goals, and prepare any questions or suggestions regarding the duties of the position.

The supervisor will also hold at least one documented informal performance feedback discussion with each employee to address progress midway between their annual reviews, and midway during the new hire probationary period or promotional trial period.

Supervisors must ensure that employees receive meaningful and objective evaluations of their work. They must use the County established ratings accurately and consistently, both within their departments and work units as well as across the organization. There are no quotas regarding overall ratings. It is expected that there will be a variety of ratings reflecting the work of employees each year across the organization.

Supervisors giving an overall "needs improvement" rating to an employee will make the employee aware of the deficiencies in their performance prior to the annual evaluation .

Supervisors in these situations will inform the employee of the deficiencies in their performance, what they need to do to correct the performance deficiencies, provide a timeline

for the necessary improvements, and identify the consequences of not making the required improvements.

The employee will participate in the performance management process by providing input for the evaluation process (which may include a self-evaluation), attending the evaluation meeting, and signing off on the evaluation to indicate receipt of the evaluation, not necessarily agreement with its content. Employees may provide written comments within two weeks following the evaluation, to be included with the evaluation and placed in the Personnel File. Performance evaluations are not subject to the grievance process.

An employee who wishes to appeal the content of the performance evaluation, may submit a request to do so, in writing, to the County Coordinator / HR Director. The employee must define in their written request the areas of concern or disagreement. The County Coordinator / HR Director will schedule a meeting with the employee to hear the employee's appeal. The allotted time for this meeting will be thirty (30) minutes. The rater of record (supervisor) will also have thirty (30) minutes to explain their rationale for the employees' performance evaluation as it was written. The decision of the County Coordinator / HR Director is final regarding any change in the evaluation. A non-bargaining employee who appeals must file their appeal by two weeks after the evaluation is completed.

In addition to the annual formal performance evaluations, employees will also be evaluated under the following conditions:

- At the completion of three months service with the County, supervisors will complete, at a minimum, an informal performance discussion with the employee.
- Prior to the completion of the probationary period for newly hired employees, or trial period for employees promoted or reinstated.
- Any time an employee's performance has changed significantly, positively or negatively.
- Any time the supervisor feels that it is in the best interest of the employee or the County.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Hours of Work and Time Reporting

SECTION:	Staffing and Employment Practices Section B-10	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

Work schedules are designed to meet the needs of the residents of the County. department heads and supervisors determine employee work schedules. The County establishes practices to pay exempt and non-exempt staff consistently with the intent of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), while meeting a high level of public accountability regarding their work time.

Policy

Department heads or their designee shall schedule the work hours of employees to meet the service delivery needs of the County residents and the needs of the Department.

The Personnel Department shall design and provide timecards or other time reporting procedures and instructions to facilitate the accurate recording and approval of each employee's hours worked.

Employees' regular and punctual attendance at work supports effective business operations of the County and provision of services to the public. Employees shall comply with attendance requirements, time recording, and time reporting procedures within their Department or Office. Each department head is responsible to ensure compliance with procedures within their Department.

The County shall pay exempt and non-exempt non-bargaining staff in a consistent manner with their appointment as a full-time or part-time employee and in compliance with the federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and Minnesota Statutes.

Any employee who fails to observe attendance or time reporting requirements may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

Procedure

Non-Exempt Employee Scheduling and Time Reporting:

1. The County's general hours of operation are Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM. The operations and standards of service of the County require employees be at work unless valid reasons warrant their absence.
2. The normal workday is eight hours including a paid fifteen (15) minute rest period during each four (4) hour work shift and excluding a one-half (1/2) hour unpaid lunch period. Travel time to and from work to eat a meal is included in the lunch period.
3. Full-time employees are expected to work forty (40) hours per week. (Law Enforcement, Jail, and Dispatch employees work eighty (80) hours during a two-week pay period.) Non-exempt (hourly wage) employees will be paid according to the time reported on their electronic timecard.
4. Generally, paid time and paid leave shall be accounted for in quarter-hour increments, unless there are fractions of hours smaller than a quarter of an hour available in the leave bank.
5. To comply with the provisions of both the federal and State Fair Labor Standards acts, hours worked, and any leave time used by non-exempt (hourly wage) employees are to be recorded daily and submitted on a biweekly basis. Audit standards require an employee to approve their timecards only after completing their last shift of the pay period.
6. Submission of the electronic time reporting includes the employee's declaration that the time reported is true and accurate for that pay period. Supervisors are responsible for reviewing and validating timecards of employees who directly report to them. Reporting false information on a time sheet may be cause for discipline up to and including termination from employment.
7. Any hours worked beyond the normal workweek require prior supervisory approval.
8. Non-compensated leave of absence hours shall not be included in the worked hours per week required to qualify for overtime.
9. Non-exempt employees shall not be allowed to use compensatory time to accumulate hours beyond forty (40) in any given work week. The compensatory time taken early in the week shall be reduced or eliminated based on hours worked or time off taken later in the week.

10. In the interest of increasing efficiency and minimizing overtime and compensatory time costs, qualifying employees are encouraged to flex their work schedule during a work week in which they are required more than 40 hours total during that work week.

Exempt Employee Scheduling and Time Reporting:

1. The department head or designee shall determine the work schedule for exempt employees.
2. Exempt employees are expected to work the hours necessary to meet the performance expectations outlined by their supervisors. The normal work period for exempt employees normally consists of eighty (80) hours in a two (2) week payroll period. Employees are responsible for managing and accounting for their work and may be required to regularly work in excess of their normal workday and/or the eighty (80) hour payroll period.
3. Except for Public Health Nurses, exempt employees are not eligible to receive overtime pay except under the following circumstances. Nurse positions are eligible for additional compensation, or compensatory time-off, at straight-time, for working more than 80 hours in a pay period.
4. Exempt employees are paid on a salary basis and receive a predetermined amount of pay each pay period and are not paid by the hour. Their pay does not vary based on the quality or quantity of work performed, and they receive their full weekly salary for any week in which any work is performed.
5. Exempt employees may flex their work hours during a pay period. Additionally, when circumstances exist that make it impossible to flex their hours during the same pay period, exempt Employees may flex their time during the next immediate pay period.
6. In accordance with exempt employee, paid leave shall be accounted for in blocks of one hour or more with no fractions of hours, unless the leave bank is being exhausted at the time leave is taken and there are fractions of hours in the leave bank, or where usage in smaller increments is required by law.
7. Under no circumstances shall an exempt non-bargaining employee receive non-exempt overtime paid at time and one half.
8. The Board of Commissioners' may upon declaration of natural disaster or other emergency status authorize over-time payments. Board declared overtime will be paid as straight time, calculated by the Employee's equivalent hourly rate based on a 2080-hour annual base salary rate for all hours worked in excess of eighty (80) hours in a two-week payroll period. The occurrence of Board declared overtime shall be dictated by influences outside the control of the County and the Employee. For example, natural disaster, pandemic, or another emergency condition

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Photo ID Badge / Building Access Policy

SECTION:	Staffing and Employment Practices Section B-11	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

Houston County is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all employees, contractors, and members of the public while visiting or working in County facilities. This policy establishes guidelines for the issuance, use, and management of Photo ID Badges / building access to maintain building security.

Policy

Houston County utilizes Photo ID Badges / building access systems to enhance safety and security within County facilities. The individual to whom a Photo ID Badge / building access is issued is responsible for its proper use, safekeeping, and return when required.

Badge Display

All Houston County employees are encouraged to wear their issued Photo ID Badge in plain view while on County work time to promote safety, identification, and professionalism within County facilities. Badges should be worn with the photo facing outward and positioned between the collar and waist (either clipped or on a lanyard). Wearing a Photo ID Badge is not mandatory but is strongly encouraged as a best practice for professional identification and building security awareness.

Property and Use

All Photo ID Badges and building access credentials are property of Houston County and must be surrendered to the Personnel Department upon request or upon separation from County employment. Photo ID Badges / building access credentials may be used only by the individual to whom they are issued and only for official County business.

Access Levels

Appropriate levels of building access will be assigned to employees based on job duties. Access permissions will be managed by the Personnel Department in coordination with Department Heads.

Lost or Damaged Badges/Access Credentials

Loss or theft of a Photo ID Badge / building access credential must be reported immediately to the employee's supervisor and the Personal Department. Replacement badges or access credentials will be issued and recorded by the Personal Department.

Extended Leave

Employees on extended leave of absence may be required to surrender their Photo ID Badge / building access credentials for the duration of the leave.

Termination of Employment

Upon termination of employment, all Photo ID Badges / building access credentials must be returned to the Personnel Department prior to final payroll processing.

Policy Compliance

Employees are expected to comply with this policy. Failure to do so may result in corrective action up to and including termination, depending on the nature of the infraction.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Employee Dress Code

SECTION:	Staffing and Employment Practices Section B-12	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

To establish standards for professional appearance and attire that promote a respectful, safe, and effective work environment. The policy ensures that employees present a positive image to the public and maintain credibility and professionalism in county government services.

Scope

This policy applies to all county employees, including full-time, part-time, temporary, and contract staff, regardless of department or location.

Policy

Employees of Houston County are expected to dress in a manner that is appropriate for their position, work environment, and interaction with the public. Attire must be clean, neat, and suitable for the employee's specific duties. Some departments may require uniforms, protective gear, or department-specific standards which supersede this general policy.

Dress Code Guidelines

General Office Environment (Administrative & Clerical):

- Employees working in an office setting are expected to dress in a neat, clean, and presentable manner. Business casual is the general standard, but comfort and practicality are also considered.
- Acceptable clothing includes slacks, khakis, jeans, polo shirts, button-down shirts, sweaters, blouses, and dresses or skirts of appropriate length.
- Casual footwear such as clean sneakers or flats is permitted.
- While the environment is casual, clothing should still reflect the professionalism of public service, especially when interacting with the public or attending meetings.

Field Work or Labor-Intensive Roles:

- Employees should wear durable and appropriate work attire suited for outdoor or hands-on tasks.
- Closed-toe, non-slip footwear is required.
- Safety gear such as reflective vests, hard hats, and gloves must be worn as required by departmental procedures or OSHA regulations.

Uniformed Departments (e.g., Sheriff's Office, Highway Department):

- Employees must adhere to department-specific uniform policies.
- Uniforms must be clean, complete, and worn properly at all times when on duty.

Unacceptable Attire (all departments):

- Clothing with offensive language, slogans, or graphics
- Torn, frayed, or excessively worn clothing (unless job-appropriate)
- Flip-flops or beach sandals (except in approved areas or settings)
- Revealing clothing, such as low-cut tops, short skirts/shorts, or clothing that exposes undergarments
- Pajamas or loungewear

Religious and Medical Accommodations:

Houston County respects employees' rights to express their religious or cultural beliefs. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it creates an undue hardship or safety concern. Employees needing accommodations should contact the Personnel Department.

Enforcement and Discipline:

Supervisors are responsible for ensuring employees comply with this policy. Employees who report to work inappropriately dressed may be sent home to change. Repeated violations may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Exceptions:

Exceptions may be made for designated "theme" or "spirit" days, special events, or when approved by the department head or Human Resources.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Disability and Workplace Accommodation

SECTION:	Staffing and Employment Practices Section B-13	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

Houston County does not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities in regard to application procedures, hiring, advancement, discharge, compensation, training, or other terms, conditions, and privileges of employment.

Policy

Using the interactive process, applicants may request a reasonable accommodation during a selection process. Applicants requesting a reasonable accommodation will be given the same consideration as other applicants. The County will provide a reasonable accommodation for qualified applicants if it does not cause an undue hardship.

An employee may request a reasonable accommodation to perform the essential functions of their job. The County will grant a reasonable accommodation if it does not cause an undue hardship.

The County may determine whether an employee poses a direct threat to the health or safety of themselves or others in the workplace and take necessary action to minimize or eliminate the threat.

Retaliation Prohibited:

The County will not tolerate any acts of retaliation against employees who have requested and/or received an accommodation. The County will not discharge, discipline, penalize, interfere with, threaten, restrain, coerce, or otherwise retaliate or discriminate against an employee for asserting rights under this policy. An employee who believes they have been retaliated against or have not been afforded rights under this policy should promptly report their concerns to the Personnel Department.

Procedure

Employee Responsibility:

Employees who believe they need an accommodation to perform the essential functions of their job are required to complete an Accommodation Request Form, located on the County's internal help desk OR available from the Personnel Department, which identifies limitations arising from the disability and potential reasonable accommodations that would support the employee in performing the essential functions of the job. Employees will submit the completed form to the Personnel Department. Medical documentation is generally required to support the request.

Supervisors' Responsibility:

Supervisors who receive a verbal request for an accommodation will direct the employee to complete the Accommodation Request Form. Supervisors shall contact the Personnel Department prior to taking any action.

Personnel Department Responsibility:

The County Coordinator / HR Director will work with supervisors to evaluate the impact of the limitations arising from the disability and determine whether there is a potential reasonable accommodation that could enable the employee to perform the essential functions of the job.

The County Coordinator / HR Director will respond to each accommodation request in writing. If a reasonable accommodation is granted, the supervisor and County Coordinator / HR Director will periodically evaluate its effectiveness. The County reserves the right to discontinue or modify the accommodation based on the results of the periodic review.

Pregnancy Accommodation:

The County will provide the following accommodations to a pregnant employee who desires any of these accommodations, without requirement for the employee to provide a note from their doctor or any other certification of the necessity of the accommodations:

- More frequent or longer restroom, food, and water breaks;
- Seating; and
- Limits on lifting over 20 pounds.

In addition to the accommodations listed above, a pregnant employee seeking additional or other reasonable accommodations must notify the Personnel Department of their request for accommodation by completing and submitting the Accommodation Request Form. The employee and the employer shall engage in an interactive process with respect to the employee's request for a reasonable accommodation under this policy.

The County will provide reasonable accommodations to an employee for health conditions related to pregnancy or childbirth if requested, with the advice of the employee's licensed health care provider, unless the accommodation would impose an undue hardship on the operation of the employer's business. Reasonable accommodation may include but is not

limited to temporary transfer to an existing and available position that is less strenuous or less hazardous, modification in work schedule or tasks, seating, more frequent or longer break periods, limits to heavy lifting, or a temporary leave of absence.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Acceptable Use of Computers and IT Resources.

SECTION:	Staffing and Employment Practices Section B-14	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

This policy establishes responsibilities for the acceptable use of the County of Houston information technology resources. These resources are provided for use by the Board of Commissioners, other elected officials, employees, and other authorized users. County information technology resources are the property of the County of Houston and are provided to support the County's business purposes.

Computer and information technology resources are essential tools in accomplishing the mission of the County of Houston's governmental divisions. These resources must be used and managed responsibly to ensure their availability for mission-related purposes. Accordingly, this policy establishes the responsibilities of all users and provides standards for acceptable use within the framework of applicable state and federal laws, policies, and regulations.

Scope

This policy applies to all users of County information technology, regardless of location. The County Board has adopted operational procedures that include, but are not limited to: security standards, employee use guidelines, monitoring practices, limitations on unauthorized use, and other operational restrictions.

Compliance with Law and County Policies

- Users must comply with federal and Minnesota state laws, County policies, contracts, and software licenses applicable to their use. This includes but is not limited to laws related to libel, data privacy, copyright, trademark, gambling, obscenity, and pornography; the federal Electronic Communications Privacy Act; the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act (prohibiting hacking and related activities); and Minnesota state computer crime statutes.
- Users are responsible for the content and consequences of their use of County information technology and may be subject to liability.

- Users must use only the information technology resources they are specifically authorized to use and only in the manner and to the extent authorized for legitimate business purposes. Access capability does not, by itself, imply authorization.
- Users are responsible for any activity under their assigned accounts or access. Users must lock their workstations when unattended.

Unauthorized Use

Users must respect all system security restrictions. Specifically, users must not:

- Allow unauthorized persons to use their account or password.
- Share their account or password with any individual, including family members.
- Permit others to use County devices under their control.
- Circumvent or attempt to circumvent security measures protecting County systems or data.
- Conceal or falsify user identification in communications (including e-mail).
- Download or install unauthorized software without prior approval from the County Director of Information Technology. Unauthorized software may be removed at any time without notice.
- Interfere with or disrupt County networks, distribute malicious code, or install devices/software enabling unauthorized access.

Personal Use

- Personal use is strictly prohibited on any computer or device with access to County data.
- Users have no expectation of privacy when using County-owned technology resources.
- The County reserves the right to conduct periodic audits of personal use to ensure compliance with this policy.

Right to Employ Security Measures

- The County reserves the right to employ any necessary security measures, including monitoring the use of information technology resources.
- Normal operation and maintenance of County systems may require monitoring for network integrity, security, troubleshooting, data backup, caching, and logging of activity.
- County officials may access stored data, without notice, for legitimate business purposes, including retrieving business-related information, addressing undeliverable messages, or responding to lawful information requests.
- Employees must immediately report any suspected violations of this policy to their supervisor or Department Head. Department Heads or supervisors shall consult with Human Resources, who may coordinate with the Director of Information Technology for investigation and corrective action.

- Any risks to the security or integrity of County systems must be immediately reported to the Director of Information Technology.

Disciplinary Proceedings

Willful or intentional violations of this policy will be addressed in accordance with applicable County policies and collective bargaining agreements. Violations may result in denial of access to County systems, disciplinary action, or termination.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Telework Policy

SECTION:	Staffing and Employment Practices Section B-15	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to clearly define the County's current position on telework arrangements and to provide guidance to employees and supervisors regarding remote work expectations.

Policy

At this time, Houston County does not offer or support a formal telework or remote work program. All employees are expected to perform their duties on-site at their assigned work location unless otherwise authorized by the County Coordinator / HR Director or as required by law.

Exceptions to this policy may be made in the event of a declared emergency or other extraordinary circumstances, as authorized by the Houston County Board of Commissioners. In such cases, temporary telework arrangements may be implemented at the discretion of the Board and County Coordinator / HR Director to ensure continuity of operations while prioritizing employee safety and public service delivery.

Requests for individual telework accommodations outside of an emergency context will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis under exceptional circumstances and must receive prior written approval from the appropriate department head and the County Coordinator / HR Director.

This Policy is subject to periodic review and may be revised in accordance with operational needs, staffing considerations, or changes in applicable laws and regulations. County-issued computers and devices are subject to monitoring and tracking. Houston County reserves the right to access, review, and spot check county-owned equipment at any time to ensure appropriate use and compliance with all applicable policies.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Nepotism Policy

SECTION:	Staffing and Employment Practices Section B-16	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to uphold the principles of merit-based employment and prevent conflicts of interest. The County establishes the following anti-nepotism policy applicable to all county employees, excluding elected officials.

Policy

Employment of Relatives:

Relatives of current county employees may be considered for employment, provided that such employment does not result in:

- A direct supervisory relationship between the relatives.
- An actual or perceived conflict of interest.
- The appearance of favoritism or impropriety.

Supervisory Relationships:

- No employee shall directly supervise or be directly supervised by a relative.
- If a supervisory relationship between relatives arises due to marriage, promotion, or reorganization, the county will attempt to reassign one of the employees to eliminate the direct supervisory relationship.

Decision-Making Involvement:

- Employees shall not participate in decisions concerning the hiring, promotion, transfer, or discipline of a relative.

Disclosure Requirements:

- Employees must disclose any familial relationships with current employees or applicants to the Personnel Department upon employment or upon the establishment of such a relationship.

Exceptions: This policy does not apply to elected officials, who retain the authority to hire staff at their discretion, subject to applicable laws and ethical guidelines.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Vehicle Use Policy

SECTION:	Staffing and Employment Practices Section B-17	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear and consistent guidelines for the use, operation, and maintenance of all vehicles owned or leased by Houston County. The policy is intended to ensure that vehicles are used safely, responsibly, and solely for official County business. It also outlines procedures for scheduling, fuel use, accident reporting, and employee accountability.

Scope

This policy applies to all County employees, elected officials, contractors, and volunteers who are authorized to operate or ride in County-owned or County-leased vehicles. It also governs the conditions under which personal vehicles may be used for County business.

Authorized Use

County-owned and leased vehicles are to be used **exclusively for official County business**. Personal use is prohibited unless prior written authorization by the County Coordinator / HR Director is granted. All vehicle use must comply with Minnesota Statute §16B.55 and relevant traffic laws.

Drivers

- Only County employees with a valid driver's license may operate a county vehicle.
- A current driver's license must always be in the driver's possession.
- Passengers are limited to County employees or individuals participating in County programs or business. Family members are not permitted in County vehicles.

Prohibited Items and Conduct

- Smoking is strictly prohibited in all County vehicles.
- Radar detectors and similar electronic equipment are not allowed.
- Drivers are expected to operate vehicles safely and obey all traffic laws at all times.
- Use of mobile devices while driving must comply with hands-free laws.

Driver Responsibility

- Drivers are responsible for any traffic or parking violations incurred.

- Locksmith fees due to lockouts or lost keys will be the responsibility of the driver.
- Keys must be removed, and vehicles locked when parked.

Vehicle Maintenance and Fueling

- Each vehicle is issued a Wex Fuel Card to be used only for:
 - Regular fuel (self-service, no premium)
 - Car washes when purchased with fuel if available
- Unauthorized purchases made with the fuel card are the responsibility of the driver or department.
- Vehicle repairs must be authorized in advance by the designated vehicle caretaker.

Vehicle Scheduling and Usage

- Reservations
 - Vehicles must be reserved using the County fleet calendar. Enter the name, destination, and timeframe.
 - Vehicles reservations should be reserved one month in advance if possible.
 - Employees should check vehicle availability before using personal vehicles.
- Usage
 - Record required data on the trip log located in each vehicle.
 - Note any mechanical issues on the log form and Administration office
 - Keys and logs must be returned to the designated staff member (Assessor / Administration Office) after each use.
 - Vehicles should be refueled if under $\frac{3}{4}$ tank and cleared of any trash before return.

Accidents, Claims, Theft, and Breakdown Reporting

- Accidents
 - Contact law enforcement immediately and seek medical assistance if needed.
 - Collect names, addresses, vehicle descriptions, license numbers, witness information, and police report numbers.
 - Notify your supervisor
- Reporting
 - Report all incidents to the Administration office immediately or by the next business day.
 - Complete and submit the County Vehicle Accident Report and, if applicable, the First Report of Injury within one business day.
- Theft
 - Immediately report theft to local law enforcement and the Administration office
- Breakdown
 - Contact Houston County Sheriff's Office Dispatch @ 507-725-3379 to request the coordination of a tow.
 - Contact your supervisor.

Insurance and Liability

- County vehicles are insured under the County's policy. In the case of an incident occurring during official use, the County's insurance is primary.
- If the driver operates the vehicle in an unauthorized, illegal, or unsafe manner, the driver may be held personally liable, and disciplinary action may follow.

Personal Property

The County is not responsible for personal property left in County vehicles. Drivers are liable for damage to, or loss of others' personal belongings left in the vehicle.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Travel Reimbursement Policy

SECTION:	Staffing and Employment Practices Section B-18	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

County employees and County elected officials, while in the performance of their responsibilities may be authorized to attend conferences, conventions, and workshops or to conduct other County business. (Hereinafter, "Authorized Representatives") Travel needs and costs must be anticipated and budgeted for in advance of the travel.

Employees should use a county vehicle when available. Employees attending the same function are encouraged to share transportation

Travel Within the County

Authorized representatives shall receive reimbursement only for mileage and/or registration fees while performing work within the County. Notwithstanding, registration fees, which include meals, shall be paid when the representative has been authorized to attend the meeting.

Out of County Travel

The County will reimburse the authorized representative for registrations, meals, transportation including parking, and lodging costs. The County will pay the actual meal costs up to the following amounts when business is conducted outside the County:

BREAKFAST - \$13.00
LUNCH - \$15.00
DINNER - \$20.00

To be eligible for breakfast cost reimbursement, the authorized person must need to leave their home prior to 6:00 A.M. To be eligible for dinner costs, the representative must be unable to reach home prior to 6:00 P.M. Receipts are required for meal reimbursements. When an authorized person is eligible to receive reimbursement for all three meals, the County shall pay the actual cost of receipted meal expenses, when business is conducted outside of the County, not to exceed a total of Forty-Eight (\$48.00) per day. **No reimbursement will be made for alcoholic beverages.**

The County will not reimburse employees for meals connected with training or meetings in which a meal is provided by the sponsoring organization as part of the event.

The County shall pay the actual cost of lodging when the authorized person is required to stay overnight and away from home in the performance of his or her duties for the County and is within the department's annual budget. The determination to stay overnight shall be based on a reasonable amount of travel time to reach the employees' meeting.

Employees shall use the most cost-effective means of transportation when traveling. The value of the employees' time shall be the determining factor in the decision. Receipts must be submitted for the reimbursement of all travel expenses and approved by the appropriate person(s) before being paid.

Authorized representatives are encouraged to use County vehicles for County business travel when a county vehicle is available. Should no County vehicle be available for County business travel, the County will reimburse the representative the GSA rate.

Out of State Travel

The Houston County Board of Commissioners have determined that representatives of the County shall be authorized to participate in the meetings and activities of their respective State Association by membership and attendance at meetings or training sessions, provided that such membership, meetings and/or trainings are job-related and serve a County public purpose. Money may be appropriated from the County Revenue Fund to defray expenses of such officials in connection with such expenses to be paid upon presentation and allowance of properly itemized claims in an amount not to exceed county policy or statutory limitations.

This policy applies to out-of-state travel necessary for job-related meetings and/or training for all Houston County employees, including elected officials as required by Minn. Stat. §471.661. Out-of-state travel, for the purpose of this policy, is defined as any travel that exceeds 500 miles in length (one way) and/or requires air transportation.

Out of State Travel Procedure

Out-of-state travel may be appropriate when the travel is to obtain ongoing education and training, receive updated information and technical expertise, or to attend an event related to County business, which serves a public purpose, and is directly related to the betterment of the County. The County Board shall determine when out-of-state travel is appropriate and in the interest of Houston County.

Pursuant to Minn. Stat. §471.661, County out-of-state travel policy for elected officials, including County Commissioners, is permitted within the budgetary allowance for "travel" as stipulated in the approved annual budget and the County Board approves such travel at a regular, special, or emergency County Board meeting prior to the travel date.

Out-of-state travel for all other employees is permitted provided there are adequate budgetary funds within the departmental budget, and the County Board and/or employees department head

determines that out-of-state travel is appropriate and in the interest of the position they hold as well as in the interest of Houston County.

The budgetary allowance for "travel" by definition for this policy includes mileage, and/or transportation expenses, lodging, food, parking, and registration fees.

Airline Travel Credit

Whenever public funds are used to pay for airline travel by an elected official or public employee, Minn. Stat. §15.435, requires that any credits or other benefits issued by any airline must accrue to the benefit of the public body providing the funding. In the event the issuing airline will not honor a transfer or assignment of any credit or benefit, the individual passenger shall report receipt of the credit or benefit to the public body issuing the initial payment within 90 days of receipt

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Data Privacy / Not Public Data Policy

SECTION:	Staffing and Employment Practices Section B-19	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Legal requirement

The adoption of this policy by Houston County, Minnesota (Houston County) satisfies the requirement in Minnesota Statutes, section 13.05, subd. 5, to establish procedures ensuring appropriate access to non-public data. By incorporating employee access to non-public data in Houston County's Data Inventory (required by Minnesota Statutes, section 13.025, subd. 1), in the individual employee's position description, or both, Houston County's policy limits access to non-public data to employees whose work assignment reasonably requires access.

Please direct all questions regarding this policy to the Houston County Data Practices Compliance Official (DPCO):

Suzanne Bublitz
Houston County Attorney
sbublitz@hocomn.gov
Phone: 507-725-5802
Fax: 507-725-5783
306 S Marshall St. Suite
2300 Caledonia, MN 55921

Procedures implementing this policy

Data inventory

Under the requirements in Minnesota Statutes, section 13.025, subd. 1, Houston County has prepared a Data Inventory which identifies and describes all non-public data on individuals maintained by Houston County. To comply with the requirement in section 13.05, subd. 5, Houston County has also modified its Data Inventory to represent the employees who have access to non-public data. In the event of a temporary duty as assigned by a manager or supervisor, an employee may access certain non-public data, for as long as the work is assigned to the employee.

In addition to the employees listed in Houston County's Data Inventory, the Responsible Authority, the Data Practices Compliance Official (DPCO), and department heads may have access to *all* non-public data maintained by Houston County if necessary for specified duties. Any access to non-public data will be strictly limited to the data necessary to complete the work assignment.

Classification position descriptions

Classification descriptions may contain provisions identifying any non-public data accessible to the employee when a work assignment reasonably requires access.

Data sharing with authorized entities or individuals

State or federal law may authorize the sharing of non-public data in specific circumstances. No public data may be shared with another entity if a federal or state law allows or mandates it. Individuals will have notice of any sharing in applicable Tennessee warnings (see Minnesota Statutes, section 13.04) or Houston County will obtain the individual's informed consent. Any sharing of non-public data will be strictly limited to the data necessary or required to comply with the applicable law.

Ensuring that non-public data are not accessed without a work assignment

Within Houston County, departments may assign tasks by employees or by job classification. If a department maintains non-public data that all employees within its department do not have a work assignment allowing access to the data, the department will ensure that the non-public data are secure. This policy also applies to departments that share workspace with other departments within Houston County where non-public data is maintained.

Recommended actions for ensuring appropriate access include:

- Assigning appropriate security roles, limiting access to appropriate shared network drives, and implementing password protections for non-public electronic data
- Password protecting employee computers and locking computers before leaving workstations
- Securing non-public data within locked workspaces and in locked file cabinets
- Shredding not public documents before disposing of them

Penalties for unlawfully accessing not public data

Houston County will utilize the penalties for unlawful access to non-public data as provided for in Minnesota Statutes, section 13.09, if necessary. Penalties include suspension, dismissal, or referring the matter to the appropriate prosecutorial authority who may pursue a criminal misdemeanor charge.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Nursing and Lactation Support

SECTION:	Staffing and Employment Practices Section B-20	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

Houston County recognizes the benefits to employee and infant/child health and well-being by supporting lactating employees to express milk in privacy during work hours in accordance with federal and state laws.

Policy

Nursing/Lactation Support:

The County supports employees in meeting their infant feeding/milk expression goals and will provide reasonable break times each day to an employee to express milk. The break times may run concurrently with regular break times already provided for the employee. The County will not reduce an employee's compensation for time used for the purpose of expressing milk. Employees should contact their supervisor to discuss appropriate break time arrangements under the lactation support policy.

The County will provide a clean, private, and secure space for an employee to express milk that is in close proximity to the work area, is a room other than a bathroom, is shielded from view, is free from intrusion from coworkers or the public, and includes access to an electrical outlet.

Employees should contact the Personnel Department to make arrangements for use of lactation rooms or other space which meets the above provisions. Employees shall use appropriate County-designated and/or County-approved space that meets requirements for expressing milk and for the storage and maintenance of supplies. Requests for the use of alternative employer space should be discussed with, and approved by, the Personnel Department

The County will provide employees with notice regarding nursing/lactation rights at the time of hire and when an employee makes an inquiry about or requests parental leave and upon request

Prohibited Retaliation:

The County will not discharge, discipline, penalize, interfere with, threaten, restrain, coerce, or otherwise retaliate or discriminate against an employee for asserting rights under this policy and relevant law. An employee who believes they have been retaliated against or have not been afforded rights under these policies should promptly report their concerns to the Personnel Department

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Vacation Donation

SECTION:	Staffing and Employment Practices Section B-21	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a mechanism that allows employees to voluntarily donate accrued vacation hours to another County employee experiencing a catastrophic or serious health condition, either their own or that of an immediate family member resulting in an extended inability to work and exhaustion of paid leave balances. This policy is intended to promote employee well-being and support County employees during times of medical hardship.

Policy Statement

Houston County employees may voluntarily transfer (donate) accrued vacation leave to another employee's sick leave donation bank when the recipient meets the eligibility criteria described in this policy. All donations and transfers under this policy are strictly voluntary and confidential. No employee shall be coerced or pressured to donate leave.

The County reserves the right to approve or deny requests based on the criteria below and administrative feasibility. This policy does not create entitlement and may be modified, suspended, or terminated at any time by the County Board.

Eligibility

Recipient Eligibility

An employee may receive donated vacation leave if all the following conditions are met:

1. The employee (or an immediate family member) is suffering from a catastrophic or serious
2. medical condition certified by a licensed healthcare provider.
3. The employee has exhausted all accrued sick leave, compensatory time, and all but three (3) days of vacation leave.
4. The employee is not currently receiving wage-replacement benefits through short-term or long-term disability insurance, workers' compensation, or other benefit programs.
5. The request is approved by the County Coordinator / HR Director (or designee) and reviewed by the County Board if necessary.

Donor Eligibility

An employee may donate vacation hours if:

1. The donor has a sufficient vacation balance remaining after donation (no less than 40 hours for full-time employees).
2. Donations are made in whole-hour increments.
3. The employee does not donate more than 32 hours per calendar year.

Donation Process

Employees wishing to donate must complete a Vacation Donation Form, available in the Personnel Office, specifying:

- Donor's name and employee ID
- Recipient's name
- Number of hours to be donated (whole hours only)
- Donor's signature and date

Donations are confidential; the identity of donors will not be disclosed to the recipient.

Approval and Transfer

The County Coordinator / HR Director will verify eligibility and approve or deny the request. The value of the donated leave will be converted based on hourly rate equivalency. Donated hours will be credited to the recipient's secondary sick leave bank at their respective rate of pay.

Example: A donor earning \$20.00 per hour donates five (5) hours of vacation leave (\$100 value). If the recipient earns \$25.00 per hour, they receive 4.00 hours of sick leave ($\$100 \div \$25.00 = 4.00$).

Use of Donated Leave

Donated hours must be used before any newly accrued sick leave following the employee's return to work. Donated hours have no cash value and are not payable upon separation. Unused donated leave will be returned to the donor(s) proportionally to the nearest half hour.

Confidentiality

All medical information and donation records will be treated as confidential and maintained by the Human Resources Department in accordance with applicable privacy laws.

Administrative Responsibility

Disclaimer

This policy does not establish a precedent or create any contractual right. Participation in the vacation donation program is voluntary and subject to the discretion of the County.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Classification Plan

SECTION:	Classification & Compensation Policies Section C-1	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

The County is required to maintain a system of assigning jobs of comparable worth, with comparable salaries. The County is best able to accomplish its work by defining specific job duties, tasks, and requirements for employees hired to perform that work.

Policy

Each County job shall be evaluated and placed in a specific classification and pay grade to ensure compliance with pay equity requirements. The Position Classification Plan shall assign pay grade and pay range to each job within the County.

Each Board approved position shall be defined by a job description including specific job duties and responsibilities, tasks, and requirements. These descriptions shall be reviewed periodically for accuracy and continued compliance with pay equity requirements.

Procedure

The Personnel Department shall provide a consistent format for job descriptions throughout the County, and a consistent process for evaluating jobs and assigning them to the appropriate pay level.

The County Coordinator / HR Director shall develop and maintain current job descriptions for the positions in their Department. Job descriptions shall include the:

- Summary of the job, including why the job exists, what it does, and how the work is performed,
- Essential duties performed by employees in that job classification,
- Required education, credentials, experience, knowledge, and skills necessary to perform the job successfully,
- Supervisory authority of the position, if any,
- Reporting relationship for the position (the role to which this job reports), and
- Conditions under which the work is normally performed.

It is an inherent management right and duty to design, redesign, restructure and create new jobs to meet the objectives and changing needs of the County.

Job description reviews and reclassification requests must be formally initiated by both the department head and the employee. A request will only be considered when there is a substantial and documented change in the job duties, responsibilities, or requirements.

Once jointly submitted, the request is reviewed by the Personnel Department and must be approved by the Personnel Committee before proceeding. This process is not part of a routine cycle and will only occur outside of scheduled reviews under qualifying circumstances.

During scheduled classification reviews, the Personnel Department will notify department heads of positions due for regular review. department heads shall then meet with the employees in those roles to ensure the accuracy of job duties, work methods, working conditions, and requirements.

If significant changes are identified, the department head must inform the Personnel Department of any proposed updates to the job description and recommend whether the position warrants re-evaluation.

The Personnel Department will:

- Document any changes to job descriptions and update records accordingly.
- Review all recommendations for reclassification.
- Forward substantially changed positions to the classification consultant or designated authority for evaluation.

The classification consultant will apply an objective evaluation methodology and provide supporting documentation for all determinations. Once a decision is made, the Personnel Department will notify the department head and affected employees of the outcome, effective date of any changes, and provide information on the appeals process if there is disagreement with the evaluation.

Compensation Following the Job Re-Evaluation Process:

If a position is evaluated at a higher pay grade, the employee will move to the next highest step and receive a salary increase of at least 3% not to exceed the maximum of the new range.

If a position is evaluated at a lower pay grade, the employee's salary shall be frozen at their current step, until the maximum step of the new pay grade catches up to the employee's current pay. The effective date of any pay adjustments shall be retroactive from the date the job description was sent in for the re-evaluation process.

Reorganization Changes in Jobs:

When a department head restructures work within the Department, some positions may require new job descriptions and re-evaluation for appropriate classification. Significant changes in current staffing and organizational structure such as those involving changes in job duties and responsibilities which classify the job in a different grade or those which modify the type and number of positions in existing classifications may be completed with the approval of the County Board of Commissioners.

New (Additional) Positions:

If a new position is created, it is the responsibility of management to define and determine essential requirements and duties of the position. The County Coordinator / HR Director will work with department heads to develop job descriptions in a consistent format. The job description will be assigned to a classification under the Classification Plan and to an appropriate pay level in the Compensation Plan. The County Board must approve any additional positions.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Compensation Plan

SECTION:	Classification & Compensation Policies Section C-2	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

In order to attract and retain a well-qualified workforce to perform County services, and comply with state and federal laws regarding wages, the County shall establish and communicate its compensation plan. The County has an interest in understanding how its compensation plan compares to that of similar public and private organizations that employ individuals with similar skills and duties.

Policy

The County's compensation system shall provide employees with reasonable and competitive compensation for their work. The County Coordinator / HR Director shall maintain a compensation system consistent with, and responsive to:

- The Fair Labor Standards Act
- Wage and Hour laws
- Internal Equity as defined by the Local Government Pay Equity Act
- Established pay ranges for each classification
- The relative difficulty and responsibility of work
- The recruitment and retention experience of the County
- Relevant external market, including pay rates in the public and private sector
- The financial condition and policies of the County
- Pertinent economic data
- Availability of applicants possessing required skills

The County Coordinator / HR Director shall review the compensation system periodically and recommend changes to the County Board. This periodic review will involve a review of the County's salary ranges.

Procedure

The compensation system shall include designated salary ranges, each with a minimum, target rate, and maximum rate. The County Board shall adopt a compensation salary range schedule

establishing rates of pay for salary ranges in the compensation system. The salary range schedule may be adjusted by the County Board. Salary ranges recommended by the County Coordinator / HR Director may reflect:

- The relevant rates of pay in both public and private competitive labor markets
- The financial condition and fiscal policies of the County
- Other pertinent economic considerations

Each classification shall be placed in the appropriate grade through an objective evaluation process within the Classification Plan.

An employee's base pay rate shall not exceed the County's salary range maximum for the applicable classification.

Compensation increases may be granted at the sole discretion of the County. These increases will generally involve internal and/or labor market equity considerations or unusual circumstances and will occur only upon the recommendation of the County Coordinator / HR Director.

Wage Deductions:

The County deducts mandatory amounts from an employee's wages as required by court order, IRS directive or state statute, and will make voluntary deductions from an employee's wages as authorized by the employee.

Direct Deposit:

Pursuant to Minnesota Statute 471.426, Houston County requires all employees use direct deposit for receipt of compensation. Funds will generally be available on Thursday of pay week. If additional processing time is required, funds may not be available until the following day. Any direct deposit changes (i.e., bank changes, deposit amounts, etc.) must be submitted to the Personnel Office no later than Monday of pay week for changes to be effective in the current pay cycle.

Payroll

Payroll is processed biweekly for all County employees. Pay periods end on alternate Saturdays with the official pay day being the following Friday. See, [2024 Pay Schedule](#). Link current pay schedule.

Wage Disclosure Protection Law:

Under the Minnesota Wage Disclosure Protection Law, employees have the right to tell any person the amount of their own wages. While the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act ([Minn. Stat. §13.43](#)), specifically lists an employee's actual gross salary and salary range as public personnel data, Minnesota law also requires wage disclosure protection rights and remedies to be included in employer personnel handbooks. To that end, and in accordance with [Minn. Stat. §181.172](#), the County will not:

- Require nondisclosure by an employee of his or her wages as a condition of employment.
- Require an employee to sign a waiver or other document which purports to deny an employee the right to disclose the employee's wages.
- Take any adverse employment action against an employee for disclosing the employee's own wages or discussing another employee's wages which have been disclosed voluntarily.
- Retaliate against an employee for asserting rights or remedies under Minn. Stat. §181.172, subd. 3.

An employee's remedies under the Wage Disclosure Protection Law are to bring a civil action against the County and/or file a complaint with the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry at (651) 284-5075 or (800) 342-5354.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

**Administration of Compensation Plan,
Promotion, Demotion, Transfer, and Reorganization**

SECTION:	Classification & Compensation Policies Section C-3	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

The County seeks to attract and retain a qualified workforce through administration of its compensation plan from new hire salary placement and throughout the employment life cycle. Current employees may also be presented with opportunities to use their knowledge and skills to serve the residents of the County in different roles throughout their employment, by applying for promotions, demotions, or transfers.

Policy

The County shall administer its compensation system to comply with state and federal laws. The County's compensation system shall be administered to provide employees with reasonable and competitive compensation for their work while balancing factors including but not limited to the external market and financial condition and policies of the County. Qualified current employees shall be afforded the opportunity to apply and be considered for vacancies as they occur throughout the County.

Procedure

Starting Salary:

A new employee shall generally be hired at or near the minimum of the salary range. The department head shall consult with the County Coordinator / HR Director to determine the starting wage, up to the midpoint of the salary range. Requests for a starting wage above the midpoint must be approved by the County Coordinator / HR Director. Such authorization shall be based on exceptional qualifications and background of the proposed employee, by labor market conditions, or other extraordinary circumstances. When an employee transfers from one department to another, or within a department, and makes a lateral move to another position with the same grade, that employee's rate of pay remains the same.

Change of Job Title:

When an employee's job title is changed, yet their work is essentially the same as it had been, there is no change in status, promotion or demotion. The job classification seniority remains unaffected by such a title change.

Promotion:

When an employee applies for a promotion and is selected for the position, the employee's salary shall be placed within the new salary range, based on an offer determined appropriate by the County Coordinator / HR Director. Requests for a salary increase exceeding the midpoint of the new range shall require the approval of the County Coordinator / HR Director.

Supervisory employees promoting are expected to give their current department head twenty (20) working days' notice; non-supervisory employees promoting are expected to give their current department head ten (10) working days' notice, both exclusive of time off. This requirement may be waived if both department heads agree.

Transfer:

When an employee transfers, the employee shall be eligible for annual salary actions based on the current schedule and salary range for the position held following transfer.

Supervisory employees transferring shall provide their current department head twenty (20) working days' notice; non-supervisory employees transferring are expected to give their current department head ten (10) working days' notice, both exclusive of time off. This requirement may be waived if both department heads agree.

Demotion:

Demotions may be voluntary (non-disciplinary) or involuntary (non-disciplinary). Distinctly different is a disciplinary demotion, which may be imposed as a form of disciplinary action and will be identified as such in formal written disciplinary documentation provided to the employee.

An employee's salary placement upon demotion may be addressed differently based on these differing circumstances and types of demotions. After an employee is demoted, the employee may be eligible for annual salary actions based on the current schedule and salary range for the position held following demotion.

Voluntary Demotions (Non-Disciplinary):

Voluntary demotions are subject to position availability.

- **Voluntary Demotion Sought by Employee:** An employee may apply to demote to a position in a lower salary range with lower level duties and responsibilities.
- **Salary Action Upon Voluntary Demotion:** When a voluntary demotion is requested by an employee, the employee's pay shall be placed within the salary range for the

demoted position. In no event shall the salary of a voluntarily demoted employee remain above the maximum of the salary range for the position to which the employee is demoted.

Involuntary Demotions (Non-Disciplinary):

A department head may demote an employee to a position for which the employee is qualified, in a lower grade or compensation range, for the following reasons:

- **Demotion in Lieu of Layoff:** If an employee would otherwise be laid off because of position elimination, lack of work or funds, or the return to work from authorized leave by another employee to such a position in accordance with these Policies, said employee may be demoted to another vacant position for which they meet the minimum qualifications. See Layoff Policy for additional information regarding bumping and recall rights.
- **Reorganization Resulting in Demotion:** When a demotion results from a planned reorganization, an employee may be demoted to serve in a different position for which they are qualified.
- **Salary Action Upon Non-Disciplinary Involuntary Demotion:** In these cases of non-disciplinary, involuntary demotions, the employee's new salary shall be set in the following manner:
 - If the employee's current salary is within the new range, it shall remain the same and the employee shall be eligible for salary increases as outlined for the position held following demotion.
 - If the employee's current salary is above the maximum salary of the new. The employee's salary will be frozen until the range of the demoted position exceeds the frozen salary, at which time the employee will again be eligible for salary advancement.

Involuntary Demotions (Disciplinary):

A department head, in consultation with the County Coordinator / HR Director, may demote an employee to a position for which the employee is qualified, in a lower grade or compensation range, for the following reason:

- **Disciplinary Action:** An employee may be demoted for disciplinary reasons. The employee shall be notified of a disciplinary demotion through formal written documentation as part of the disciplinary procedure. Any demoted employee shall be given the reasons for such demotion in writing from the department head, in consultation with the County Coordinator / HR Director.
- **Salary Action Upon Disciplinary Demotion:** In cases of disciplinary demotions, an employee's salary shall be reduced to a salary within the new range, and to the step at least 10% below their pre-demotion salary. If the 10% reduction places the employee's rate below the minimum of the salary range for the position into which

the employee demoted, the employee's rate will be placed at the minimum of the salary range.

General Adjustment:

When a general adjustment is provided, it shall be applied for all probationary and regular employees subject to the following guidelines. Any increase percentage applied shall be calculated on the employee's regular base rate of pay, and in no case shall the employee's new base rate of pay exceed the salary range maximum for the employee's classification.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Insurance Benefits

SECTION:	Benefits Policies Section D-1	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

The County wishes to provide health insurance and additional insurance benefits as part of its overall compensation package supporting the attraction and retention of a qualified workforce.

Policy

As part of the County's total compensation package, the County makes a competitive monthly contribution toward group health and life insurance benefits. As such, the County maintains a health insurance program subject to the limitations and conditions established by the County and the insurance provider. See the current year's summary plan description 2025 Medica Benefits Overview.

Qualified employees may elect to enroll for individual (single) or dependent (family) coverage as set forth below:

The single coverage contribution by the County for the CDHP shall be 95% of the single premium for the plan. The County contribution rate for dependent/family coverage for employees choosing the CDHP shall be 85% of the plan premium. Premium rates are adjusted each calendar year.

Qualified employees electing the CDHP shall receive County contributions in the amount of fifty percent (50%) of the deductible into a VEBA or HSA Health Care savings account. Such contributions shall be made in four equal installments payable in conjunction with the 1st pay period of January, April, July, and October.

At no cost to the employee, the County provides a \$20,000 death benefit, term life insurance policy subject to the limitations; benefits and conditions set forth in the contract between the County and the insurance carrier. Additionally, the County also provides employees with access to employee purchased life insurance coverage through a company approved by the County.

Retirement / PERA

The County participates in the Public Employees Retirement Association (PERA) to provide pension benefits for its eligible employees to help plan for a successful and secure retirement. Participation in PERA is mandatory for most employees, and contributions into PERA begin immediately. For further information about PERA eligibility and contribution requirements see <https://mnpera.org>

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Holidays

SECTION:	Benefits Policies Section D-2	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

The County establishes a consistent process for compensating employees for specific holidays.

Policy

The following days, and other such days as the Board may designate, are holidays, to be compensated at straight time for regular and probationary full-time employees, provided the employee is in compensated payroll status the last working day preceding the holiday and the first working day following the holiday:

New Year's Day.....	January 1
Martin Luther King Day.....	Third Monday in January
President's Day.....	Third Monday in February
Spring Holiday.....	Friday before Easter
Memorial Day.....	Last Monday in May
Juneteenth.....	June 19
Independence Day.....	July 4
Labor Day.....	First Monday in September
Veteran's Day.....	November 11
Thanksgiving Day.....	Fourth Thursday in November
Friday after Thanksgiving.....	Fourth Friday in November
Christmas Eve.....	December 24
Christmas Day.....	December 25

Designated holidays that fall on Sunday will be observed the following Monday, those that fall on Saturday will be observed the preceding Friday, unless another day is specified for observance by the Board. In the rare case a holiday falls on a Sunday and Monday, The Sunday holiday will be observed on the previous Friday. An employee scheduled to work other than the normal workweek of Monday through Friday shall receive the same number of holidays. Employees will receive holiday pay for either the designated or the observed holiday based upon their regularly assigned work schedule.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Vacation Leave

SECTION:	Benefits Policies Section D-3	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

The County defines a consistent process for granting Vacation Leave accruals to employees and outlines the rules for using Vacation Leave.

Policy

The County believes that vacation is important to the health and well-being of our employees and for a productive work environment. As such, provides paid vacation for eligible full-time and part-time employees

Procedure

1. Vacation Leave is accrued and may be used during the probationary period.
2. Accrued vacation hours, as well as amounts used each pay period, are reflected on the employee's earnings statement and reflected electronically in the County's timecard system.
3. Employees in regular status positions at the County (positions assigned a full-time FTE, designated within the County's budget), including regular and probationary full-time, will accrue vacation leave based on the below schedule, provided the employee is in compensated payroll status or on approved military leave. This schedule reflects the full-time accrual rate. Part-time employees will accrue vacation leave on a pro-rated basis, based on their approved budgeted FTE, provided their pro-rated vacation leave accrual rate meets or exceeds the minimum standard outlined below.

Years of Completed Service	Days Earned Per Year (Defined as 8-Hour Days)	Hours Earned Per Year (Based on Full-Time Schedule Worked)
< 1 years	(3.08 hours per pay period) 10 days	80 hours
1 - < 5 years	(3.70 hours per pay period) 12 days	96 hours

5 - < 10 years	(4.31 hours per pay period) 14 days	112 hours
10 - < 15 years	(4.93 hours per pay period) 16 days	128 hours
15 - < 20 years	(5.54 hours per pay period) 18 days	144 hours
20 - < 25 years	(6.16 hours per pay period) 20 days	160 hours
25 years or more	(6.76 hours per pay period) 22 days	176 hours

- a. When continuous service reaches a point entitling the employee to the next higher accrual rate, the new accrual rate will commence on the first day of the pay period on or following the date of eligibility.
 - b. The accrual rate shall be determined by the employee's continuous service in a regular full-time or regular part-time position, including all authorized paid leave(s) and authorized leave(s) without pay for military service. Unpaid leaves of absence of fewer than thirty (30) days, and military leaves of absence, will not affect the date used to determine vacation leave accruals.
4. Two (2) years earned vacation days may be carried over from one year to the next. Employees having accumulated two (2) years earned vacation shall be allowed to accrue additional hours for use during the calendar year, but shall reduce those hours to two years accumulation by the end of the last payroll period within the calendar year.
 5. Vacation is granted for the purpose of employee recreation and, therefore, no employee shall be permitted to waive such vacation for the purpose of receiving double pay, unless the employee cannot be scheduled for an approved vacation by the department head. However, an employee who is not working due to illness or injury and has exhausted his/her sick leave, he/she may be permitted to draw his/her earned vacation pay.
 6. Upon separation from employment, employees must have their vacation accrual reduced to the two (2) year accumulated maximum, at the time of separation, or forfeit those hours accumulated over the two (2) year maximum.
 7. In all cases, vacation shall be subject to the needs and service obligations of the Department. In establishing vacation schedules, employees shall schedule a vacation period by seniority. Two (2) employees in the same job classification may be scheduled for a similar vacation period only with the approval of the department head.
 8. Part-time employees shall earn pro-rata vacation benefit based on the number of hours worked during a calendar month. A part-time Employee's Years of Service in the bargaining unit shall determine the threshold at which they shall accrue their pro-rated vacation credits.
 9. Non-exempt employees shall take all vacation time in minimums of one quarter (1/4) hour increments. Exempt employees shall take all vacation time in minimum increments of two (2) hours. Exempt employees may flex their work hours during a pay period. Additionally,

when circumstances exist that make it impossible to flex their hours during the same pay period, exempt Employees may flex their time during the next immediate pay period.

10. Vacation time cannot be granted prior to its accrual.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Sick Leave / Earned Sick and Safe Time

SECTION:	Benefits Policies Section D-4	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

Houston County provides sick leave benefits to eligible employees to support health, safety, and family responsibilities, while ensuring compliance with Minnesota's Earned Sick & Safe Time (ESST) statutes (Minn. Stat. §§ 181.9445 – 181.9448) and the 2025/2026 amendments thereto.

Policy Overview & Applicability

All County employees who work at least 80 hours in Minnesota in a year are eligible under ESST. The County's existing sick leave program integrates with ESST obligations. Where County sick leave provides more generous benefits, additional hours used for ESST-qualifying reasons must comply with ESST rules.

Accrual & Tracking

Full-time employees accrue 3.70 hours per pay period up to 960 hours. Part-time employees accrue on a pro-rata basis. Temporary / Casual employees earn one hour for every 30 hours worked after working the required 80 hours and will be administered under ESST rules.

Permissible Uses / Qualifying Reasons

Employees may use sick leave/ESST for illness, injury, preventive care, domestic abuse, sexual assault, stalking, communicable disease exposure, funeral or memorial arrangements, or public emergencies. Covered family members include spouse, child, parent, grandparent, sibling, in-laws, household members, and one individual designated annually.

Certain public-safety roles may be restricted from using ESST for weather or public emergency closures, consistent with Minnesota law.

Notice, Approval, and Documentation

If foreseeable, employees must provide up to seven (7) days' notice. If not foreseeable, notice must be provided as reasonably required by the County. Leave is subject to supervisory approval and staffing needs, but employees cannot be required to find replacements.

If ESST is used for more than two (2) consecutive scheduled workdays, reasonable documentation may be required. For domestic abuse, sexual assault, or stalking absences, a written statement may be accepted if other documentation poses undue hardship.

Misuse, Denial, and Enforcement

Misuse of sick leave or ESST may result in denial of pay and disciplinary action. Failure by the County to comply with ESST may result in liability for leave owed plus liquidated damages under Minnesota law.

Severance, Payout, and Year-End Balances

Employees with five or more years of service who are not terminated for cause qualify for severance benefits of 50% of unused sick leave up to 480 hours.

Benefits, Return-to-Work, and Reinstatement

During approved sick or ESST leave, the County continues insurance contributions. Employees return to their prior position at the same pay rate. Seniority and service time continue during leave.

Discrimination, Retaliation, and Notice

The County prohibits retaliation or discrimination against employees for using or requesting ESST or sick leave. Employees may report violations to the Personnel Department or Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry. This policy may be modified or revoked at any time consistent with law and does not create a contract of employment.

Notice

THIS POLICY IS NOT A CONTRACT FOR EMPLOYMENT AND DOES NOT CREATE A CONTRACTUAL RIGHT TO PAID TIME OFF OR SIMILAR FORMS OF COMPENSATION. THE COUNTY MAY UPDATE THIS POLICY AND RESERVES THE RIGHT TO INTERPRET THE POLICY AS WELL AS REPLACE, MODIFY, OR REVOKE IT AT ANY TIME, WITH OR WITHOUT NOTICE. THERE IS NOT A CONTRACTUAL RIGHT TO TIME OFF ACCRUAL AS DESCRIBED HEREIN, AND RELATED DOCUMENTS AND THIS PARAGRAPH SHALL BE UNDERSTOOD AS AN EFFECTIVE DISCLAIMER OF ANY CLAIM FOR TIME OFF ACCRUAL OR RELATED COMPENSATION.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

SECTION:	Benefits Policies Section D-5	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

Houston County strives to balance the demands of the workplace and our call to public service with the needs of our employees and their families. Consistent with this statement, the County provides eligible employees with leave rights in accordance with the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). The County posts the mandatory [FMLA Notice](#) as required by the United States Department of Labor and also provides all new hires with general notice information regarding FMLA.

This policy serves to provide employees with a general description of their FMLA rights. However, in the event of any conflict between this policy and applicable law, employees shall be afforded all rights required by law.

Policy

The FMLA entitles eligible employees with up to 12 weeks (26 weeks for military service member caregiver leave) of unpaid job protected leave for specified family and medical reasons, along with continuation of group health insurance coverage.

Eligibility:

To qualify for FMLA leave, an employee must meet all the following conditions:

- Employed by the covered employer for at least 12 months (or 52 weeks) in the preceding seven-year period. These do not need to be consecutive months of employment in order to meet the requirement. If the break in service was due to National Guard or Reserve military service obligations, the County will count separate periods of employment, exceeding the seven-year period, extended by the length of the military service referenced above.
- Worked at least 1,250 hours during the preceding 12-month period. For purposes of this policy, this includes hours actually worked and does not refer to all hours in compensated status. Paid leave, unpaid leave, and FMLA do not count toward the 1,250 hours worked.
- Works at a location where the employer has 50 or more employees within a 75-mile radius.

Type of Leave Covered:

Eligible employees will be granted FMLA leave for the following reasons:

- Any period of incapacity due to pregnancy or prenatal care, the birth of a child, and to care for the newborn child within one year of birth.
- Placement with the employee of a child for adoption or foster care and to care for the newly placed child within one year of placement.
- To care for the employee's spouse, child, or parent who has a serious health condition.
- A serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the essential functions of their job.
- Any qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that the employee's spouse, son, daughter, or parent is a covered military member on "covered active duty;"
- To care for a covered service member with a serious injury or illness if the eligible employee is the service member's spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin (military caregiver leave).

Terms and Definitions:

A child, for purposes of this policy in situations other than military family leave, includes a biological, adopted or foster child, a stepchild, a legal ward, or a child of a person standing *in loco parentis* who is either under 18 years of age, or 18 or older and incapable of self-care because of mental or physical disability.

The need to care for a covered family member encompasses both physical and psychological care. It may also include acquiring or making arrangements for appropriate care or substituting or sharing care duties.

A serious health condition is an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves one of the following:

- Incapacity or treatment requiring inpatient care (an overnight stay) in a hospital, hospice, or residential care facility, or other medical care facility.
- Any period of incapacity due to pregnancy, prenatal medical care, or childbirth.
- Any period of incapacity or treatment due to a chronic serious health condition which is defined as a condition that requires periodic visits (twice or more per year) to a health care provider for treatment, continues over an extended period of time, and may cause episodic rather than continuing periods of incapacity.
- A period of incapacity involving absence plus treatment – for example, inability to work, attend school, or perform other regular daily activities due to the serious health condition for more than three consecutive days and involving ongoing medical treatment; and any
- subsequent treatment or period of incapacity relating to the same condition. Ongoing medical treatment may either involve multiple appointments with a health care provider, or may include a single appointment and follow-up care such as prescription medication.

- Permanent or long-term conditions requiring supervision of a health care provider, but need not be receiving active treatment;
- Conditions requiring multiple treatments. Any period of absence to receive treatments and recovery therefrom, by a health care provider or under orders of or referral by a health care provider, either for restorative surgery after an accident or other injury, or for a condition that would likely result in a period of incapacity of more than three consecutive calendar days in the absence of medical intervention.

An eligible employee whose spouse, son, daughter, or parent has been notified of an impending call or ordered to active military duty, or who is on covered active-duty status, may take up to 12 weeks of leave for a qualifying exigency. Qualifying exigencies include the following:

- Leave to address *any* issue arising from the military member's short notice deployment may be taken for up to seven days from the military member's receipt of notice of deployment.
- Attending military events or related activities.
- Certain childcare and related activities arising from the military member's covered active duty such as arranging alternative childcare, providing non-routine childcare, enrolling or transferring a child to a new school or day care facility.
- Certain activities related to care of the military member's parent who is incapable of self-care such as arranging for alternative care, providing non-routine care, admitting or transferring a parent to a new care facility.
- Making or updating financial and legal arrangements to address a military member's absence while on covered active duty.
- Attending counseling for the employee, the military member, or the child of the military member when the need for that counseling arises from the covered active duty of the military member and is provided by someone other than a health care provider.
- Certain post-deployment activities within 90 days of the end of the military member's covered active duty such as attendance at arrival ceremonies, reintegration events, and addressing issues arising from death of a military member.
- Taking up to 15 calendar days of leave to spend time with a military member who is on short-term, temporary rest and recuperation leave during deployment.

In accordance with the provisions for military caregiver leave, an employee eligible for FMLA leave who is the spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin of a covered service member or a covered veteran may take up to 26 weeks in a single 12-month period to care for the covered service member who is receiving medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy, or is in outpatient status, or is on the temporary disability retired list for a serious injury or illness; or to care for the covered veteran who is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy for a serious injury or illness.

Length and Amount of Leave:

The length of FMLA leave (for reasons other than to care for a covered service member with a serious injury or illness) shall not exceed twelve weeks in a twelve-month period. The leave year is calculated on the following basis:

- A rolling 12-month period measured backward from the date an employee uses any FMLA leave.

For situations involving care for a covered service member with serious injury or illness, the 12-month period begins on the first day the eligible employee takes FMLA leave to care for the covered service member and ends 12 months after that date. During this single 12-month period, an eligible employee's FMLA leave entitlement is limited to a combined total of 26 workweeks for any qualifying reason.

Intermittent Leave and Reduced Work Schedule:

Intermittent or reduced work schedule leave may be taken when medically necessary. Intermittent leave, whether due to the employee's or qualified family member's condition, must be documented in the medical certification form as medically necessary.

The County may temporarily transfer an employee to an available position with equivalent pay and benefits, if the alternative position would better accommodate the need for intermittent or reduced schedule leave.

When leave is required for planned medical treatment, the employee must make a reasonable effort to schedule such leave so as to minimize disruption of the employer's operations.

Intermittent or reduced schedule leave may be taken for the care of a newborn or newly placed adopted or foster child only when the schedule is mutually agreed upon by the County for this situation. In all cases, leave related to the birth, adoption or foster care placement of a child must be taken within one year of the birth or placement of the child.

Coordination of Leave:

The FMLA provides for protected *unpaid* leave of absence. However, FMLA leave taken at Houston County may be paid or unpaid, or a combination of both, due to additional leave running concurrently with FMLA leave.

Whenever applicable to the situation, additional forms of available leave shall run concurrently with FMLA leave including Minnesota pregnancy and parenting leave, and all forms of available paid time off including but not limited to sick leave, vacation leave, disability leave, workers' compensation leave when applicable, third-party sick/disability pay when applicable, and compensatory time off. An employee taking FMLA leave will be required to utilize and exhaust

available accrued paid leave that is applicable according to the circumstances, prior to converting to unpaid leave status.

Leave taken pursuant to a disability leave plan, such as short- or long-term disability insurance benefits, may be considered FMLA leave for a serious health condition and counted in the leave entitlement permitted under FMLA if it meets the criteria set forth above in 29 CFR § 825.112–825.115. In such cases, the County shall designate the leave as FMLA leave and count the leave against the employee's FMLA leave entitlement. Because leave pursuant to a disability benefit plan is not unpaid, the provision for substitution of the employee's accrued paid leave is inapplicable, and neither the employee nor the County may require the substitution of paid leave. However, the County and employees may agree, where state law permits, to have paid leave supplement the disability plan benefits not to exceed 100% of the employee's pre-disability base wage.

If an employee takes paid sick or vacation leave for a condition that is later determined to qualify under the FMLA, the County may designate all or some portion of related leave taken under this policy, to the extent that the earlier leave meets the necessary qualifications and requirements for designation under the FMLA.

Procedure for Requesting Leave, Notice, and Certification Requirements:

An employee requesting leave which may qualify under the FMLA must provide written or verbal notice of the need for leave to the Personnel Department as soon as reasonably practicable. Whenever the need for leave is foreseeable, the employee is required to provide notice at least 30 days prior to the date on which the leave is to commence. When an employee becomes aware of a need for FMLA leave less than 30 days in advance, the employee must provide notice of the need for leave within two business days. When the need for FMLA leave is not foreseeable, the employee must comply with the County's usual and customary notice and procedural requirements for requesting leave, absent unusual circumstances that would prevent the employee from doing so.

Employees taking intermittent leave will be required to follow their department's regular call-in or notification procedures for approval of time off, to the extent reasonably practicable based on the nature of the condition requiring leave.

The County requires certification by the treating healthcare provider regarding the need for qualified FMLA leave, when the need for leave is due to the employee's serious health condition or that of an employee's family member. The County requires certification of the qualifying exigency for military family leave and for the serious injury or illness of a covered service member. The employee must respond to requests for certification within 15 days of the request or provide a reasonable explanation for the delay. Completed certification documentation must be provided to the Personnel Department. Failure to provide proper and complete certification, or required recertification, may result in a denial or delay of FMLA leave.

Recertification may be required when the employee requests an extension of the original length approved for the leave, when the circumstances regarding the leave have changed, or if the employer receives information casting doubt on the reason given for the absence. Recertification may also be required if there is a question regarding the validity of the certification or if the employee is unable to return to work as planned. In addition, when the need for leave extends beyond a single leave year, the employee shall be required to provide a new medical certification for each subsequent year.

Employer Notice, Certifications, and Designation Procedure:

Within five business days of the employee providing notice of their need for FMLA leave, the County shall provide the employee with the *Notice of Eligibility and Rights and Responsibilities*. The employer may request additional information sufficient to certify the need and eligibility for FMLA leave. Within five business days after the employee has submitted appropriate and sufficient certification documentation, the County will provide the employee with a written response to the employee's request for FMLA leave, using the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) *Designation Notice*.

Employee Status and Benefits During Leave:

An employee granted leave under this policy will continue to be covered under the County's group health plans, which shall include medical, dental, and vision plans, under the same conditions and at the same level of County contribution as would have been provided had the employee not taken FMLA leave. Rights to additional, continued benefits will depend on the County's established policy for providing such benefits when the employee is on other forms of leave, whether the leave is paid or unpaid. The employee is required to continue payment for any employee portion due for insurance coverage while on leave. Arrangements for payment of the employees' portion for insurance coverage must be made by the employee with the Personnel Department.

The County will continue making payroll deductions for other benefits while the employee is on paid leave. If the employee converts to unpaid leave, the employee may request continuation of other benefits by arranging to pay his or her portion of the premiums. If the employee does not continue payments for other benefits during unpaid leave, the County will discontinue coverage during the leave in accordance with plan administration rules. The County may require an employee on FMLA leave to report periodically regarding the employee's status and intent to return to work.

Return to Work and Reinstatement Following Leave:

An employee taking leave under this policy shall be required to provide a fitness for duty (FFD) clearance from the treating health care provider whenever the leave is for the employee's own health condition. Failure to provide the FFD certification in a timely manner may eliminate or delay the employee's right to reinstatement under the FMLA. If an employee is utilizing

intermittent leave and reasonable safety concerns exist related to return to regular job duties, an FFD certification may be required as frequently as every 30 days during periods when the employee has used intermittent leave.

Employees returning from FMLA will generally be reinstated to the same position held prior to their FMLA protected leave, or to a position equivalent in pay, benefits, and other terms and conditions of employment. However, no greater right to reinstatement or to other benefits, terms or conditions of employment exist than if the employee had been continuously employed during the FMLA leave period.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Leaves of Absence

SECTION:	Benefits Policies Section D-7	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

The County strives to balance the demands of the workplace and our call to public service with the needs of employees and their families. Consistent with this statement, the County provides eligible employees with leave rights in accordance Minnesota state statutes, federal law, and in certain additional situations as defined in these policies.

Policy

An employee who requests time off may be eligible to use accrued paid leave time and may be eligible for leave protected by law and/or leave time provided by County policy. When an employee's leave qualifies under more than one leave type, applicable leaves will be designated concurrently to the greatest extent possible.

Seniority and Benefits During Unpaid Leaves of Absence:

Except as required by law, seniority shall not accumulate during any unpaid leave of absence exceeding 30 days.

Health insurance benefits will be offered in accordance with state and federal law. Continuation provisions may apply at the end of the month in which the leave begins or following loss of eligibility for regular County contributions and will resume upon completing the eligibility and/or waiting period requirement, if any, following return from leave.

Failure to comply with the return-to-work date established for the leave, or failure to request an extension from the department head within five (5) days prior to the expiration of the leave, may be grounds for termination of employment.

Prohibited Retaliation:

Retaliation is prohibited for requesting, taking leave, or asserting other rights provided under these policies. The County will not discharge, discipline, interfere with, restrain, coerce, threaten, penalize, or discriminate against an employee regarding the employee's compensation, terms, conditions, location, or privileges of employment, or any other factor as

required by law, because the employee took time off from work or exercised their rights pursuant to these policies. An employee who believes they have been retaliated against or have not been afforded rights under these policies should promptly report their concerns to the Personnel Department

Minnesota Pregnancy and Parenting Leave:

Employees of Houston County are eligible to receive 12 weeks of unpaid pregnancy and parental leave under Minnesota Pregnancy and Parenting Leave laws. Parental leave due to birth or adoption of a child must begin within 12 months of the birth or adoption. However, if a child must remain in the hospital longer than the mother, the leave must begin within 12 months after the child leaves the hospital. The 12 weeks of pregnancy or parental leave may be taken consecutively or intermittently. Time taken off work to attend prenatal care medical appointments will not be counted against the employee's 12-week leave entitlement under the Minnesota Pregnancy and Parenting Leave law. Employees are required to provide reasonable notice to the Personnel Department of the date the leave will begin and the estimated amount of leave.

Employees who take pregnancy and parenting leave covered by Minnesota Pregnancy and Parenting Leave law are entitled to reinstatement in their same job after returning from leave, or return to a position of comparable duties, hours, and pay including any automatic adjustments that occurred during the leave period. An employee returning from a leave of absence longer than one month must notify their supervisor or manager at least two weeks prior to returning from leave.

An employee taking leave covered by Minnesota Pregnancy and Parenting Leave law will be provided with continuation of their employer-provided group insurance, including health insurance, along with continuation of any employer contributions as if they were actively working, during the leave. The employee will continue to be required to pay their portion of premium, if any, for such benefits.

Minnesota Pregnancy and Parenting Leave runs concurrently with FMLA leave whenever the employee is eligible for leave under both laws. However, if an employee has taken FMLA leave for unrelated reasons, the employee will still be entitled to 12 weeks of Minnesota Pregnancy and Parenting Leave for qualifying situations. Both paid and unpaid leave count toward the total of 12 weeks of Minnesota Pregnancy and Parenting Leave. Therefore, if an employee uses paid leave options such as PTO, vacation, disability, or sick time for all or part of their time off for qualifying pregnancy and parenting reasons, the employee would not be entitled to an *additional* 12 weeks of unpaid leave under Minnesota Pregnancy and Parenting Leave law. Employees are not required to use all available and applicable accrued paid leave such as sick leave, vacation leave, PTO, etc., during Minnesota Pregnancy and Parenting Leave prior to converting to unpaid leave of absence.

Minnesota School-Related Activities Leave:

Employees are entitled to take up to 16 hours of unpaid leave during any 12-month period to attend their children's school conferences, classroom activities, childcare, or other early childhood programs, or to observe and monitor the services or program, provided the conference, activity, or observation cannot be scheduled during non-work hours. Eligible activities must be school, early childhood or childcare related and do not include community or private extracurricular programs. Employees are required to provide reasonable notice of the leave request and make a reasonable effort to schedule the leave so as to not unduly disrupt the operations of the employer. This leave may be unpaid leave; however, the County may require the use of accrued paid leave under this section.

Elections and Voting:

All employees eligible to vote in an election shall be provided time off from work necessary to appear at the employee's polling place, cast a ballot, and return to work on the day of that election or during the time period allowed for voting in person before the election day, without penalty or deduction from salary or wages because of the absence.

Election Judge:

An employee selected to serve as an election judge pursuant to Minnesota law shall be provided time off with pay for purposes of serving as an election judge, provided the employee gives the County at least twenty days written notice. The employee's request to be absent must be accompanied with a certification from the appointing elections authority stating the hourly compensation to be paid to the employee for service as an election judge and the hours during which the employee will serve. In order to receive regular pay for the time served as an election judge, the employee shall be required to submit any compensation received for this duty, minus mileage and other expense reimbursement, to the County.

Jury Duty:

Employees who are called for jury duty shall receive their normal compensation for days they are scheduled to work. Any payments, per diem or fees, excepting expenses, shall be remitted to the County. If an employee is excused from court duty prior to the end of the work shift, the employee shall return to work as directed by the County or make arrangements for a leave, with or without pay.

Victim or Witness Leave:

An employee who is a victim or witness, who is subpoenaed or requested by the prosecutor to attend court for the purpose of giving testimony, or is the spouse or immediate family member of such victim, shall be provided reasonable time off from work to attend criminal proceedings related to the victim's case. This time off may be leave with or without pay as determined appropriate by the County, in accordance with the circumstances and the employees' available accrued leave. An employee who is absent from the workplace shall provide 48 hours' advance notice to the County, unless it is impracticable or an emergency prevents the employee from providing this notice. Upon request of the County, the employee shall provide verification that

supports the employee's reason for being absent from the workplace. All information related to the employee's leave pursuant to this section shall be kept confidential by the County.

Court Appearance/Witness/Testifying for County Related Business:

Employees subpoenaed as a witness in an official capacity or appearing for County related business as authorized by the appropriate County Authority, will receive their normal compensation, less any remuneration exclusive of expenses, unless the action is instituted by the employee.

Court Appearance/Witness/Testifying for Personal Matters:

Any other absence to testify in litigation, not in the status of an employee, shall not qualify for any compensation and the employee shall arrange for leave, with or without pay. Any party to a lawsuit, not connected to County duties shall not qualify for compensation and the employee shall arrange for a leave, with or without pay.

Bone Marrow Donation Leave:

An employee who works at least half time for the County who seeks to undergo a medical procedure to donate bone marrow shall be provided paid leave not to exceed 40 work hours, unless additional paid leave is agreed to by the employer. The County may require verification by a physician for the purpose and length of each leave requested by the employee to donate bone marrow. A medical determination that the employee does not qualify as a bone marrow donor does not result in forfeiture of the paid leave of absence granted to the employee prior to that medical determination.

Blood Donation

Employees will be allowed time off work with pay without having to use their vacation or sick leave accruals for donating blood at the blood mobile when it is in Caledonia, Minnesota. Employees must seek supervisory approval, which shall only be withheld when there is inadequate staffing to cover department functions.

Organ Donation Leave:

An employee who works at least half time for the County who seeks to undergo a medical procedure to donate an organ or partial organ to another person shall be provided with paid leave not to exceed 40 work hours for each donation, unless additional paid leave is agreed to by the employer. The County may require verification by a physician for the purpose and length of each leave requested by the employee for organ donation. A medical determination that the employee does not qualify as an organ donor and does not result in forfeiture of the paid leave of absence granted to the employee prior to that medical determination.

Military Leave:

In accordance with state and federal laws, for qualifying military training or active service in accordance with official military orders or related authority, an employee shall receive full pay at base wage rate for a period not to exceed fifteen (15) days per calendar year. The employee may choose when to take all or part of the 15 paid days for required service throughout the

year. Military leave in excess of fifteen (15) days in a calendar year may be provided without pay.

Extended Military Leave:

In accordance with state and federal laws, an employee shall be entitled to a military leave of absence without pay of up to five (5) years for service in the armed forces of the United States. Reinstatement shall be made upon the request of an employee and within the timeframes outlined in Minnesota Statutes and in accordance with the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA).

Bereavement Leave:

Leave with pay not deducted from vacation leave to a maximum of three (3) days shall be granted upon the occasion of the death of the employee's current spouse, children, step-children, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, mother, father, step-father, step-mother, grandparents, step-grandparents, brother, sister, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, grandchildren, step-grandchildren; and the mother, father, aunt, uncle, brother, sister or grandparents of the employee's spouse; or a bona fide person living as a contributing member that is considered part of the family unit and not a tenant, renter or boarder.

Work Related Injury:

An employee temporarily disabled from work due to an injury or illness sustained directly in the performance of the employee's work with the County may be eligible for Workers' Compensation. See Workers' Compensation policy for additional information. All injuries or illnesses must be reported to the Supervisor on the date of the injury or as soon as possible thereafter.

Medical Leave:

A medical or disability leave of absence may be granted to an employee who is either ineligible or who has exhausted their entitlement to applicable mandated leaves (such as FMLA, Minnesota Pregnancy and Parental Leave, etc.). An employee requesting a medical or disability leave of absence should contact the Personnel Department and may be granted a leave of absence as a reasonable accommodation that will enable the individual to perform the essential functions of the job. Such leave will be evaluated through the interactive process and based on the specific facts of each case. The status of the leave will be reviewed at approximately 30-day intervals or as deemed appropriate based on the facts of the specific case.

Requests for such leave will be subject to prior certification by the attending medical authority or a medical authority designated by the County. The employee may be required to submit documentation from the healthcare provider stating the need for the leave, the expected duration of the leave, and a general explanation of the nature of the medical condition or disability including its impact on ability to perform the job, as well as an explanation of how the leave of absence will assist the employee in being able to return to work and perform the

essential functions of the job. Employees are required to use all available paid leave accruals prior to converting to an unpaid leave of absence.

Returning employees may be required to submit certification from the healthcare provider of their ability to safely perform the essential functions of the position.

Employee Death

When the death of an employee or elected official occurs, the County facilities shall remain open pursuant to the published calendar. The deceased employee's department will also remain open, if possible, at the discretion of the department head. Employees of that department only will be allowed up to 4 hours off with pay to attend the funeral or memorial service. Other employees who wish to attend the funeral or memorial of a current employee from another department, must take vacation, comp time or flex time, at the discretion of their department head.

Elected Office – Time off for Public Office Meetings (211B.10)

An employee elected to a public office must be permitted time off from regular employment to attend meetings required by reason of the public office. The time off may be without pay, with pay or made up within the pay period, as agreed between the employee and employer, subject to collective bargaining agreements.

Voluntary Furlough:

To reduce the tax burden on taxpayers, Houston County has a voluntary furlough program that provides employees with an option of taking leave without pay. Upon written request of the employee to his or her supervisor an employee shall be granted forty (40) hours of leave without pay per calendar year with no loss of benefits. Such a request shall be granted but will be scheduled by mutual agreement of the employee and the supervisor in increments of one (1) hour or more. All employees are highly encouraged to consider participating in this program. Department Heads shall approve requests pursuant to this Program only when it does not compromise public safety and/or their department's effective delivery of mandated services or the hours of operation of any County office.

Employee participation in this program shall not negatively impact the of the employee's benefits eligibility, leave accruals or other leave provisions as set forth in the Houston County policies or collective bargaining agreements.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Employee Training and Development

SECTION:	Benefits Policies Section D-8	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

The County recognizes the value of employees maintaining current knowledge in their field and intends to provide learning opportunities for employees to build and maintain professional skills in order to perform County work.

Policy

The County will conduct programs or ensure that learning opportunities are available to meet the mandatory training and development needs of County employees; offer learning opportunities to support County objectives; and encourage employee participation in formal educational pursuits that enhance job performance or potential for increased responsibility.

The County Coordinator / HR Director shall coordinate the assessment of training and developmental needs of County employees and develop cost-effective strategies to address those needs.

The County Coordinator / HR Director shall oversee the design, delivery, and evaluation of countywide training programs and services.

County Departments and Offices may implement specific training requirements and opportunities for their staff.

Conferences, Workshops & Seminars

Supervisors shall assess any employee request and approve or deny the costs for an employee attending a job-related conference, workshop, or seminar within the state, using the following criteria:

- The topic is relevant to the employees current job description.
- The employee's attendance provides a direct benefit to the County either by keeping the employee abreast of current developments in their professional field, expanding their knowledge to meet operational goals or assisting the Department in meeting County objectives.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Discrimination and Harassment Prevention

SECTION:	Code of Conduct Policies Section E-1	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

Houston County is committed to providing a respectful and inclusive work environment in which all individuals have the opportunity to contribute in a productive manner and to experience professional growth free from discrimination, harassment, or related retaliation based upon protected class status.

Policy

It is critical to this commitment that all employees be familiar with this policy and its related reporting process and take appropriate action to address any concerns that arise under the policy. Anyone who may have experienced or observed discrimination or harassment in violation of this policy, in the context of employment with Houston County, is encouraged to report their concern to the County Coordinator / HR Director. This policy defines the County's process for reporting, investigating, and addressing unlawful discriminatory, harassing, or retaliatory behavior.

Houston County prohibits discrimination including harassment, disparate treatment, and disparate impact, based on any characteristic protected by law regarding the terms, conditions, privileges and prerequisites of employment. This policy which focuses on maintaining a workplace free from discrimination, harassment, and retaliation is intended to support and complement the County's commitment in this area, as well as its commitment to providing a work environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity.

Houston County prohibits discrimination, harassment, disparate treatment, disparate impact, and retaliation on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, creed, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, genetic information, veteran or military status, status with regard to public assistance, pregnancy, familial status, local Human Rights Commission activity, or on the basis of any other characteristic protected by law. In instances of bona fide occupational qualifications necessary to perform a job, certain limited circumstances apply, when factors relevant to job duties may be considered.

Introduction & Definitions:

Employment discrimination may occur in the form of harassment, disparate treatment, disparate impact, or retaliation. Huston County prohibits illegal discrimination in any form.

Important laws prohibiting employment discrimination include but are not limited to: Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (ADEA), the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the Equal Pay Act of 1963, the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978, the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, Executive Order 11246 of 1965 pertaining to federal contractors, the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993, the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA) and the Consumer Credit Protection Act (CCPA).

Harassment - Harassment is unwelcome conduct based on race, ethnicity, color, creed, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, genetic information, veteran or military status, status with regard to public assistance, pregnancy, familial status, local Human Rights Commission activity, arrest or conviction records, or on the basis of any other characteristic protected by law. Harassment is defined as unlawful when enduring the offensive conduct becomes a condition of continued employment; or where the conduct is severe or pervasive enough to create a work environment that a reasonable person would consider intimidating, hostile, offensive, or abusive, or where the conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with the individual's work performance. Harassment is also prohibited in retaliation for filing a charge of discrimination, testifying, or participating in any way in an investigation, proceeding, or lawsuit under these laws, or for opposing employment practices reasonably believed to discriminate against individuals in violation of these laws.

Sexual Harassment - Sexual harassment, as defined by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when, for example: a) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, b) such submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual (*quid pro quo* harassment), or c) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with the individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment. Harassment is illegal when it is so frequent or severe that it creates a hostile or offensive work environment or when it results in an adverse employment decision.

Similarly, sexual harassment as defined by Minnesota Statutes § 363A.03, Subdivision 43 includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, sexually motivated physical contact or other verbal or physical conduct or communication of a sexual nature when: a) submission to that conduct or communication is made a term or condition, either explicitly or implicitly, affecting an individual's employment; or b) submission to or rejection of that conduct

or communication by an individual is used as a factor in decisions affecting that individual's employment; or c) that conduct, or communication has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's employment, or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive employment environment.

Disparate Treatment - Disparate treatment discrimination occurs when an employer intentionally takes an employee's protected status into consideration when taking an adverse employment action.

Disparate Impact - Disparate impact discrimination occurs when an employer adopts a policy or practice that while appearing neutral and nondiscriminatory on its surface, has a disproportionately negative effect on members of a protected class. Disparate impact discrimination is also known as adverse impact discrimination.

Retaliation - Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) laws prohibit punishing or taking adverse action against employees or applicants for asserting their rights to be free from employment discrimination including harassment. It is unlawful to retaliate against employees or applicants for reporting employment discrimination or harassment; for filing an EEO charge or being a witness in a charge, complaint, investigation or lawsuit; for participating in an employer investigation; for refusing to follow orders they reasonably believed would result in discrimination; for requesting pay information to uncover discriminatory pay practices; and for participating in a complaint process. Likewise, it is unlawful to retaliate against an employee for exercising their rights related to religious accommodation, disability accommodation, family and medical leave, or military leave, among other protected actions.

Examples of Prohibited Conduct:

Discriminatory or harassing behavior may include, but is not limited to, the following examples:

- Slurs, epithets, negative stereotyping, denigrating jokes, nicknames for protected categories
- Threats, intimidating or hostile acts
- Conduct with the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with work performance
- Written or graphic material that denigrates, shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group, sexually suggestive objects or images
- Unwanted sexual conduct, advances, or requests for sexual favors
- Leering, whistling, touching, obscene comments or gestures
- Technology and social media-based communications, posts, and messaging of a harassing, discriminatory, or retaliatory nature

Individuals Subject to this Policy and Application to the Work Environment:

This policy applies to all employees, interns, volunteers, and elected officials. Violations of this policy by any employee may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Conduct prohibited by this policy is unacceptable in the workplace, as well as in any work-related setting outside of the workplace such as during attendance at conferences, professional meetings, educational programs, or workplace-related social events. Off duty conduct which bears a nexus with the employee's job may also be subject to this policy.

Certain employees, by the nature of their job, may be exposed to inappropriate or undesirable conduct during the course of interactions with members of the public. However, inappropriate conduct of individuals interacting within and influencing general County work settings – for example, vendors, contractors, applicants, customers, and clients - may also be reported so that Houston County may take necessary and reasonable action to maintain a working environment free of discrimination and harassment.

Employee Responsibilities:

Houston County encourages reporting of all perceived incidents of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation. Individuals who believe they may have been the victim of such conduct, or observed a violation of this policy, are encouraged to discuss their concerns with their immediate supervisor or next level manager. When appropriate to the situation, individuals are encouraged to promptly advise the offender that his or her behavior is unwelcomed and request that it be discontinued. This step should be documented. If addressing the offender does not effectively resolve the concern or is not appropriate to the situation, and in all cases of potentially significant violations of this policy, individuals should follow the discrimination and harassment complaint procedure provided in this policy for making a formal report to the County Coordinator / HR Director.

Management Responsibilities:

Supervisory and management representatives are responsible for maintaining a work environment free from unlawful discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. Supervisory and management personnel are required to take prompt action to correct behavior in violation of this policy and document their action. Regarding all potentially significant violations of this policy, and concerns that are not corrected through immediate intervention, supervisory and management personnel are required to promptly contact the County Coordinator / HR Director to determine appropriate action. Supervisory and management representatives' commitment to this policy is a key element of the leadership role at Houston County. Due to the critical nature of this responsibility, supervisory and management representatives who become aware of a potential violation of this policy and who fail to take appropriate action shall be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

Reporting Procedure:

Prompt reporting of allegations of harassment, discrimination, or retaliation is advised, to facilitate timely investigation, intervention, and constructive action as appropriate to the situation. Formal reports of alleged violations of this policy should be submitted to the Human

Resources Director, if the complaint involves the County Coordinator / HR Director, the report should be submitted to the County Attorney. To facilitate appropriate assessment and follow-up action responsive to the complaint, whenever possible the formal complaint should contain details of the situation, and should identify the person or persons against whom the complaint is being made, as well as the names of any witnesses, and the name and contact information of the individual reporting the concern.

Intentionally False Claims Prohibited:

An employee, not acting in good faith, and making false claims of discrimination or harassment may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. In addition, any employee who intentionally provides false information during an investigation may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. False and malicious complaints of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation are differentiated from complaints that, even if erroneous, are made in good faith. A complaint made in good faith and later proven false is not subject to disciplinary action.

Complaint Investigation:

The County Coordinator / HR Director will review all allegations of harassment, discrimination, disparate treatment, disparate impact, and retaliation. He/she may discuss the complaint with the reporting individual to review or clarify details and gather additional information. The County Coordinator / HR Director will determine if the complaint requires further investigation, and if so, will oversee the investigation to its conclusion.

Reasonable standards will be followed to respect the confidentiality of individuals involved, to the extent consistent with ensuring a complete and adequate investigation, appropriate corrective action, and in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and administrative rulings. Complete confidentiality is not possible and shall not be guaranteed. The investigatory

process may require the accused to respond to charges made against them; and data related to the complaint, investigation, and any resulting disciplinary action may be subject to release by law - as several examples which preclude any guarantees of strict confidentiality.

Complaints and investigative materials will be maintained in a file separate from involved employees' personnel files. If disciplinary action results from the investigation, the final disciplinary action will become part of the subject employee's personnel file.

Corrective Action:

Misconduct constituting a violation of this policy will be addressed appropriately in accordance with the facts and determinations of the investigation. Responsive action may include but is not

limited to: individual or group training; referral to counseling; reassignment; disciplinary action including verbal or written reprimand, suspension without pay, or termination of employment.

Conclusion:

Upon closure of the process outlined above, the County Coordinator / HR Director will notify the reporting individual that the investigation is concluded, and may provide relevant information regarding the outcome, as appropriate to the situation. The Human Resource Director and department head of the area from which the complaint originated may conduct additional follow-up to ensure the concern has been effectively addressed and the County's commitment to providing a respectful and inclusive workplace upheld.

Prohibited Retaliation:

Houston County forbids retaliation against anyone who makes a good faith complaint of suspected violation of this policy, or against anyone who serves as a witness or participates in an investigation. Acts of retaliation should be reported immediately and may be subject to additional investigation.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Respectful Workplace

SECTION:	Code of Conduct Policies Section E-2	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

The County is committed to promoting a respectful and professional work environment, providing employees with a workplace that is conducive to productivity and positive customer service. Respect for one another is fundamental to maintaining an efficient and effective work environment.

Policy

It is the policy of Houston County to maintain a respectful work and public service environment free from violence, discrimination, harassment, and other offensive or degrading behavior or conduct. The County will not tolerate such behavior by or toward any employee. Disrespectful or unprofessional communications and behavior can disrupt the efficient functioning of the workplace. Any employee found to have acted in violation of this policy shall be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

The County shall provide a reporting process and investigative practices for reported violation of this policy.

Standards of Behavior and Expectations:

Every employee of the County has the right to work in a respectful workplace. In order to promote and sustain a workplace where all employees are treated with respect and dignity, regardless of their position or status, each employee is expected to abide by these values and standards of interpersonal behavior, communication and professionalism:

1. Treat employees and others with respect, civility, and courtesy. Respect and value the contributions of all members of our workforce, regardless of status or role in the organization.
2. Work honestly, effectively and collegially with employees and others. Respond courteously and appropriately to requests from others for assistance or information.

3. Engage in non-retaliatory problem-solving processes that address concerns regarding respectful or professional communications or behavior.
4. Encourage and support all employees in developing their individual conflict management skills. Use informal means to address issues with individuals whenever possible.
5. Participate fully and in good faith in any informal resolution process or formal complaint and investigation process.
6. Have an open and cooperative approach in dealings with employees and co-workers, recognizing and embracing individual differences.
7. Recognize that differing social and cultural standards may mean that behavior that is acceptable to some may be perceived as unacceptable or unreasonable to others.
8. Abide by applicable rules, regulations, policies, and bylaws and address any dissatisfaction with, or violation of, specific policies and procedures through appropriate channels.
9. Demonstrate commitment to continuous personal and professional learning and development.
10. Demonstrate commitment to a culture where all employees cooperate and collaborate in using best practices to achieve high work-related outcomes.
11. Be responsible stewards of material and human assets to achieve excellence, innovation, and sharing of knowledge across the organization.
12. Employees in supervisory and management positions must model civility for others and clearly define expectations for how employees treat each other. Individuals in supervisory and management positions are responsive to complaints when they are brought forward.

Behavior which violates this policy includes, but is not limited to:

1. A pattern of behavior that a reasonable person would find to be demeaning, humiliating, or offensive.
2. Discriminatory behavior which includes inappropriate remarks about or conduct related to an employee's race, color, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, ethnicity/national origin, disability, marital status, pregnancy, familial status, age, disability, status with regard to public assistance, genetic information, veteran or military status, local human rights commission activity, exercise of rights related to

family and medical leave, and any other characteristic or category protected by law. Also see the County's Discrimination & Harassment Prevention Policy.

3. Offensive behavior includes patterns of actions that have a negative impact on the work environment such as: vulgar obscenities, name calling, disrespectful language, or the intentional filing of an unfounded complaint under this policy.
4. Violent behavior which includes the use of physical force, harassment or intimidation, or abuse of power or authority. Making threats of violence, retribution, litigation, or financial harm.
5. Making comments or engaging in behavior directed as a personal attack on the professional conduct of others.
6. Shouting or engaging in other speech, conduct, or mannerisms that are reasonably perceived by others to represent intimidation or harassment.
7. Making or telling jokes that are intended to be, or that are reasonably perceived by others to be, crude or offensive; teasing, name calling, ridicule or making someone the brunt of pranks or practical jokes. Using sarcasm or cynicism directed as a personal attack on others.
8. Intentionally making comments or engaging in behavior that is untruthful; or spreading unsubstantiated rumors or gossip.
9. Making actual or threatened inappropriate physical contact.
10. Throwing instruments, tools, office equipment, or other items as an expression of anger, criticism, or threat, or in an otherwise disrespectful or abusive manner.
11. Engaging in any pattern of disruptive behavior or interaction that could interfere with the workplace or adversely impact the quality of services.

Procedure

Responding to Violations of this Policy:

Responding to behavior which violates this policy is most effectively handled immediately by the person(s) observing the behavior. An employee who believes that they have been treated in violation of this policy by any person in relation to employment with the County should deal with the situation in one or more of the following ways:

- A. The person who is the target or observer of the behavior should politely but firmly request that the person cease the behavior. The employee may request that a coworker or union representative accompany them. This meeting may include describing how the

behavior is disrespectful (e.g., causing feelings of intimidation, offense, or discomfort, unwanted).

- B. The person who is the target or observer of the behavior may write a statement describing the incident(s) of inappropriate behavior, a summary of the conversation with the person violating this policy, and a description of that person's response to the conversation following the incident. This statement may be provided to a supervisor or the Personnel Department as appropriate based on the severity of the situation.
- C. If an employee fears that adverse employment consequences could result from direct conversation with the offender, the employee may go to their supervisor, manager, the department head, or the Personnel Department. In the event the complaint is against their department head, the employee should report it to the County Coordinator / HR Director. In the event of a complaint against the County Coordinator / HR Director, it should be reported to the County Attorney. The report of such an incident should include the details of the situation, and the resolution sought.
- D. In the case of violent behavior, all employees are required to report the incident immediately to a supervisor, manager, the department head, or the Personnel
- E. Department, and to the proper legal authorities dependent upon the nature and severity of the incident.
- F. If an issue cannot be resolved by addressing the situation directly, or by working through the appropriate management and leadership team within the employee's work area, the employee may consider filing a formal complaint with the Personnel Department. See the section on "How to File a Complaint."
- G. The cooperation of all employees is required to reestablish and maintain a respectful environment. Employees must make efforts to be aware of the sensitivity of those individuals with whom they work. Disrespectful or unprofessional behavior may or may not be intentional. To ensure an efficiently functioning workplace, employees are encouraged to informally resolve concerns whenever possible.

Responsibilities of Supervisory and Management Employees:

Management's responsibilities include investigating or appropriately following up on all complaints and making necessary efforts to reestablish or provide an environment free of disrespectful behavior to protect the rights of all employees. Management should promptly consult with the Personnel Department regarding significant issues related to this policy; and if they have questions regarding how to appropriately address a concern that has come to their attention.

Supervisors and managers shall deal swiftly and vigorously with persons treating others disrespectfully. An employee who engages in disrespectful workplace behavior is subject to standard disciplinary procedures.

A supervisor or manager who becomes aware of disrespectful workplace behavior and fails to take appropriate actions against it is subject to disciplinary procedures.

A supervisor or manager who receives such a complaint shall record their actions in response to the complaint, including any investigation, correction or discipline. The records should be maintained by the supervisor/manager or the Personnel Department, as appropriate.

When conducting an investigation, management shall operate within the requirements of the Minnesota Data Practices Act, County policy, and other applicable rules and regulations.

How to File a Complaint:

All employees are encouraged to voice their concern if they feel they are being treated disrespectfully. The County offers many options when seeking assistance, such as reporting the concern to a supervisor or manager, the department head, or the Personnel Department

If the problem cannot be resolved by the employee asking the person to stop or reporting the behavior to their supervisor or manager, or to the department head, an employee may submit

a formal complaint by contacting the Personnel Department for assistance. The completed form should be submitted to the Personnel Department. Complaints must contain details of the situation and the identity of the person or persons against whom the complaint is being made.

Follow-Up and Investigation of a Complaint:

The County Coordinator / HR Director will review the complaint, and the employee will generally be contacted within five business days.

The County Coordinator / HR Director will discuss the complaint with the employee, review details, and gather supporting information as appropriate.

The County Coordinator / HR Director will determine if the complaint needs to be investigated further. If it is determined that the complaint requires further action, it will be investigated to conclusion.

Results of the investigation will be compiled into a report by the investigating party and sent to the County Coordinator / HR Director and the department head of where the complaint originated, as appropriate.

The County Coordinator / HR Director or the department head will follow up to ensure violations of this policy have been addressed.

Prohibited Retaliation:

The County will not tolerate acts of retaliation against employees who have made a good faith report of suspected violations of this policy or any person who assists or participates in an investigation or a proceeding related to such an investigation.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Workplace Violence

SECTION:	Code of Conduct Policies Section E-3	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

The County is committed to providing employees with a safe workplace that is free from violence; reducing employee vulnerability to workplace violence; responding quickly to employees if workplace violence occurs; and supporting employees who experience acts of workplace violence.

Policy

Employees, customers, clients, contractors, vendors, business associates, and others should be treated with courtesy and respect; and employee interactions should be professional and appropriate to the circumstances. County employees are expected to serve angry, upset, or otherwise disgruntled customers with patience, courtesy, and respect while maintaining safety. No employee is required to tolerate physical or verbal threats to their safety, or physical or verbal abuse. Further, it is a goal of the County to maintain a work environment that provides for respectful conflict resolution.

The County is committed to:

- Providing services to the public in a professional and caring manner.
- Providing a safe environment for employees and the public.
- Reducing employee vulnerability to workplace violence.
- Responding quickly to employees if workplace violence occurs.
- Supporting employees who experience violence both at the time of, and subsequent to, the incident.

Definition

Violence is the use of harassment, intimidation, physical force, or the abuse of power or authority, where the intent is to control by causing pain, fear or hurt. The County acknowledges that employees may be exposed to violence by the very nature of their jobs in the provision of service to the public. The County acknowledges that human relationships include the potential

for conflict, which may result in violence. This includes the actions of employees, clients, other internal or external customers, vendors, or any other person. The County recognizes that violence at work, family violence, or any other type of violence may impact an employee's work performance.

Procedure

The County assumes the initiative for maintaining a safe workplace. The County retains the authority to act appropriately in performance evaluation and disciplinary procedures. The intention of these procedures is not to conflict with any other County policy or procedure.

Each department head is charged with the development, maintenance, and communication of procedures for preventing and addressing workplace violence relevant to the functions of the areas they oversee. These include procedures for prevention, incident response, and actions following an incident. The department head or their designee provides orientation, training, and support on workplace violence prevention, reporting, and response procedures pertinent to their departments and/or service delivery areas.

If an employee is threatened or assaulted, the first thing the employee should do is end the encounter and move to a secure place. If defense is necessary, it should be reasonable and proportionate to the situation with a minimum of contact with, or injury to, the individual. The County supports acts of self-defense when an employee is doing so to protect themselves. Once in a secure setting, the employee should obtain medical help if needed and report the incident to law enforcement and to their supervisor or department head. Calling 911 may be appropriate for either law enforcement or medical support.

If an employee sees or overhears a violent incident in progress, they should call for help. Calling 911 may be appropriate for either law enforcement or medical support. Management should be promptly notified.

If a violent incident occurs, the employee involved must report the incident to their supervisor or to the department head. Follow-up will vary depending on the incident.

Employees are expected to exercise sound judgment and inform their supervisor and/or the Personnel Department of potentially dangerous situations, including but not limited to situations where an individual exhibits behavior that could be a sign of a dangerous situation. Such behavior includes but is not limited to:

- Displays of signs of extreme stress, hostility, resentment, anger, or making threatening remarks.
- Displaying irrational, inappropriate, or other concerning behaviors.
- Engaging in concerning discussion of weapons, harm, or violence, or bringing weapons to the workplace.

Employees who are victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking outside of the workplace are supported in taking steps to secure their safety and obtain necessary services. Employees are encouraged to timely inform the Personnel Department any protective or restraining order that they have obtained that lists the workplace as a protected area. The Personnel Department can provide Employee Assistance Program and additional resources, and provide information on available leave benefits.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Code of Conduct

SECTION:	Code of Conduct Policies Section E-4	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

Houston County is committed to providing a workplace culture that prioritizes mutual respect, professionalism, safety and health, and effective workplace collaboration. The County maintains code of conduct expectations to support effective functioning of the workplace in accordance with professional standards of behavior, to ensure quality service delivery, and uphold public trust.

Policy

The County affirms its right and responsibility to develop and administer the policies, expectations, and general work rules necessary to ensure efficient operation of services, fair treatment, safe working conditions, and the overall maintenance of a respectful and effectively functioning work environment. The County retains all rights and privileges not specifically addressed in these Policies.

Employees are expected to adhere to rules and expectations of professional and ethical conduct and recognized business department in all matters associated with their County employment.

Examples of *unacceptable conduct* which may result in disciplinary action include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Conduct or performance which fails to satisfy the duties, responsibilities, quantity, quality, or safety rules of the job.
2. Criminal behavior that would raise questions about the employee's suitability for the job.
3. Insubordinate conduct, refusal to follow a supervisor's direction, or willful violation of a lawful regulation.
4. Restriction, interference, or harassment of others in the performance of job duties; engaging in behavior which distracts or disrupts the wellbeing of others or the effective functioning of the workplace.

5. Theft, gross negligence, or willful destruction or abuse of any County property or material; misappropriation, misuse, and/or mismanagement of County property or funds or data; falsifying or destroying County reports or records, including falsification of an employee's timecard; unauthorized access, removal, or misuse of County reports, records, or data; and surreptitiously recording.
6. Fighting, physical violence, making threats of violence, threatening gestures, possession of illegal and/or unauthorized weapons.
7. Reporting to work under the influence of alcohol, cannabis, drugs, or controlled substance, possession or consumption of same while on the job.
8. Excessive or unexcused absences, reporting to work late, or leaving work before the end of the scheduled shift.
9. The solicitation or acceptance of money, gifts, or valued items which may be construed as evidence of favoritism, coercion, unfair advantage, collusion or otherwise impacting the decisions of an employee in public matters.
10. The use or threatened use of political influence to exert pressure on any County employee or others for favors or to conduct actions contrary to these Policies.
11. Willful deception or misrepresentation or falsification of information on an employment application or during the pre-employment and onboarding process.
12. Reporting for a scheduled work assignment in clothing or appearance which an authorized supervisor has directed as not acceptable for the work assignment or disruptive to employees or the public.
13. Engaging in a conflict of interest and/or unapproved outside employment. Before engaging in any other employment or activity that may be or appears to be a conflict of interest, the employee shall obtain prior approval from the department head. A conflict of interest exists when the employees outside employment or activity is inconsistent, incompatible, or in conflict with County employment.
14. Misconduct or the violation of a general rule requiring the maintenance of good order and recognized business department.

The above list is not intended to be all-inclusive in defining prohibited behaviors or specifying standards of conduct or obligations which employees must observe. Houston County expects employees to observe professional and appropriate conduct at all times in association with their county employment. Violations or failure to meet appropriate conduct expectations may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Discipline and Discharge

SECTION:	Code of Conduct Policies Section E-5	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

The County administers a consistent and fair system of discipline to correct employee behavior or conduct, to intervene and guide employees toward performance that meets requirements, to ensure competent delivery of service, and to limit or eliminate misconduct and the associated negative effects and costs.

Policy

The County generally uses progressive discipline but maintains that any incident of employee misconduct or violation of policy may result in disciplinary action at any level, including discharge from employment, depending upon the circumstances and severity of the conduct or violation. Disciplinary action will be documented in writing and maintained in the employee's personnel file once the disciplinary action has reached its final disposition. The County retains all rights and privileges not specifically addressed in these Policies.

The supervisor shall inform the department head and the County Coordinator / HR Director prior to initiating disciplinary action to ensure consistency with organizational practices. The specific facts and circumstances of the situation will be reviewed, and the most appropriate disciplinary action applied.

Employees shall be permitted to respond to formal disciplinary action by preparing a written response to the disciplining authority and having that response placed in their personnel file.

Disciplinary action will be in one of the following forms:

- Documented Verbal Warning
- Written Warning
- Suspension
- Demotion
- Discharge

Discharge of Non-Probationary Non-Veteran Employee:

A non-probationary employee may be removed from continued employment with the County for cause, following the use of progressive discipline or in situations where remedial action is not deemed effective or appropriate.

Discharge of a Non-Probationary Veteran:

An honorably discharged veteran, as defined in the Minnesota Veterans Preference Act, who is an employee of the County and covered by these policies, who is being considered for termination of employment by discharge, shall receive a notice of intent to discharge prior to any action being taken. The written notice shall include the basis for the intent to discharge and notice of the right to request a hearing before the Personnel Board of Appeals in accordance with the Personnel Board of Appeals Procedural Rules, or a hearing before an arbitrator in accordance with state law. Requests for a hearing in accordance with the Veterans Preference Act must be in writing to the County Coordinator / HR Director. A veteran notified of the intent to discharge may be suspended with pay, benefits, and employment status until a final determination is made.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Grievance Procedures

SECTION:	Code of Conduct Policies Section E-6	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Policy

The County of Houston wishes to address employee grievances by providing standard procedures for their resolution.

Limitations

An employee who commences a grievance proceeding under the provisions of a collective bargaining union is not allowed to grieve the same issue a second time under these rules. Similarly commencement of a grievance proceeding under these rules shall preclude the employee from grieving the same issue under a collective bargaining agreement.

Step I:

An employee having a grievance should present the grievance to his/her immediate supervisor within seven calendar days after the event causing the grievance. The employee may be accompanied by counsel of his/her choice. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to discuss it with the employee and give an oral answer to the employee within five working days from the time the grievance was initially presented. In such cases where there is not a supervisor between the employee and the department Head, the grievance shall be presented directly to the department head as set forth in Step II.

Step II:

A grievance not resolved in Step I may be appealed to Step II. The grievance should be presented to the department head in writing. Included shall be:

1. The nature of the grievance.
2. The facts on which the grievance is based.
3. The policy or rule allegedly violated.
4. The remedy requested.

The Step II grievance should be presented to the department head within fourteen calendar days from the time of the supervisor's response.

The department head shall:

1. Investigate the grievance.
2. Discuss it with the employee.
3. Give a written answer to the employee within five working days following the meeting with the employee.

Step III:

A grievance not resolved in Step II may be appealed to Step III. The grievances should be presented in writing to the Human Resources Director within fourteen calendar days from the time of the department head response. The grievance shall include:

1. The nature of the grievance.
2. The facts on which the grievance is based.
3. The policy or rule allegedly violated.
4. The remedy requested.

The County Coordinator / HR Director shall investigate the alleged violation, review the alleged violation with the County Board, and present the decision to the employee, in writing, within twenty calendar days following the receipt of the appealed grievance.

Time Limits

If the grievance is not presented in the time periods stated above, it is considered waived. If a grievance is not appealed to the next step within the specified time limit, it is considered settled on the basis of the last answer. If the proper authority does not answer a grievance within the time limits, the employee shall treat the grievance as denied and may immediately appeal the grievance to the next step. The time limits of each step may be extended by mutual agreement of both parties.

Grievances are disputes or disagreements as to the interpretation or application of the specific terms and conditions of a labor agreement or County policies. Grievances may be filed by any employee regardless of whether or not the employee is a member of an employee organization.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Political Activity

SECTION:	Code of Conduct Policies Section E-7	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

The County has an obligation to define and support appropriate standards of conduct for employees in the area of political activity in relation to their County position.

Policy

As public employees, County staff shall adhere to certain limitations on the use of County time and County property for political efforts.

All County employees have the right to vote as they please, to express their opinions on political subjects, and retain membership in political parties.

Candidate for Public Office:

Any non-elected department head or employee seeking public office must devote full-time energies to normal County employment and may not campaign during normal working hours.

An employee seeking public office must notify their department head and the County Coordinator / HR Director so that a determination can be made as to whether the position the employee occupies with the County would be in conflict with the candidacy for the public office the employee is seeking.

If the employee fails to provide proper notification of their candidacy, the County Coordinator / HR Director shall consult with the County Attorney for determination of any conflict of interest. If a finding of a conflict is made, the employee shall be required to take a leave of absence without pay until the first business day following the election, at which the outcome of the election contest is determined.

Upon election, the employee must immediately notify their department head in writing. If the department head determines that the duties of the elective office conflict with the proper discharge of County responsibilities, the employee will be required to take a leave of absence or be separated from the County service.

Prohibited Activities:

The following employee political activity is strictly prohibited:

- Using official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with, or affecting the result of, an election or nomination for office.
- Using official authority or influence to compel any officer or employee to apply for membership in, or become a member of, any organization.
- Directly or indirectly coercing or attempting to coerce or command a state or local officer or employee to pay, lend, or contribute anything of value for political purposes.
- Soliciting or receiving funds during hours of employment.
- Placing or distributing campaign materials within the established election areas of the government center.
- Wearing buttons, apparel, or other regalia at work within the established election areas of the government center which feature a political party, candidate or issue which is on the ballot in the current election.

Legislative Protocol for Employees:

- Employees are expected to confine their efforts to the County's current legislative agenda if they choose to lobby on a policy issue that would affect the operations of the County.
- Any legislative participation shall be immediately communicated to the County Coordinator / HR Director.
- If the issue has not been addressed by the County's legislative agenda, a County Board position should be sought prior to any lobbying effort.
- An employee who lobbies in a professional capacity, either at the request of a legislator or a professional association, shall note in their testimony that they speak as a professional and not as a County representative.
- The County Coordinator / HR Director or designated personnel will organize the County's efforts.
- Employees do not speak for the County Board, unless specifically assigned to do so.
- When the County is paying the dues for membership in a professional association, employees shall not take a position within that professional association that is inconsistent with County Board policy.
- Employees and appointed representatives shall notify the County Coordinator / HR Director of a pending appointment to an advisory board or task force of a political subdivision initiated outside of the scope of County Board authority. When appropriate, the County Coordinator / HR Director will notify the County Board.

This policy applies to all employees and respective appointed Board members that lobby as a representative of Houston County.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Conflict of Interest

SECTION:	Code of Conduct Policies Section E-8	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

All counties in Minnesota are required to establish ethical standards of conduct for all employees and officials by setting forth those acts or actions that are incompatible with the best interests of the county, and by directing disclosure by such officials of private financial or other interests in matters affecting the county.

The Office of the State Auditor review checks to make sure that Houston County reviews their Code of Ethics and Conflict of Interest Policy with all employees and officials annually.

Policy

The proper operation of democratic government requires that public officials be independent, impartial and responsible to the people; that government decisions and policy be made in the proper channels of the government structure; that public office or public employment not be used for personal gain; and that the public have confidence in the integrity of its government.

In recognition of these goals, there is hereby established a Code of Ethics for all Employees and Public Officials of Houston County. The purpose of this Code is to establish ethical standards of conduct for all such persons by setting forth those acts or actions that are incompatible with the best interests of the county, and by directing disclosure by such employees or officials of private financial or other interests in matters affecting the county. The provisions and purpose of this Code and such rules and regulations as may be established are hereby declared to be in the best interests of Houston County.

Ethical Principles

The ethical county employee and public official accepts the responsibility that his or her mission is that of servant and steward to the public.

The ethical county employee and public official should:

- Properly administer the affairs of the county.
- Promote decisions which only benefit the public interest.

- Actively promote public confidence in county government.
- Keep safe all funds and other properties of the county.
- Conduct and perform the duties of the office diligently and promptly dispose of the business of the county.
- Maintain a positive image to pass constant public scrutiny.
- Evaluate all decisions so that the best service or product is obtained at a minimal cost without sacrificing quality and fiscal responsibility.
- Inject the prestige of the office into everyday dealings with the public employees and associates.
- Maintain a respectful attitude toward employees, other public officials, colleagues and associates.
- Effectively and efficiently work with governmental agencies, political subdivisions and other organizations in order to further the interest of the county.
- Faithfully comply with all laws, regulations and policies applicable to the county and impartially apply them to everyone.

The ethical county employee and public official should not:

- Engage in outside interests that are not compatible with the impartial and objective performance of his or her duties.
- Improperly influence or attempt to influence other officials to act in his or her own benefit.
- Accept anything of value from any source which is offered to influence his or her action as a public official.

Ethical Considerations:

Public officials and employees are to serve all people fairly and equitably without regard to their personal or financial benefit. The credibility of Houston County government hinges on the proper discharge of duties in the public interest. Public officials and employees must assure that the independence of their judgment and actions, without any consideration for personal gain, is preserved. Specific ethical considerations are enumerated below for the guidance of public officials and employees, but these do not necessarily encompass all the possible ethical considerations that might arise.

Other Offices or Employment

An elected public official shall not hold another incompatible office as that term has been interpreted from time to time by statute, the courts, and by the Attorney General. Employees shall not hold any incompatible office, nor shall they engage in any regular outside employment without notice to and approval by their department head or County Board. Elected and appointed public officials shall not hold other office or employment which compromises the performance of their elected or appointed duties without disclosure of said office or employment and self-disqualification from any particular action which might be compromised by such office or employment.

Use of Confidential Information

No employee or public official shall use information gained as an employee or public official which is not generally made available to and/or is not known to the public, to directly or indirectly gain anything of value or to further their own private interest nor shall any employee or public official accept outside employment or involvement in a business or activity that will require the employee to disclose or use confidential information of the county.

Solicitation of or Receipt of Anything of Value

A public official or employee shall not solicit or receive anything of value from any person or association, directly or indirectly, in consideration of some action to be taken or not to be taken in the performance of the person's official duties.

However, the acceptance of any of the following shall not be in violation of this section:

- Gifts of nominal value;
- Plaques or similar mementos recognizing individual services in a field of specialty or services related to a charitable cause;
- Payment of reimbursement expenses for travel or meals, not to exceed actual expenses incurred, which are not reimbursed by the County of Houston, and which have been approved in advance by the employee's Supervisor as part of their work assignment; or
- Honoraria or expenses paid for papers, talks, demonstrations or appearances made by employees on their own time, for which they are not compensated by the County of Houston.

Holding Investments

No public official shall hold any investment which might compromise the performance of the public official's duties without disclosure of said investment and self-disqualification from any particular action which might be compromised by such investment, except as permitted by statute, such as Minnesota Statute 471.88.

Representation of Others

A public official or employee shall not represent persons or associations in dealings with the county in consideration of anything of value.

Financial Interest

Where an employee or public official or a member of the employee or public official's immediate family has a financial interest in any matter being considered by the county, such interest, if known, shall be disclosed by the employee or public official. If the employee or public official has such a financial interest or if the minor child of an employee or public official has such a financial interest, the employee or public official shall be disqualified from further participation in the matter.

County Property

No employee or public official shall use or allow the use of county time, supplies, or county owned or leased property and/or equipment, for the employee's private interest or any other use not in the interest of the county, except as provided for by law or other county policy.

Special Consideration

No employee or public official shall grant any special consideration, treatment, or advantage to any citizen beyond that which is available to every other citizen.

Authority

No employee or public official shall exceed his or her authority, or breach the law, or ask others to do so.

Giving Anything of Value

No elected public official shall give anything of value to potential voters in return for their votes, promises, or financial considerations which would be prohibited by the State Minnesota Fair Campaign Practices statute.

Public Funds, etc.

No employee or public official shall use public funds, personnel, facilities, or equipment for private gain or political campaign activities.

Expenses

Employees and public officials shall provide complete documentation to support requests for expense reimbursement. Expense reimbursement shall be made in accordance with County policy.

Donations

No employee or public official shall take an official action which will benefit any person or entity because of a donation of anything of value to the County by such person or entity.

Official Action

No employee or public official shall take an official action which will benefit any person or entity where such employee or public official would not have otherwise taken such action but for the employee or public official's family relationship, friendship, or business relationship with such person or entity.

Compliance with Law

Employees and Public officials shall comply with all county policies, local ordinances and State and Federal Statutes including, but not limited to, laws governing the functioning of counties and municipalities, their elected and appointed officials, and employees.

Acceptance of Advantage by County Employee

No employee or public official of the county in direct contact with suppliers or potential suppliers of the county, or who may directly or indirectly influence the purchase of products, evaluation of contracted services, or otherwise has official involvement in the purchase or contracting process may:

- Have any financial interest or have any personal beneficial interest directly or indirectly in contracts or purchase orders for goods or services used by, or purchased for resale or furnished to the county; or
- Accept directly or indirectly from a person, firm or corporation to which a contract or purchase order has been or may be made, a rebate, gift, money or anything of value other than items of nominal value. No such employee may further accept any promise, obligation or contract for future reward.

Ethical Considerations:

The following actions by an employee or public official of the County of Houston shall be deemed a conflict of interest:

- Use or attempted use of their official position to secure benefits, privileges, exemptions or advantages for themselves or their immediate family; or an organization with which they are associated which are different from those available to the general public.
- Acceptance of other employment or contractual relationships that will affect their independent judgment in the exercise of their official duties.
- Act as an agent or attorney in any action or matter pending before the County of Houston except in the proper discharge of official duties or on their own behalf; or
- The solicitation of a financial agreement for themselves or entity other than the county when the county is currently engaged in the provision of the services which are the subject of the agreement or where the county has expressed an intention to engage in competition for the provision of the services, unless the affected county agency waives this clause.

Determine of Conflicts of Interest

When an employee or public official believes the potential for a conflict of interest exists, it is the employee's duty to avoid the situation. A conflict of interest shall be deemed to exist when a review of the situation by the appropriate personnel (department head, County Coordinator / HR Director, County Attorney, or County Board) determines that any one of the following conditions are present:

- The use for private gain or advantage of county time, facilities, equipment or supplies; or badge, uniform, prestige or influence of county office, position or employment.
- Receipt or acceptance of any money or other things of value from anyone other than the county for the performance of an act which the employee or public official would be required or expected to perform in the regular course or hours of county employment or as part of their official county duties.
- Employment in or by a business which is subject to direct or indirect control, inspection, review, audit or enforcement by the employee or public official.

- The performance of an act in other than their official county capacity which may later be subject directly or indirectly to the control, inspection, review, audit or enforcement by the employee or public.

If the appropriate personnel determine that a conflict of interest exists, the job duty shall be assigned to another person who does not have a conflict of interest. If it is not possible to assign the job duty to another employee or public official, all interested persons shall be notified of the conflict of interest and the original employee may proceed with the job duty or assignment.

Special Considerations – Committee Members

Situations can arise where a member of a Commission, a Board, or a committee abstains from voting because of a conflict of interest, but his or her abstention becomes a vote either for or against the matter because a majority is required to pass or reject that matter. This can happen where four-fifths vote is needed to pass an issue, or the vote has to be a clear majority, and a split vote does not pass or reject. When this happens, the County Attorney must be consulted and the final vote should carry public notice explaining what took place, and how it was resolved.

Disclosure of Financial Interests – Elected Officials

Not later than ninety (90) days after the date of approval of this code, each public official of the County shall file as a public record, in the Personnel Department of the County, a statement containing the following:

- A list naming all business enterprises known by the public official to be licensed by or to be doing business with the County which the public official or any member of the public official's immediate family is connected as an employee, officer, owner, investor, creditor of, director, trustee, partner, advisor, or consultant.
- A list of the public officials and members of the public officials' immediate family's interests in real property located in the County or which may be competing with the interests of the County located elsewhere, other than property occupied as a personal residence.

Each person who enters upon duty after the date of this code into an office or position as to which a statement is required by this code shall file such a statement on forms to be provided by the County not less than thirty (30) days after the date of his/her entrance on duty.

Each person who made an initial filing shall file a new statement by January 30 of each year thereafter giving the information called for above as of the time of the new statement. If a change in financial interest or property ownership occurs between filings, a new filing shall be made within thirty (30) days of the change.

The interest of any member of the immediate family shall be considered to be an interest of a person required to file a statement by or pursuant to this ordinance.

This policy shall not be construed to require the filing of any information relating to any person's connection with or interest in any professional society or any charitable, religious, social,

fraternal, educational, recreational, public service, civil, or political organization, or any similar organization not conducted as a business enterprise and which is not engaged in the ownership or conduct of a business enterprise.

However, if any such organization seeking any action or benefit comes before a County Commission or the Board, then membership in the organization shall be a potential conflict of interest and must be reported as such to the Personnel Department by the public official in an amended disclosure statement. The other stipulations of this code then apply.

The Personnel Department shall inform each person who is required to file of the time and place for filing. The Personnel Department shall inform the Board whenever a person who is required to file a statement fails to do so.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Commercial Driver's License (CDL)

SECTION:	Code of Conduct Policies Section E-9	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

To comply with state and federal regulations and protect County employees and resources, certain employees of Houston County are expected to retain a valid CDL, including necessary endorsements, as required to perform work outlined in their job description.

Policy

Employees who drive without a valid CDL shall be considered as acting outside the scope of their employment and are subject to disciplinary action in accordance with County Personnel Rules & Regulations and the applicable Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Notification:

The County shall inform each employee of the license requirement for their job as well as the reporting requirements should that license be suspended, revoked, or modified.

Upon hire, the employee shall provide the CDL for the County to copy for its records.

Each employee required to have a CDL shall notify the County upon renewal or revocation of the license within seven (7) days of that action. If an off-duty or out-of-state action causes revocation or suspension, the employee shall notify their immediate supervisor or manager within seven (7) days of the occurrence. The supervisor or manager, or the department head, shall notify the Personnel Department

An employee who is called in to work due to emergency conditions shall notify the County if they are not fit and able to operate the motor vehicle due to impairment.

Training & Education:

The County shall notify each employee required to maintain a CDL of the current requirements to maintain such a license in orientation, and again on a periodic basis. The education should include both basic requirements and recent policy or procedure revisions.

Pre-Hearing Loss of Driving Privilege / Alternative Assignment:

If an employee who is required to maintain a CDL loses that license temporarily, the employee may be allowed to report to work only when the department head determines that work which does not require a CDL is available from the time the license is lost until the hearing is decided. The employee may use Vacation Leave, accrued compensatory time, or time off without pay for the hours that the employee is unable to work because of license suspension. This does not include working or using compensated time during any disciplinary suspension without pay. Medical or other leave time may be appropriate in some situations, including inpatient chemical dependency treatment. The employee shall address these matters with their department head and Personnel Department

The County may be able to continue the employment of the individual who has lost the CDL in situations where driving is a minor or occasional part of the job and the employee is cooperative and willing to revise schedules or other conditions to modify their assignment while the license is not valid.

Post-Conviction:

Once the employee's case has been decided by the DMV or the Courts, the employee may request alternate duties or schedules, a modified work assignment, or a leave of absence to accommodate the time the license is invalid, not to exceed 120 days. If the alternate work assignment is in a different classification and pay grade, the employee's wages shall be adjusted to reflect that classification for the duration of the assignment. An employee assigned to a temporary classification or alternative assignment, or on a leave of absence, is expected to return to their previous classification upon having their CDL restored.

If an employee loses the CDL for a period of time in excess of one year, the employee shall be discharged for just cause.

Multiple Offenses:

If an employee who is required to maintain a CDL for work loses their CDL for more than 30 days, more than once within a three (3) year period, the employee shall be discharged for just cause.

Connection with Drug & Alcohol Policy:

An employee who is required to have a CDL is also subject to the County Drug & Alcohol Testing Policy which addresses pre-employment, reasonable suspicion, random, and follow-up testing.

Purchase of Licenses:

The County will not permit the use of County funds to purchase driver's licenses for County employees. This includes reimbursement for driver's licenses purchased by County employees.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Emergency Closure of County Government Offices and Adverse Weather Conditions

SECTION:	Workplace Safety & Health Policies Section F-1	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Policy

County offices shall be open for business on all business days except legal holidays, holidays established by the County Board of Commissioners, and specific dangerous situations. County facilities will generally remain open during adverse weather. Except in the most severe emergencies, County offices will remain open and operating with full service if at all possible. Should the weather or other conditions be sufficiently severe or other dangerous situations occur, such that the interests of the public and/or employees are best served by closing County offices, the Chairperson of the board, County Coordinator / HR Director, Sheriff, Engineer, and Emergency Management Coordinator make such decision.

Procedure

Decisions to cancel departmental programs, events, or meetings including members of the public or those held outside of regular business hours will be made by the department head. The department head is required to promptly notify the County Coordinator / HR Director regarding any cancellations.

During adverse weather conditions, based on individual circumstances and subject to the employee reaching an agreement with the department head as to the severity of the inclement weather, employees should evaluate the weather and road conditions in deciding to report to work or requesting to leave early. Employees are required to follow supervisor notification procedures as defined by their department when requesting authorization for absence due to adverse weather conditions.

Employees not reporting to work due to a weather event will generally be allowed to use accrued vacation time or compensatory time. Alternatively, with supervisor approval, an employee may be permitted to modify their typical work schedule or make other reasonable schedule adjustments such as flexing their schedule during that workweek. The department head will ensure there is sufficient staff on duty for the department to function.

Sheriff's Office licensed peace officers, 911 dispatchers, correctional officers, and Highway Department employees whose jobs require a CDL are generally required to report to work regardless of conditions. There may be instances where additional critical positions may also be required to report to work regardless of conditions, as determined by the department head.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Cell Phone and Wireless Communications

SECTION:	Workplace Safety & Health Policies Section F-2	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

This policy is intended to define acceptable and unacceptable uses of wireless communications devices, including but not limited to cellular telephones and tablets, while engaged in activities or duties related to County employment. Its application is to ensure wireless communications device usage is consistent with the best interests of the County without unnecessary restriction of employees in the conduct of their duties. This policy will be implemented to prevent the improper use or abuse of wireless communications devices and to ensure that County employees exercise the highest standards of propriety in their use.

Policy

Wireless communications devices are intended for the use of County employees in the conduct of their work for the County. The County expects all employees who are required to drive as part of their job to drive safely and legally while on County business, including following the laws governing use of wireless communications devices while operating a motor vehicle.

Supervisors are responsible for the wireless communications devices assigned to their employees and will exercise discretion in their assigned use.

To ensure that wireless communications devices are used in a manner that supports and enhances effective County service and workplace performance, it is critical that the use of such devices:

- In no way limits the conduct of work of the employee or other employees.
- Does not result in any personal profit gained or outside employment served.
- It is in accordance with all applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations.
- It is in accordance with County policies and conduct expectations.

Procedure

All employees are expected to follow applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations regarding the use of wireless communications devices at all times. Employees whose job

responsibilities include regular or occasional driving and who use a wireless communications device for business use, are expected to refrain from using their wireless communications device while driving a motor vehicle, except in a legally permitted manner that will not detract from ability to safely operate the motor vehicle. Safety must come before all other concerns. Wireless communications devices shall not be used while operating machinery or heavy equipment.

- In accordance with Minnesota law, employees are required to use hands-free operations or lawfully stop in an area not designed or used for vehicular traffic and not obstructing traffic or pull off into a parking lot and safely park the vehicle, before placing or accepting a call. Employees are encouraged to refrain from discussion of complicated or emotional matters and to keep their eyes on the road while driving at all times. Special care should be taken in situations where there is traffic or inclement weather, or the employee is driving in an unfamiliar area.
- Reading text messages, composing or sending text messages while holding the device, making or receiving phone calls while holding the device, emailing, video calling, scrolling/typing, accessing a webpage, or using non-navigation applications while driving is strictly prohibited.
- In accordance with state law, there is an exception to hands free cellular phone operations to obtain emergency assistance to report a traffic accident, medical emergency or serious traffic hazard or prevent a crime from being committed. There is also a state law exception for authorized emergency vehicles while in the performance of official duties.
- Employees who are charged with traffic violations resulting from the use of a wireless communications device will be solely responsible for all liabilities that result from such actions.

Supervisors may prohibit employees from carrying wireless communications devices during working hours, while performing specific work duties, or when entering certain work areas.

Use of public resources by County employees for personal gain and/or private use including, but not limited to, outside employment or political campaign purposes, is prohibited and subject to disciplinary action which may include termination and/or criminal prosecution, depending on the circumstances.

Incidental and occasional personal use may be permitted when this type of use is authorized by the department head. Personal calls must not interfere with working operations and are to be completed as quickly as possible. Participating in excessive or disruptive personal calls may be addressed as a performance issue.

Employees should be aware that wireless communications device data and records about County business are subject to the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, whether the employee is using a County provided device or participating in a program that permits both County and personal use of the same device (such as an employee-owned device with County reimbursement plan). For example, in the event of a data request potentially involving wireless

device data, the County would be under the obligation to determine what information is public data and what information is private data and would need access to the employee's wireless communications device records, and potentially the device itself, in order to gather and provide the data that is requested.

The County reserves the right to inspect any wireless communications device used as part of County employment at any time in order to verify or maintain compliance with County policies, respond to data requests, or to monitor employee performance.

Employees who abuse or misuse wireless communications devices may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Communicable Disease Prevention Management

SECTION:	Workplace Safety & Health Policies Section F-3	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

Houston County is committed to providing a safe and healthy work and community environment. In pursuit of this goal, the following Communicable Disease Prevention and Management Policy is provided to eliminate or minimize occupational exposure to communicable diseases while outlining consistent procedures for communicable disease management in the workplace.

Communicable diseases include but are not limited to tuberculosis; chicken pox; shingles; infectious mononucleosis; MRSA; severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) or other coronaviruses; measles; pertussis (whooping cough); meningitis; diphtheria, pandemic influenza and other diseases as reportable to the Minnesota Department of Health. The County may choose to broaden this definition within its best interest based on available data and/or in accordance with information received through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) or other qualified health authorities. Each case of communicable disease is different and will, therefore, be treated according to the individual facts and circumstances on a case-by-case basis.

The scope of this policy covers communicable diseases that pose a direct threat, or a significant risk of substantial harm to the health or safety of the individual or others that cannot be eliminated or reduced by reasonable accommodation. The application of this policy is not strictly limited to this definition however and will be assessed based on the specific facts and circumstances of the particular scenario at hand and in accordance with information received through the CDC or other qualified health authorities.

Where applicable, Houston County's policies addressing applicable employee leaves of absence should be consulted, as well as federal, state, and local health authorities.

Responsibilities

Employees Responsibilities:

1. In all cases of health-related absence due to a communicable disease that poses a direct threat or its potential, or that meets criteria of comparable gravity as defined or

communicated by a qualified health authority such as the CDC, the affected employee must notify the Personnel Department immediately of such condition. Notice should be provided via email, phone, fax or other non-in-person methods.

2. Anyone who discovers evidence of, or obtains knowledge of, a communicable disease in the workplace that could pose a direct threat or its potential, or that meets criteria of comparable gravity as defined or communicated by a qualified health authority such as the CDC, should report such findings to the Personnel Department
3. Help prevent the spread of communicable disease in the workplace by practicing general hygiene and precautionary measures including staying home when sick and proper handwashing.

Department Management Responsibilities:

1. Management should be sensitive to employees with these condition(s) and ensure that they are treated appropriately in accordance with County policies, official health and safety guidance, and in accordance with applicable law. Precautions should be taken to ensure that an employee's condition does not present a health and/or safety threat to other employees, clients, or the public.
2. Treat employees' health condition and information as personal and private. Health data is private data and may not be released to the public or to fellow employees without a strict observance of data privacy rights of the employee.
3. Contact the Personnel Department for assistance with managing a situation that may fall within the scope of this policy to ensure that each situation is handled appropriately and in accordance with current legal guidance.
4. Be sensitive and responsive to employees' concerns regarding communicable disease and workplace exposure, offering employee education available through federal, state, and local health authorities.

Personnel Department Responsibilities:

1. As appropriate to the situation and in collaboration with federal, state, or local health authorities, provide education as available to management and employees on
2. communicable diseases that are impacting the workplace. May assist in coordinating training or organizational response initiatives.
3. Provide referral to and/or consult with federal, state, and local health authorities as needed.
4. Provide or facilitate consultation to assist employees in managing leaves and other benefits.

5. As appropriate to the situation, consult with County Facility / Maintenance Department to appropriately disinfect workspaces.

Workplace Health and Safety

The United States Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)'s General Duty Clause, 29 U.S.C. § 654 requires employers to provide a workplace free from recognized hazards. If the County receives notice that an employee has a communicable disease that could endanger the health of others in the workplace, or poses a direct threat to the individual or to others, it shall make decisions regarding a reasonable accommodation, if any, on a case-by-case basis, based on the health and physical conditions of the employee, and the health and safety of other persons with whom the employee will interact.

Houston County decisions involving persons who have communicable diseases shall be based on current and informed medical judgments concerning the disease, the risks of transmitting the illness to others, the symptoms and special circumstances of each individual who has a communicable disease, and a careful weighing of the identified risks and the available alternatives for responding to an employee with a communicable disease. Federal, state, and/or local health authorities may be consulted as needed.

An employee may be excluded from the workplace when:

- a) Public health officials isolate or quarantine an employee, or
- b) Public health officials or a qualified healthcare provider advise that the employee should or must be absent from work to prevent disease transmission to others, or
- c) Additional isolation or quarantine recommendations or requirements become available from federal, state, or local health authorities.

In the instance of isolation, quarantine, or recommended period of absence, it is the employee's responsibility to provide Houston County with acceptable confirmation from a public health or other medical official of any isolation or quarantine period, or recommended or mandated period of absence, via email, phone, fax or other non-in-person methods. Standard reporting, documentation, or verification requirements may be modified by the County in accordance with specific circumstances and current guidance by federal, state, or local health authorities.

If any of the above conditions a), b), or c) occur, the employee may be advised not to report to work for a specified period of time. In such cases, Houston County may require an employee to take available paid leave or unpaid leave until the specified period of time ends and until the employee meets criteria to safely return to work based on the guidance of a qualified medical authority appropriate to the situation.

An employee may return to work when criteria appropriate to the situation are met. This will generally mean that an employee may return to work:

- Following provision of a release to return to work by a qualified medical professional, or in certain situations based on meeting criteria to safely return as defined by a qualified medical authority, as appropriate to the situation; and
- Upon verification of required documentation and authorization by the County Coordinator / HR Director and
- When there is no current risk of transmission, or direct threat of the communicable disease to others; and
- Provided the employee is able to continue to perform the job position's essential functions with or without reasonable accommodation.

Houston County reserves the right to exclude a person with a communicable disease from the workplace facilities, programs, and functions if a reasonable determination is made that such restriction is necessary for the welfare of the person who has the communicable disease and/or the welfare of others within the workplace or members of the public. Such actions will be taken based upon recommendations and/or requirements from federal, state, or local health authorities or guidance from a qualified healthcare provider.

Unless otherwise specified, usual attendance and leave policies and procedures, including authorized telework/remote work arrangements, as well as applicable provisions of collective bargaining agreements will remain in place. Individuals who believe they may face particular challenges reporting to work during a communicable disease outbreak should take steps to develop any necessary contingency plans in coordination with their supervisor and the Personnel Department.

Data relating to matters of employee health and medical concerns will be handled in accordance with the law.

Houston County prohibits illegal discrimination, harassment and retaliation against employees who have a communicable disease.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

DOT Drug and Alcohol Testing for Commercial Drivers

SECTION:	Workplace Safety & Health Policies Section F-4	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

Houston County has a vital interest in maintaining safe, healthful, and efficient working conditions for employees, as well as safe roadways for all community members and travelers. The County recognizes that individuals who are impaired because of drugs and/or alcohol may jeopardize the safety and health of other workers, as well as themselves, and other community members and travelers. Alcohol and drug abuse can cause unsatisfactory job performance, increased tardiness and absenteeism, increased accidents and workers' compensation claims, among other workplace concerns. The use, possession, manufacture, sale, transportation, or other distribution of controlled substances or controlled substance paraphernalia; and the unauthorized use, possession, transportation, sale, or other distribution of alcohol are contrary to this policy.

Policy

In response to regulations issued by United States Department of Transportation (DOT), the County has established this Policy on Alcohol and Controlled Substances applicable to employees who hold a commercial driver's license (CDL) or commercial learner's permit (CLP) to perform their duties.

Given the significant dangers of alcohol and controlled substance use, each applicant and driver must abide by this policy as a term and condition of hiring and continued employment. Moreover, the County is required by federal law to implement and maintain a policy which addresses certain requirements related to drug and alcohol use and associated testing for its CDL drivers.

Procedure

To ensure this policy is clearly communicated to all drivers and applicants, and in order to comply with applicable federal law, drivers and applicants are required to review this policy, sign the "Acknowledgment of DOT Drug and Alcohol Policy" form, and return this documentation to the Personnel Department

Because changes in applicable law and the County's practices and procedures may occur from time to time, this policy may change in the future, and nothing in this policy is intended to be a contract, promise, or guarantee the County will follow any particular course of action, disciplinary, rehabilitative, or otherwise, except as required by law. This policy does not in any way affect or change the status of any at-will employee.

Any revisions to federal or state law will take precedent over this policy to the extent the policy has not incorporated those revisions.

Person's Subject to Testing and Types of Tests:

All employees are subject to testing whose job duties include performing "safety-sensitive duties" on behalf of the County in commercial motor vehicles that:

1. Have a gross combination weight rating or gross combination weight of 26,001 pounds or more, whichever is greater, inclusive of a towed unit(s) with a gross vehicle weight rating or gross vehicle weight of more than 10,000 pounds, whichever is greater; or
2. Have a gross vehicle weight rating or gross vehicle weight of 26,001 or more pounds whichever is greater; or
3. Are designed to transport 16 or more passengers, including the driver; or
4. Are of any size and are used in the transportation of materials found to be hazardous for the purposes of the Hazardous Materials Transportation Act (49 U.S.C. § 5103(b)) and which require the motor vehicle to be placarded under the Hazardous Materials Regulations (49 CFR Part 172, Subpart F).

The following functions are considered safety-sensitive:

- All time waiting to be dispatched to drive a commercial motor vehicle
- All time inspecting, servicing, or conditioning a commercial motor vehicle
- All time driving at the controls of the commercial motor vehicle
- All other time in or upon a commercial motor vehicle (except time spent resting in a sleeper berth)
- All time loading or unloading a commercial motor vehicle, attending the same, giving or receiving receipts for shipments being loaded or unloaded, or remaining in readiness to operate the vehicle
- All time repairing, obtaining assistance, or attending to a disabled commercial motor vehicle.

The County may test any applicant to whom a conditional offer of employment has been made and any driver for controlled substance and alcohol under any of the following circumstances:

Pre-Employment Testing:

All applicants, including current employees seeking a transfer, promotion, or demotion, applying for a position where duties include performing safety-sensitive duties described above, will be required to take a drug test prior to the first time a driver performs a safety-sensitive function for the County, or in the new position. A driver may not perform safety-sensitive functions unless the driver has received a controlled substance test result from the Medical Review Officer (“MRO”) indicating a verified negative test result. In addition to pre-employment-controlled substance testing, applicants will be required to authorize in writing former employers to release alcohol test results of .04 or greater, positive controlled substance test results, refusals to test, other violations of drug and alcohol testing regulations, and completion of return to duty requirements within the preceding three (3) years.

The County will contact the candidate’s DOT regulated previous and current employers within the last three (3) years for drug and alcohol test results as referenced above and review the testing history if feasible before the employee first performs safety-sensitive functions for the County. Effective June 1, 2025, the County will also conduct a full query of the Department of Transportation (DOT) Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration’s (FMCSA) Clearinghouse for all candidates. In addition, at least once every 365-day period, the County will conduct a limited query of the Clearinghouse for each currently employed CDL driver.

If the limited query reveals that the Clearinghouse has information about resolved or unresolved drug and alcohol program violations by a candidate or current employee, the candidate or employee will be asked to provide electronic consent to a full query of the Clearinghouse. In the event a full query of the Clearinghouse reveals unresolved violation information for a candidate or current employee, the driver will not be permitted to perform safety-sensitive functions, including the operation of a commercial motor vehicle and, in the case of a candidate, may have their conditional offer of employment rescinded or, in the case of a current employee, may be subject to discipline up to and including termination of employment.

Post-Accident Testing:

As soon as is practicable following an accident involving a commercial motor vehicle operating on a public road, the County will test each surviving driver for controlled substances and alcohol when the following occurs:

- The accident involves a fatality; or
- The driver receives a citation for a moving traffic violation from the accident and an injury is treated away from the accident scene; or
- The driver receives a citation for a moving traffic violation from the accident and a vehicle is required to be towed from the accident scene.

The following chart summarizes when DOT post-accident testing needs to be conducted:

Type of accident involved	Citation issued to the DOT covered CDL driver?	Test must be performed by the County
Human fatality	YES	YES
	NO	YES
Bodily injury with immediate medical treatment away from the scene	YES	YES
	NO	NO
Disabling damage to any motor vehicle requiring tow away	YES	YES
	NO	NO

A driver subject to post-accident testing must remain readily available or the driver will be deemed to have refused to submit to testing. This requirement to remain ready for testing does not preclude a driver from leaving the scene of an accident for the period necessary to obtain assistance in responding to the accident or to obtain necessary medical care.

Post-Accident Controlled Substance Testing:

Drivers are required to submit a urine sample for post-accident controlled substance testing as soon as possible. If the driver is not tested within thirty-two (32) hours after the accident, the County will cease its attempts to test the driver and prepare and maintain on file a record stating why the test was not promptly administered.

Post-Accident Alcohol Testing:

Drivers are required to submit to post-accident alcohol testing as soon as possible. After an accident, consuming alcohol is prohibited until the driver is tested. If the driver is not tested within two (2) hours after the accident, the County will prepare and maintain on file a record stating why the test was not administered within that time. If eight (8) hours have elapsed since the accident and the driver has not submitted to an alcohol test, the County will cease its attempts to test the driver and prepare and maintain on file a record stating why the test was not administered.

The County may accept the results of a blood or breath test in place of an alcohol test and urine test for the use of controlled substances if:

- The tests are conducted by federal, state, or local officials having independent authority for the test; and
- The tests conform to applicable federal, state, or local testing requirements; and
- The test results can be obtained by the County.

Whenever such a test is conducted by a law enforcement officer, the driver must contact the County and immediately report the existence of the test, providing the name, badge number, and telephone number of the law enforcement officer who conducted the test.

Random Testing:

Every driver will be subject to unannounced alcohol and controlled substance testing on a random selection basis. Drivers will be selected for testing by use of a scientifically valid method under which each driver has an equal chance of being selected each time selections are made. These random tests will be conducted throughout the calendar year. Each driver who is notified of selection for random testing must cease performing safety-sensitive functions and report to the designated test site immediately. It is mathematically possible that a driver may be selected and tested more than once, and others not at all, based on following a valid random selection method and the fact that all drivers are included in the selection pool for each draw. If a driver is selected for a random test while the driver is absent, on leave or away from work, that driver may be required to undergo the test upon return to work.

Federal law requires the County to test at a rate of at least fifty percent (50%) of its average number of drivers for controlled substance each year, and to test at a rate of at least ten percent (10%) of its average number of drivers for alcohol each year. These minimum testing rates are subject to change by the DOT.

Reasonable Suspicion Testing:

When a supervisor has reasonable suspicion to believe a driver has engaged in conduct prohibited by federal law or this policy, the County will require the driver to submit to an alcohol and/or controlled substance test.

The County's determination that reasonable suspicion exists to require the driver to undergo an alcohol test will be based on "specific, contemporaneous, articulable observations concerning the appearance, behavior, speech, or body odors of the driver." In the case of controlled substances, the observations may include indications of the chronic and withdrawal effects of a controlled substance.

The required observations for reasonable suspicion testing will be made by a trained supervisor or other person designated by the County who has received appropriate training in identification of actions, appearance and conduct of a driver which are indicative of the use of alcohol or controlled substance. These observations leading to an alcohol or controlled substance test, will be reflected in writing and signed by the supervisor or other trained individual who made the observations. The record will be retained by the County. The person who makes the determination that reasonable suspicion exists to conduct testing, will not be the person conducting the testing, which shall instead be conducted by another qualified person.

Alcohol testing is authorized only if the observations are made during, just before, or just after the driver has ceased performing safety-sensitive functions. If a reasonable suspicion alcohol test is not administered within two (2) hours following the determination of reasonable suspicion, the County will prepare and maintain on file a record stating the reasons the alcohol test was not promptly administered. If a reasonable suspicion alcohol test is not administered within eight (8) hours following the determination of reasonable suspicion, the County will

prepare and maintain on file a record stating the reasons the alcohol test was not administered and will cease attempts to conduct the alcohol test.

Notwithstanding the absence of a reasonable suspicion test, no driver may report for duty or remain on duty requiring the performance of safety-sensitive functions while the driver is under the influence of, or impaired by, alcohol, as shown by the behavioral, appearance, speech, and performance indicators of alcohol use, nor will the County permit the driver to perform or continue to perform safety-sensitive functions until (1) an alcohol test is administered and the driver's alcohol concentration is less than .02; or (2) twenty-four (24) hours have elapsed following the determination of reasonable suspicion.

Return-to-Duty Testing:

The County reserves the right to impose discipline against drivers who violate applicable FMCSA or DOT rules or this policy, subject to applicable personnel policy and collective bargaining agreements. Except as otherwise required by law, the County is not obligated to reinstate or requalify such drivers for a first positive test result.

Should the County consider reinstatement of a DOT covered driver, the driver must undergo a Substance Abuse Professional (SAP) evaluation and participate in any prescribed education/treatment, and successfully complete return-to-duty alcohol test with a result indicating an alcohol concentration of less than 0.02 and/or or a controlled substance test with a verified negative result, before the driver returns to duty requiring the performance of a safety-sensitive function. The SAP determines if the driver has completed the education/treatment as prescribed.

The employee is responsible for paying for all costs associated with the return-to-duty test. The controlled substance test will be conducted under direct observation.

Follow-Up Testing:

The County reserves the right to impose discipline against drivers who violate applicable FMCSA or DOT rules or this policy, subject to applicable personnel policies and collective bargaining agreements. Except as otherwise required by law, the County is not obligated to reinstate or requalify such drivers.

Should the County reinstate a driver following a determination by a Substance Abuse Professional (SAP) that the driver is in need of assistance in resolving problems associated with alcohol use and/or use of controlled substance, the County will ensure that the driver is subject to unannounced follow-up alcohol and/or controlled substance testing. The number and frequency of such follow-up testing will be directed by the SAP and will consist of at least six (6) tests in the first twelve (12) months following the driver's return to duty. Follow-up testing will not exceed sixty (60) months from the date of the driver's return to duty. The SAP may terminate the requirement for follow-up testing at any time after the first six tests have been administered, if the SAP determines such test is no longer necessary. The employee is responsible for paying for all costs associated with follow-up tests.

Follow-up alcohol testing will be conducted only when the driver is performing safety-sensitive functions, or immediately prior to or after performing safety-sensitive functions.

Cost of Required Testing:

The County will pay for the cost of pre-employment, post-accident, random, and reasonable suspicion controlled substance and alcohol testing requested or required of all job applicants and employees. The driver must pay for the cost of all requested confirmatory re-tests, return-to-duty, and follow-up testing.

Required Prior Controlled Substance and Alcohol Checks for Applicants:

The County will conduct drug and alcohol checks of applicants for employment to drive a commercial motor vehicle. Applicants must execute consent forms authorizing the County to obtain the required information from current and prior employers and from the FMCSA Clearinghouse. The County will obtain, pursuant to the applicant's written consent, information on the applicant's alcohol tests with a concentration result of 0.04 or greater, positive controlled substance test results, and refusals to be tested within the preceding three (3) years which are maintained by the applicant's previous employers.

The County will obtain all information concerning the applicant which is maintained by the applicant's previous employers within the preceding three (3) years pursuant to DOT and FMCSA controlled substance and alcohol testing regulations, as well as information maintained in the FMCSA's Clearinghouse pursuant to the applicant's electronic consent provided within the Clearinghouse.

In addition, the County will require the applicant to report whether they have tested positive or refused to test, on any pre-employment drug or alcohol test administered by an employer to which they applied, but where they did not obtain, safety-sensitive transportation work covered by DOT agency drug and alcohol testing rules during the past three years. The County will review such records, if feasible, prior to the first time a driver performs safety-sensitive functions.

Prohibited Conduct:

The following conduct is explicitly prohibited by applicable DOT and FMCSA regulations and therefore constitutes violation of County policy.

Driver Under the Influence of Alcohol When Reporting for Duty or While On-Duty:

No driver may report for duty or remain on duty requiring the performance of safety-sensitive functions while having an alcohol concentration of 0.04 or greater. Drivers reporting for duty or remaining on duty to perform safety-sensitive functions while having an alcohol concentration of 0.02, but less than 0.04, will be removed from duty for 24 hours, escorted home and placed on vacation leave, [OR paid time off (PTO) leave,] or compensatory time leave, or other appropriate leave of absence for hours missed from work.

On-Duty Use of Alcohol:

No driver performing safety-sensitive functions may use alcohol while on duty.

Pre-Duty Use of Alcohol:

No driver may perform safety-sensitive functions within four (4) hours after using alcohol. If an employee has had alcohol within four (4) hours, the driver is required to promptly notify their supervisors, and such notification must be provided before performing any safety-sensitive functions.

Alcohol Use Following an Accident:

No driver required to take a post-accident alcohol test may use alcohol for eight (8) hours following the accident, or until the driver undergoes a post-accident alcohol test, whichever occurs first.

Refusal to Submit to a Required Alcohol or Controlled Substance Test:

No applicant or driver may refuse to submit to pre-employment, post-accident, random, reasonable suspicion, or follow-up alcohol or controlled substance testing.

In the event an applicant or driver does in fact refuse to submit to required alcohol or controlled substance testing, no test will be conducted. Refusal by a driver to submit to controlled substance or alcohol testing will be considered a positive test result, will cause disqualification from performing safety-sensitive functions, and may appear on the driver's permanent record.

Drivers who refuse to submit to testing will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination of employment. In accordance with the FMCSA Clearinghouse reporting requirements, beginning January 6, 2020, the County will report a driver's refusal to submit to a DOT test for drug or alcohol use to the Clearinghouse within three (3) business days. If an applicant refuses to submit to pre-employment controlled substance testing, any applicable conditional offer will be withdrawn.

For purposes of this section, a driver is considered to have refused to submit to an alcohol or controlled substance test when the driver:

- Fails to provide adequate breath for alcohol testing without a valid medical explanation after the driver has received notice of the requirement for breath testing.
- Fails to provide adequate urine for controlled substance testing without a genuine inability to provide a specimen (as determined by a medical evaluation), after the driver has received notice of the requirement for urine testing.
- Fails to report for testing within a reasonable period of time, as determined by the County.
- Fails to remain at a testing site until testing is complete.
- In the case of directly observed or monitored collection, fails to permit observation or monitoring.

- Fails or declines to take a second test as required by the County and/or collector.
- Fails to undergo a medical examination as directed by the County pursuant to federal law.
- Refuses to complete and sign the alcohol testing form, to provide a breath or saliva sample, to provide an adequate amount of breath, or otherwise fails to cooperate in any way that prevents the completion of the testing process.
- Engages in conduct that clearly obstructs the test process.

Altering or Attempting to Alter a Urine Sample or Breath Test:

A driver altering or attempting to alter a urine sample or controlled substance test, or substituting or attempting to substitute a urine sample, will be subject to providing a specimen under direct observation. Both specimens will be subject to laboratory testing. In such case, the employee may be subject to immediate termination of employment and any job offer made to an applicant will be immediately withdrawn.

Controlled Substance Use:

No driver may report for duty or remain on duty requiring the performance of safety-sensitive functions when the driver uses any controlled substance, except when the use is pursuant to the instructions of a licensed medical practitioner who has advised the driver in writing the substance does not adversely affect the driver's ability to safely operate a commercial motor vehicle. Drivers must forward this information regarding therapeutic controlled substance use to the MRO immediately after receiving any such advice. The MRO may, but does not have to, certify the driver.

Cannabis / Marijuana / THC:

All employees covered by this policy are regulated by federal law, and federal law preempts state laws related to cannabis. State initiatives have no bearing on the Department of Transportation's regulated drug testing program. The DOT's Drug and Alcohol Testing Regulation, 49 CFR Part 40, does not authorize the use of Schedule I drugs, including cannabis, for any reason.

Having a medical marijuana card and/or a cannabis prescription from a physician does not allow any employee to use or possess that drug in the County's workplace. The federal government classifies cannabis as an illegal drug. *There is no acceptable concentration of marijuana metabolites in the urine or blood of an employee who performs safety-sensitive duties for the County.* Employees and applicants are still subject to being tested under the County's DOT Drug and Alcohol Policies, as well as subject to being disciplined up to and including termination of employment, suspended, and/or having an offer of employment withdrawn after testing positive for cannabis.

DOT regulated CDL holders should be aware:

- There is no currently accepted medical use of marijuana for safety-sensitive DOT regulated drivers. Therefore, Medical Review Officers (MROs) will not verify a drug test

as negative based on information that a physician recommended the employee use medical marijuana when states have passed medical marijuana initiatives.

- Any product, including “cannabidiol” or CBD products, with a concentration of more than 0.3% THC remains classified as marijuana, a Schedule I drug under the Controlled Substances Act.
- The labeling of CBD products may be misleading because the products could contain higher levels of THC than what the product label states. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not currently certify levels of THC in CBD products, so federal oversight is not in place to ensure the labels are accurate.
- CBD use is not an acceptable explanation for a laboratory-confirmed marijuana positive test result. Therefore, Medical Review Officers will verify a drug test indicating marijuana as positive, even if an employee reports they only used a CBD product.
- It remains unacceptable for any CDL holder subject to the Department of Transportation’s drug testing regulations to use cannabis / marijuana / THC.

Controlled Substance Testing:

No driver may report for duty, remain on-duty, or perform a safety-sensitive function if the driver tests positive for controlled substance.

Collection and Testing Procedures:

Drivers are required to report immediately upon notification to the collection site. For random tests conducted off site, employees may use a county vehicle to drive to the collection site. Drivers will be expected to provide a photo ID card for identification to the collection staff. All drivers will be expected to cooperate with collection site personnel requests to remove any unnecessary outer garments such as coats, sweaters or jackets and will be required to empty their pockets. Collection personnel will complete a Federal Custody and Control Form (CCF), which drivers providing a sample will sign.

Alcohol Testing:

Employees will be tested for alcohol just before, during, or immediately following performance of a safety-sensitive function. Screening tests for alcohol concentration will be performed utilizing a non-evidential screening device included by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration on its conforming products list (e.g., a saliva screening device) or an evidential breath testing device (“EBT”) operated by a trained breath alcohol technician (BAT) at a collection site. If a driver’s first attempt is positive (with an alcohol concentration of .02 or greater), the driver will be asked to wait at least 15 minutes and then be tested again. The driver may not eat, drink or place anything in their mouth (e.g., cigarette, chewing gum) during this time. Any results less than 0.02 alcohol concentration is considered a negative test result.

If the driver attempts and fails to provide an adequate amount of breath, the driver will be referred to a physician to determine if the driver’s inability to provide a specimen is genuine or constitutes a refusal to test. Alcohol test results are reported directly to the County by the collection site staff.

Controlled Substance Testing:

The County will use a “split urine specimen” collection procedure for controlled substance testing. Collection of urine specimens for controlled substance testing will be conducted by an approved collector and will be conducted in a setting and manner to ensure the driver’s privacy.

At the collection site, the driver will be given a sealed container and must provide at least 45 ml of urine for testing. Once the sample is provided the collection personnel will check the temperature and color and look for signs of contamination. The urine is then split into two separate specimen containers (A, or “primary;” and B, or “split”) with identifying labels and security seals affixed to both. The collection facility will be responsible for maintaining a proper chain of custody for delivery of the sample to a DHHS-certified laboratory for analysis. The laboratory will retain a sufficient portion of any positive sample for testing and store that portion in a scientifically acceptable manner for a minimum 365-day period.

If an employee fails to provide a sufficient amount of urine to permit a controlled substance test (45 milliliters of urine), the collector will discard the insufficient specimen, unless there is evidence of tampering with that specimen. The collector will urge the driver to drink up to 40 ounces of fluid, distributed reasonably over a period of up to three hours, or until the driver has provided a sufficient urine specimen, whichever occurs first.

If the driver has not provided a sufficient specimen within three hours of the first unsuccessful attempt, the collector will cease efforts to attempt to obtain a specimen. The driver must then obtain, within five calendar days, an evaluation from a licensed physician, acceptable to the MRO, who has expertise in the medical issues raised by the employee’s failure to provide a sufficient specimen. If the licensed physician concludes the driver has a medical condition, or with a high degree of probability could have a medical condition, which precluded the driver from providing a sufficient amount of urine, the County will consider the test to have been canceled. If a licensed physician does not make such a determination, the County will consider the driver to have engaged in a refusal to test and will take appropriate disciplinary action under this policy.

The primary specimen is used for the first test. If the test is negative, it is reported to the MRO who then reports the result, following a review of the CCF Form for compliance, to the County. If the initial result is positive or non-negative, a “confirmatory retest” will be conducted on the primary specimen. If the confirmatory re-test is also positive or non-negative, the result will be sent to the MRO. The MRO will contact the driver to verify the positive or non-negative result. If the MRO is unable to reach the driver directly, the MRO must contact the County who will direct the driver to contact the MRO.

Review of Test Results:

The MRO is a licensed physician with knowledge and clinical experience in substance abuse disorders and is responsible for receiving and reviewing laboratory results of the controlled substances test as well as evaluating medical explanations for certain drug test results. Prior to making a final decision to verify a positive or non-negative test result, the MRO will give the driver or the job applicant an opportunity to discuss the test result, typically through a phone call. The MRO, or a staff person under the MRO's supervision, will contact the individual directly, on a confidential basis, to determine whether the individual wishes to discuss the test result. If the employee or job applicant wishes to discuss the test result:

- The individual may be required to speak and/or meet with the MRO, who will review the individual's medical history, including any medical records provided.
- The individual will be afforded the opportunity to discuss the test results and to offer any additional or clarifying information which may explain the test result. If the employee or job applicant believes a mistake was made at the collection site, at the lab, or on a chain-of-custody form, or that the drug test results are caused by lawful substance use, the employee should tell the MRO.
- If there is some new information which may affect the original finding, the MRO may request the laboratory to perform additional testing on the original specimen in order to further clarify the results; and
- If the MRO upholds the positive, adulterated, or substituted drug determination, that test result will be provided to the individual. There is no opportunity to explain a positive alcohol test provided in the DOT regulations.

A final determination will be made by the MRO that the test is either negative, test cancelled, positive, and/or a refusal to test because of adulteration or substitution, and the County will be so advised.

The driver can request the MRO to have the split specimen (the second "B" container) tested at the driver's expense. This includes all costs that may be associated with the re-test. There is no split specimen testing for an invalid result. The driver has seventy-two (72) hours after they have been notified of the positive result to make this request. If the employee requests an analysis of the split specimen, the MRO will direct the laboratory to send the split specimen to another certified laboratory for analysis.

If an employee has not contacted the MRO within seventy-two (72) hours, the employee may present information documenting that serious injury, illness, lack of actual notice of the verified test result, inability to contact the MRO, or other circumstances unavoidably prevented the employee from making timely contact. If the MRO concludes there is a legitimate explanation for the employee's failure to contact within seventy-two (72) hours, the MRO will direct the analysis of the split specimen.

If the results of the split specimen are negative, the County may pay for all costs associated with the re-test and there will be no adverse action taken against the employee or job applicant.

Notification of Test Results

Employees:

The County will notify a driver of the results of random, reasonable suspicion, and post-accident tests for controlled substance if the test results are verified positive and will inform the driver which controlled substance or substances were verified as positive. Results of alcohol tests will be immediately available from the collection agent.

Right to Confirmatory Retest:

Within seventy-two (72) hours after receiving notice of a positive controlled substance test result, an applicant or driver may request through the MRO a re-analysis (confirmatory retest) of the driver's split specimen. Action required by federal regulation as a result of a positive controlled substance test (e.g., removal from safety-sensitive functions) will not be stayed during retesting of the split specimen. If the result of the confirmatory re-test fails to reconfirm the presence of the controlled substance(s) or controlled substance metabolite(s) found in the primary specimen, or if the split specimen is unavailable, inadequate for testing, or untestable, the MRO will cancel the test.

Dilute Specimens:

Dilute Negatives Creatinine concentration of specimen is equal to or greater than 2 mg/dL, but less than or equal to 5 mg/dL. If the County receives information that a driver has provided a dilute negative specimen, the County will direct a recollection, pursuant to the MRO's direction, under direct observation.

Consequences for Drivers Engaging in Prohibited Conduct

Job Applicants:

Any applicable conditional offer of employment will be withdrawn from a job applicant or employee seeking a transfer, promotion, or demotion who refuses to be tested or tests positive for controlled substance pursuant to this policy.

Employees:

Drivers who are known to have engaged in prohibited behavior with regard to alcohol misuse or use of controlled substance, as defined in this policy, are subject to the following consequences:

- **Removal from Safety-Sensitive Functions:**

No driver may perform safety-sensitive functions, including driving a commercial motor vehicle, if the driver has engaged in conduct prohibited by federal law. No driver who is found to have an alcohol concentration of 0.02 or greater but less than 0.04 may perform or continue to perform safety-sensitive functions for the County, including driving a commercial motor vehicle, until the start of the driver's next regularly scheduled duty, but not less than twenty-four (24) hours following administration of the test. If a driver tests positive under this policy or is found to have an alcohol concentration of .02 or greater but

less than .04, the driver will be removed from safety-sensitive duties and escorted home. The driver should not drive home but be escorted to their home. The driver will then be placed on leave such as vacation, [PTO], compensatory time, or other appropriate leave for hours missed from work.

- **Notification of Resources Available:**

The County will advise each driver who has engaged in conduct prohibited by federal law or who has a positive alcohol or controlled substance test of the resources available to the driver [including but not limited to the County's Employee Assistance Program (EAP)], in evaluating and resolving problems associated with the misuse of alcohol and use of a controlled substance, including the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of Substance Abuse Professionals (SAPs) and counseling and treatment programs. The County will provide this SAP listing in writing at no cost to the driver.

- **Discipline:**

The County reserves the right to impose whatever discipline the County deems appropriate in its sole discretion, up to and including termination of employment for a first occurrence, or any subsequent occurrence, against drivers who violate applicable FMCSA or DOT rules or this policy, subject to applicable personnel policies and collective bargaining agreements. Except as otherwise required by law, the County is not obligated to reinstate or requalify such drivers following a first positive confirmed controlled substance or alcohol test result.

- **Evaluation, and Return to Duty Testing:**

Should the County wish to consider reinstatement of a driver who engaged in conduct prohibited by federal law and/or who had a positive alcohol or controlled substance test, the driver must undergo an SAP evaluation, participate in any prescribed education/treatment, and successfully complete return-to-duty alcohol test with a result indicating an alcohol concentration of less than 0.02 and/or or a controlled substance test with a verified negative result, before the driver returns to duty requiring the performance of a safety-sensitive function. The SAP will determine what assistance, if any, the driver needs in resolving problems associated with alcohol misuse and controlled substance use and will ensure the driver properly follows any rehabilitation program and submits to unannounced follow-up alcohol and controlled substance testing.

- **Follow-Up Testing:**

If the driver passes the return-to-duty test, the driver will be subject to unannounced follow-up alcohol and/or controlled substance testing. The number and frequency for such follow-up testing will be as directed by the SAP and will consist of at least six tests in the first twelve months. These tests will be conducted under direct observation.

- **Refusal to Test:**

All drivers and applicants have the right to refuse to take a required alcohol and/or controlled substance test. If an employee refuses to undergo testing, the employee will be considered to have tested positive and may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and

including termination of employment. Refer to the section on *Refusing to Test* discussed earlier in this policy.

- **Responsibility for Cost of Evaluation and Rehabilitation:**

Drivers will be responsible for paying the cost of evaluation and rehabilitation, including but not limited to services provided by a Substance Abuse Professional (SAP), recommended or required by the County or FMCSA or DOT rules, except to the extent that such expense is covered by an applicable employee benefit plan or imposed on the County pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement.

- **Reporting to the FMCSA's CDL Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse:**

In accordance with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's (FMCSA) Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse reporting requirements effective January 6, 2020, the County will report the following information to the Clearinghouse within three business days:

- A DOT alcohol confirmation test result with an alcohol concentration of 0.04 or greater.
- A negative DOT return-to-duty test result.
- The driver's refusal to submit to a DOT test for drug or alcohol use.
- An "actual knowledge" violation which may include actual knowledge a driver has used alcohol or controlled substances based on the employer's direct observation, information provided by the driver's previous employer(s), a traffic citation for driving a CMV while under the influence of alcohol or controlled substance, or an employee's admission of alcohol or controlled substance use except as provided in 49 CFR § 382.121 of:
 - On duty alcohol use pursuant to § 382.205.
 - Pre-duty alcohol use pursuant to § 382.207.
 - Alcohol use following an accident pursuant to § 382.209.
 - Controlled substance use pursuant to § 382.213; and
- Reports of negative return-to-duty (RTD) test results and the successful completion of a driver's follow-up testing plan as ordered by an SAP.

Change of Status or Loss of CDL for Traffic Violations in Commercial and Personal Vehicles:

Effective August 1, 2005, the FMCSA established strict rules affecting when CDL holders can lose their CDL for certain traffic offenses in a commercial or personal vehicle. Employees are required to notify their supervisor immediately if the status of their CDL license changes in any way.

Maintenance and Disclosure of Records:

Except as required or authorized by law, the County will not release driver information that is contained in records required to be maintained by this policy or FMCSA and DOT regulations. Beginning on January 6, 2020, the County will be required to query and report to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's (FMCSA) Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse prior to hiring new drivers, to conduct annual checks of existing CDL

drivers, and to report certain violations of the DOT drug and alcohol testing program for holders of CDLs.

A driver is entitled, upon written request, to obtain copies of any records pertaining to the driver's use of alcohol or a controlled substance, including any records pertaining to the driver's alcohol or controlled substance tests.

Policy Contact for Additional Information:

If you have any questions about this policy or the County's controlled substance and alcohol testing procedures or resources available to employees, you may contact the Personnel Department to obtain additional information.

Definitions:

Accident:

Means an occurrence involving a commercial motor vehicle operating on a public road which results in a fatality; bodily injury to any person who, as a result of the injury, immediately receives medical treatment away from the scene of the accident; or one or more motor vehicles incurring disabling damage as a result of the accident, requiring the vehicle to be transported away from the scene by a tow truck or other vehicle. The term "accident" does not include an occurrence involving only boarding and alighting from a stationary motor vehicle; an occurrence involving only the loading or unloading of cargo; or an occurrence in the course of the operation of a passenger car or a multipurpose passenger vehicle unless the vehicle is transporting passengers for hire or hazardous materials of a type and quantity that require the motor vehicle to be marked or placarded in accordance with 49 CFR § 177.823; 49 CFR § 382.303(a); 49 CFR § 382.303(f).

Alcohol Concentration (or Content):

Means the alcohol on a volume of breath expressed in terms of grams of alcohol per 210 liters of breath as indicated by an evidential breath test. 49 CFR § 382.107.

Alcohol Use:

Means the consumption of any beverage, mixture, or preparation, including any medication, containing alcohol. 49 CFR § 382.107.

Applicant:

Means a person applying to drive a commercial motor vehicle. 49 CFR § 382.107.

Breath Alcohol Technician or BAT:

Means an individual who instructs and assists individuals in the alcohol testing process and operates an evidential breath testing device (EBT). 49 CFR § 40.3.

County:

Means County of Houston

County Premises:

Means all job sites, facilities, offices, buildings, structures, equipment, vehicles and parking areas, whether owned, leased, used or under the control of the County.

Collection Site:

Means a place designated by the County where drivers present themselves for the purpose of providing a specimen of their urine or breath to be analyzed for the presence of alcohol or controlled substances. 49 CFR § 40.3.

Commercial Motor Vehicle:

Means a motor vehicle or combination of motor vehicles used in commerce to transport passengers or property if the motor vehicle (1) has a gross combination weight rating or gross combination weight of 26,001 or more pounds, whichever is greater, inclusive of a towed unit(s) with a gross vehicle weight rating or gross vehicle weight of more than 10,000 pounds, whichever is greater; or (2) has a gross vehicle weight rating or gross vehicle weight of 26,001 or more pounds, whichever is greater; or (3) is designed to transport sixteen (16) or more passengers, including the driver; or (4) is of any size and is used in the transportation of materials found to be in the transportation of materials found to be hazardous for the purposes of the Hazardous Materials Transportation Act (49 USC § 5103(b)) and which require the motor vehicle to be placarded under the Hazardous Materials Regulation. (49 CFR Part 172, Subpart F; 49 CFR § 382.107.)

Confirmation (or Confirmatory) Test:

For alcohol testing means a second test, following a positive non-evidential test, following a positive non-evidential (e.g., saliva) screening test or a breath alcohol screening test with the result of 0.02 or greater, that provides quantitative data of alcohol concentration. For controlled substance testing, "Confirmation (or Confirmatory) Test" means a second analytical procedure to identify the presence of a specific controlled substance or metabolite which is independent of the screen test and which uses a different technique and chemical principal from that of the screen test in order to ensure reliability and accuracy. 49 CFR § 382.107.

Controlled Substance:

Means those substances identified in 49 CFR § 40.85. Marijuana, amphetamines, opioids, (including heroin), phencyclidine (PCP), cocaine, and any of their metabolites are included within this definition. 49 CFR § 382.107; 49 CFR § 40.85.

Department of Transportation or DOT:

Means the United States Department of Transportation.

DHHS:

Means the Department of Health & Human Services or any designee of the Secretary, Department of Health & Human Services. 49 CFR § 40.3.

Disabling Damage:

It means damage which precludes departure of a motor vehicle from the scene of the accident in its usual manner in daylight after simple repairs, including damage to motor vehicles that could have been driven, but would have been further damaged if so driven. Disabling damage does not include damage which can be remedied temporarily at the scene of the accident without special tools or parts, tire disablement without other damage even if no spare tire is available, headlight or taillight damage or damage to turn signals, horn or windshield wipers which make them inoperative. 49 CFR § 382.107.

Driver:

Means any person who operates a commercial motor vehicle. This includes, but is not limited to: full-time, regularly employed drivers; temporary, casual, intermittent, or occasional drivers; leased drivers and independent owner-operator contractors who are either directly employed by or under lease to the County or who operate a commercial motor vehicle at the direction of or with the consent of the County; and Commercial Learner's Permit (CLP) drivers. For purposes of pre-employment testing, the term driver includes a person applying to drive a commercial motor vehicle. 49 CFR § 382.107.

Drug:

Has the same meaning as "controlled substance."

Employee Seeking a Transfer, Promotion, or Demotion:

Refers to an employee who is not subject to DOT regulations seeking a transfer, promotion, or demotion to a different position that will subject them to DOT regulations in the sought-after position.

Evidential Breath Testing Device or EBT:

Means a device approved by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) for the evidential testing of breath and placed on NHTSA's "Conforming Products List of Evidential Breath Measurement Devices." 49 CFR § 40.3.

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration or FMCSA:

Means the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration of the United States Department of Transportation.

Medical Review Officer or MRO:

Means a licensed physician (medical doctor or doctor of osteopathy) responsible for receiving laboratory results generated by a controlled substance testing program who has knowledge of substance abuse disorders and has appropriate medical training to interpret and evaluate an individual's confirmed positive or non-negative test result together with the individual's medical history and any other relevant biomedical information. 49 CFR § 40.3

Performing [a Safety-Sensitive Function]:

Means any period in which a driver is actually performing, ready to perform, or immediately available to perform any safety-sensitive functions. 49 CFR § 382.107.

Positive Test Result:

Means a finding of the presence of alcohol or controlled substance, or their metabolites, in the sample tested in levels at or above the threshold detection levels established by applicable law.

Reasonable Suspicion:

Means a belief a driver has engaged in conduct prohibited by the FMCSA controlled substance and alcohol testing regulations, except when related solely to the possession of alcohol, based on specific contemporaneous, articulable observations made by a supervisor or County official who has received appropriate training concerning the appearance, behavior, speech or body odors of the driver. The determination of reasonable suspicion will be made in writing during, just preceding, or just after the period of the workday that the driver is required to be in compliance with this policy. In the case of a controlled substance, the observations may include indications of the chronic and withdrawal effects of a controlled substance.

Safety-Sensitive Function:

Means all time, from the time a driver begins to work or is required to be in readiness to work, until the time the driver is relieved from work and all responsibility for performing work. Safety-sensitive functions include:

- All time at a County building, terminal, facility, or other property, or on any public property, waiting to be dispatched, unless the driver has been relieved from duty by the employer;
- All time inspecting equipment as required by 49 CFR § 392.7 and § 392.8 or otherwise inspecting, servicing, or conditioning any commercial motor vehicle at any time;
- All time spent at the driving controls of a commercial motor vehicle in operation;
- All time, other than driving time, in or upon any commercial motor vehicle except time spent resting in a sleeper berth (a berth conforming to the requirements of 49 CFR § 393.76);
- All time loading or unloading a vehicle, supervising, or assisting in the loading or unloading, attending a vehicle being loaded or unloaded, remaining in readiness to operate the vehicle, or in giving or receiving receipts for shipments loaded or unloaded; and
- All time repairing, obtaining assistance, or remaining in attendance upon a disabled vehicle. 49 CFR § 382.107.

Screening Test (also known as Initial Test):

In alcohol testing, means an analytical procedure to determine whether a driver may have a prohibited concentration of alcohol in their system. Screening tests may be conducted by

utilizing a non-evidential screening device included by the National Highway Traffic Administration on its conforming products list (e.g., a saliva screening device) or an evidential breath testing device (EBT) operated by a trained breath alcohol technician (BAT). In controlled substance testing, "Screening Test" means an immunoassay screen to eliminate "negative" urine specimens from further consideration. 49 CFR § 382.107.

Substance Abuse Professional or SAP:

Means a licensed physician (medical doctor or doctor of osteopathy), licensed or certified psychologist, licensed or certified social worker, licensed or certified employee assistance

professional, or licensed or certified addiction counselor (certified by the National Association of Alcoholism and Controlled Substance Abuse Counselors Certification Commission) with knowledge of and clinical experience in the diagnosis and treatment of alcohol and controlled substance-related disorders. 49 CFR § 40.281.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

A Workplace Accident And Injury Reduction (AWAIR) Program

SECTION:	Workplace Safety & Health Policies Section F-5	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

A Workplace Accident and Injury Reduction (AWAIR) Program

Houston County affirms that employees are our most valued resource. Ensuring employee safety in the performance of their work is of the utmost importance, and this objective is the basis of Houston Counties AWAIR Program, establishing workplace safety and health as one of our organization's highest priorities. The success of the safety program requires clearly defined goals, specific objectives and identification of those who will share the responsibility of accomplishing the goals and objectives set forth.

It is the responsibility of all employees to be aware of unsafe acts in all work areas that can produce injuries. No employee is required to work at a job they know is not safe. It is the responsibility of all employees of Houston County to be diligent in detecting hazards, and in turn, controlling them, including informing your supervisor immediately of any situation beyond your ability or authority to correct.

Goals and Objectives:

Central to our AWAIR program are the goals and objectives, we as a County have established for the overall safety and health program. The goals provide the direction for our program and state what we are striving to achieve. The goals are specific to Houston County. The County has established objectives, which are specific actions that will be taken in an effort to achieve our safety and health program goals.

Goal: We will establish and maintain a culture that is committed to workplace safety and health.

Objectives:

- 1. Regular safety committee meetings will be conducted at least on a quarterly basis to inform employees about specific workplace safety and health issues, and to build an overall awareness of employee safety and health, including review of incident reports.*
- 2. Safety committee meetings will include both employee and management representatives who will serve a two-year term.*

3. *Safety committee agendas will be established, and the meetings will be facilitated to gather input from employees and management relating to workplace safety and health topics.*
4. *Resources regarding a specific health or safety "toolbox topic" will be distributed monthly and discussed at team meetings.*
5. *Safety rules will be actively enforced throughout the organization.*

Roles and Responsibilities:

A. Everyone at Houston County:

1. All employees, including supervisors, managers, department heads and Elected Officials, must follow all safety rules at all times.

B. Employees:

1. Employees must promptly report any safety and health hazards they observe to their supervisor or Safety Committee Representative, Manager or other applicable person.
2. An employee's first priority is to perform each job task safely. If an employee is unsure how to perform the task safely, the employee must consult with their supervisor.
3. Employees must wear personal protective equipment as required for their protection, routinely inspect personal protective equipment for damage/wear and tear, and maintain the equipment in a sanitary manner.
4. Employees must report all accidents and near misses to their supervisor immediately upon occurrence.

C. Management:

1. Supervisors must discuss any current safety issues with their employees at the beginning of the work shift or at regularly scheduled staff meetings as appropriate.
2. Supervisors will address all safety concerns raised by staff by initially investigating the issue, assessing the concern, and taking appropriate corrective action whenever necessary. Corrective action can include ordering new equipment, issuing maintenance work orders or consulting with the Safety Officer, the Safety Committee, County Coordinator / HR Director, or County Management.
3. Immediately upon learning of an accident or near miss, the supervisor must initiate an investigation and submit the completed accident investigation report to the Safety Officer.
4. Supervisors will actively and constructively participate in all Safety Committee inspections of their assigned areas.

5. Discuss the positive effects of safety committee activities, on a one-on-one basis and/or in group meetings.
6. Support safety training for all employees.
7. Respond to safety recommendations in a timely manner.
8. Communicate to all employees and supervisors the importance of workers' safety and health throughout the organization.
9. County Management will review all safety concerns brought forward by the Safety Officer, department head, the Safety Committee, and/or supervisors and take appropriate action.
10. County Management will review the AWAIR program and any recommended revisions from the Safety Committee at least annually, make the appropriate revisions, and work with the Safety Officer, the Safety Committee and supervisors to communicate the revisions throughout the organization.
11. County Management also establishes the importance of the AWAIR program, both by the priority they give workplace safety and health issues and through the example they set by initiating safety and health improvements, correcting hazards, enforcing safety rules, rewarding excellent performance in safety and health, and by following all safety rules.

D. County Coordinator / HR Director:

1. The County Coordinator / HR Director is designated as the Safety Officer and will serve as the lead person in the organization for safety and health issues and will also serve as chairperson of the Safety Committee.
2. The Safety Officer must review pertinent facts from all accident investigation reports with the Safety Committee and take appropriate action to prevent recurrence. Incident data will be shared in a manner that protects individual privacy and maintains compliance with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act.
3. The Safety Officer will coordinate and oversee, in cooperation with first-line supervision and/or department heads, all safety training required by regulation or identified by management, supervisors or the Safety Committee as required to assure a safe workplace.
4. The Safety Officer will recommend improvements in facilities, machinery, equipment, raw materials and personal protective equipment to County Management.

5. The Safety Officer will be responsible for the annual review of this program/policy and documentation of findings. The annual review of the policy is vital to ensuring that Houston County is making progress toward the established goals.

E. Safety Committee:

1. The Safety Committee will conduct regular meetings and area inspections to review accident reports, identify hazards and address all safety concerns raised by employees, supervisors, or the Safety Officer.
2. The Safety Committee will review the AWAIR program at least annually and make recommendations concerning updates and revisions to the program to County Management and the Safety Officer.
3. Safety Committee members each represent their work area and, therefore, should address all safety concerns brought to them by their coworkers. These concerns should be handled by initially investigating the issue with the supervisor to determine if the
4. concern is valid and whether it can be immediately corrected, and as necessary and appropriate, bring the issue to the Safety Officer or the full Safety Committee.

F. Elected and Appointed Officials:

1. Elected/Appointed Officials will support and reinforce the importance of safety and health throughout the County.
2. Elected/Appointed Officials will provide the resources to improve safety and health throughout the organization. This includes providing employees and supervisors with the authority to identify and correct hazards, the budget to purchase new equipment or make repairs when necessary, the training required to work safely and to recognize hazards, and the systems to ensure repairs are made, materials ordered, and other improvements accomplished.

Enforcement of Safety and Health Programs:

Enforcement of safe work practices should be fair, consistent throughout the County, and based on established policy. Management and supervision should be conscious of the examples they set for the workplace and should follow the same workplace safety and health rules as the rest of the workforce.

Employees will be trained and instructed regarding workplace safety expectation. Supervisors will monitor and coach employees to ensure that proper safety practices are followed. Unsafe or unhealthy work behaviors by any employee shall be corrected in a timely manner, in accordance with the severity of the violation.

Violation of safety rules and safe work procedures may be subject to disciplinary action. The County may follow progressive discipline for violations of workplace health and safety policy,

rules and procedures but reserves the right to issue any level of discipline it deems appropriate based on the specific facts and circumstances.

Not only should negative behavior be discouraged, but positive behavior should be reinforced. Exceptional performance or efforts in workplace safety and health should be recognized by supervisors and County Management.

Hazard Identification, Analysis and Control:

Houston County will use the following steps to identify, analyze and control hazards:

- *Conduct walk-around inspections by supervisors, management and/or the Safety Committee members. Inspections should be conducted on a regular basis to identify both newly developed hazards and any previously missed.*
- *Conduct periodic or as-needed industrial hygiene monitoring and sampling for agents such as hazardous substances, noise levels, and heat.*
- *Establish and periodically review and update Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) or Job Safety Analysis (JSA) identifying workplace hazards and safety controls associated with particular jobs or tasks*
- *Develop and implement job hazard identification checklists*
- *Encourage and follow up on employee reporting of workplace safety and health hazards*
- *Encourage and review employee hazard abatement suggestions*
- *Identify regular scheduling for, and timely conduct and document, preventative maintenance inspections*
- *Evaluate opportunities for, and implement, appropriate engineering controls*
- *Evaluate opportunities for, and implement, appropriate administrative controls*
- *Provide, and monitor appropriate use of, required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)*
- *Provide management and employee training]*

The following forms and checklists can be accessed on the “Workplace Health and Safety” page of the County’s employee help desk, and are available in printed format upon request from the Personnel Department:

- *Hazard Inventory*
- *Safety Inspection Checklist*
- *Report of Unsafe Conditions*
- *Hazard Elimination Evaluation Control Worksheet*
- *Job Hazard Analysis / Job Safety Analysis**
- *Indoor Environmental Audit*
- *Certification of Employee Training*
- *Accident/Injury Investigation]*

*Job Hazard Analysis (JHA), also known as Job Safety Analysis (JSA):
The steps for creating a JHA are:

- 1. List all the job steps or tasks the worker must perform to complete the job. The list is created by watching the employee perform the operation in question, recording each step of the process and reviewing the list with the employee for completeness.*
- 2. Review each step to determine what safety and health hazards are or could be present; these should be listed as well. Further observation may be necessary to assure all possible hazards are identified.*
- 3. Determine what measures can eliminate or lessen the risk of injury or illness to the employee from the identified hazards. These measures may include: engineering controls, such as guarding or ventilation; work practices; administrative controls, such as job rotation; and personal protective equipment.*

Communication:

All managers and supervisors are responsible for communicating with all workers about occupational safety and health in a form readily understandable by all workers. The County's communication system encourages all workers to inform their managers and supervisors about workplace hazards without fear of reprisal. Our communication system may include one or more of the following approaches:

- New worker orientation including a discussion of safety and health policies and procedures
- Review of the County's program
- Employee and management training
- Regularly scheduled safety meetings
- Posted or distributed safety information
- A system for workers to inform County Management about workplace hazards

Accident Investigation:

Accident investigations are a key component of the County's AWAIR program, with the goal of hazard identification, correction of deficiencies, and prevention of future incidents. In addition to conducting investigations of incidents in which injury or property damage has occurred, investigations should also be completed regarding near-miss or close call situations.

The investigation should begin as soon as possible following an incident, and no later than 48 hours after the event. Any existing or remaining hazards in the area or related to the incident should be assessed and promptly controlled.

The incident investigation will be conducted by the supervisor, Safety Officer and Safety Committee Member.

The incident investigation should focus on identifying and correcting the root cause of the incident. Conducting a root cause analysis will assist in identifying underlying or systemic issues

that should be addressed to prevent future incidents. When a shortcoming or deficiency is identified, the investigation should also consider why it existed or occurred, and what prevented it from being previously addressed. This approach helps the County to understand how and why the incident occurred, and to identify and address *all* factors contributing to the incident.

The investigation should answer the following questions:

- What happened;
- How did it happen;
- Why did it happen; and
- What needs to be corrected.

The investigation may include but not be limited to incident site and equipment examination, witness interviews, review of documentation such as maintenance or training records, review of operating procedures and work process, examination of safety controls in place, constructing sequence of events leading up to the incident, and additional contributing factors or relevant information.

Safety Committee:

Minnesota Statutes § 182.676 requires that employers with more than 25 employees establish and administer a joint labor-management Safety Committee. The purpose of our Safety Committee is to involve labor and management in a cooperative effort to promote safety and health in the workplace.

In accordance with state law, the Safety Committee shall:

- Hold regularly scheduled meetings unless otherwise provided in a collective bargaining agreement.
- Include employee Safety Committee members who are selected by employees.

The Safety Committee will advise management about safety and health issues in the workplace. In addition, Safety Committee members may: participate in walk-around inspections of the workplace; train new employees on safe working procedures; complete job hazard analyses; provide input and recommendations regarding workplace safety and health rules, policies and procedures; participate in incident investigations; and bring employee safety and health concerns forward for review and correction.

Houston County recognizes the critical contributions a well-functioning Safety Committee can make to ensure the safety and health of our employees. Safety Committee members are supported in performing their duties without fear of discrimination or retaliation. Any concerns regarding the proper exercise of duties and responsibilities under this policy should be reported to the County Coordinator / HR Director.

Program Review:

The Safety Officer and the Safety Committee shall conduct an annual review of the County's AWAIR Program. The annual program review will evaluate progress toward achieving the program's goals and objectives and identify new or updated goals and objectives, ensure that procedures in place are consistent with those described in the program, and ensure that procedures and program approach are effective in improving workplace safety and health.

Program review may include, but is not limited to the following:

- OSHA 300 Log – Log of Work-Related Injuries & Illnesses
- First Report of Injury
- Accident investigation reports, including near-miss documentation
- Reports and documentation from the Safety Committee, supervisor inspections, and walk-arounds
- Employee and supervisor interviews
- Walk-arounds and direct observation

Review of these items should be used to discern trends; determine areas for improvement; and identify elements of the program and the County's approach that are working well and have proven successful in reducing or preventing workplace injury and illness, and in supporting worker safety.

Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Drug, Alcohol, Tobacco and Cannabis Free Workplace

SECTION:	Workplace Safety & Health Policies Section F-6	EFFECTIVE:	12/16/2025
AUTHORITY:	25-44	REVISED:	Not Revised

Purpose

Houston County is committed to maintaining safe, healthful, and efficient working conditions for employees, and recognizes that individuals who are impaired because of drugs, alcohol, or cannabis may jeopardize the safety and health of community members, other workers, and themselves. Drug, alcohol, tobacco and cannabis abuse or misuse, including use in the workplace, can cause unsatisfactory job performance, increased tardiness and absenteeism, increased accidents and workers' compensation claims, among other workplace concerns. The County's Drug, Alcohol, tobacco and Cannabis Free Workplace Policy has been established for the purpose of providing a safe and healthful workplace for all County employees, and to support safe and effective delivery of County services. In recognition of the value of a drug, alcohol, cannabis, and tobacco free workplace, and in conjunction with the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988, the County has adopted the following policy.

Policy

This policy is applicable to all employees, volunteers, and interns of the County. Employees in DOT regulated job classifications and Sheriff's Office job classifications must also comply with policies specific to their job classification, in accordance with federal and state regulations regarding drugs, alcohol, cannabis, and tobacco.

1. County employees, volunteers, and interns are strictly prohibited from the use, possession, sale, transfer, manufacture, distribution, solicitation to sell or purchase, and/or being under the influence of or impaired by, controlled substances, drugs (including prescription medication not used by the person for whom it is prescribed or used in a manner other than prescribed), alcohol, or cannabis (including cannabis-related products, cannabinoids, and tetrahydrocannabinols / THC), drug or cannabis paraphernalia, while:
 - a. Scheduled to work and/or actually performing work for the county at the workplace, or performing County work offsite, including while working remotely.
 - b. On County premises, except when following all applicable legal substance transport laws in an employee's personal vehicles
 - c. In County motorized vehicles or watercraft.

- d. Operating County motorized vehicles, watercraft, machinery, or equipment.
2. In certain limited situations, such as while participating in a networking event at a work-related conference where alcohol is served, responsible consumption of alcohol may be permitted. Appropriateness of the responsible consumption of alcohol while representing the County should be assessed on a case-by-case basis and may include situations when alcohol is served as part of a sanctioned event *and* the employee will not be driving impaired or returning to regular work duties for the remainder of the day. Employees, volunteers, and interns are advised that in any situation subsequent to the intake of alcohol or lawful consumable products where they conduct County business or are representing the County, their condition and behavior is a part of their work performance and may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.
3. The presence of any illegal drug in an employee's system while working and/or while at the workplace is strictly prohibited to the fullest extent permitted by law.
4. The use of, or being under the influence of, *medically prescribed* cannabis is prohibited at all times while employees are on duty, performing County work, on County premises (other than as a member of the public in public areas), or while an employee is operating a County vehicle, watercraft, machinery, or equipment.
5. This policy does not prohibit or interfere with approved law enforcement activities for employees assigned to perform such duties in accordance with their County job classification.
6. If an employee is taking medically authorized prescription drugs, over-the-counter drugs, or other substances which may impair their ability to perform job responsibilities or pose a safety risk to themselves or others, the employee is under an affirmative duty to notify their supervisor, department head, or County Coordinator / HR Director before beginning work, that their ability to perform their job duties may be impaired. Employees are responsible to consult with a qualified health care professional regarding the effects their medications may have on their fitness for duty including their ability to work safely, and must promptly communicate work restrictions or limitations to their supervisor, department head, or County Coordinator / HR Director. When providing information regarding work-related restrictions or limitations, the employee should refrain from disclosing any medical diagnosis or underlying medical condition.
7. As a condition of employment (or volunteer/internship work arrangement), County employees, volunteers, and interns will abide by the terms and conditions of this drug, alcohol, and cannabis free policy. They shall notify the County Coordinator / HR Director of any criminal drug statute conviction for which a drug, alcohol, or cannabis violation occurs in the workplace, within five calendar days after such conviction.

8. The County will comply with applicable federal contracting or grant agency notification requirements upon receiving notice of a drug, alcohol, or cannabis conviction. As applicable, the County will also notify licensing boards and/or other agencies regarding prohibited activity and/or convictions.
9. For County Departments with positions subject to the requirements of the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988, as required by law, contract, or grant, within 30 calendar days of receiving notice from an employee of a drug, alcohol, or cannabis related workplace conviction, the County will take a personnel action against the employee up to and including termination of employment (consistent with the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973); OR the County may require the employee to participate satisfactorily in a substance abuse assistance or appropriate rehabilitation program approved for these purposes by a federal, state, or local health, law enforcement, or other appropriate agency at the employee's expense. Programs of this type may be available through the County's health insurance or Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
10. For County Departments with positions subject to the requirements of the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988, as required by law, contract, or grant, the County will in writing notify an applicable contracting or granting agency within ten calendar days after receiving actual notice of a conviction of criminal drug statute violations occurring in the workplace.
11. Smoking shall not be permitted in, and no person shall smoke in a public place, at a public meeting, in a place of employment, or in public transportation pursuant to Minnesota Statute 144.414.
12. The County will notify the appropriate law enforcement agency when there is a reasonable suspicion that an employee may have illegal drugs in their possession at work or on County premises.
13. Employees are encouraged to voluntarily seek professional substance use assistance before any substance use or dependence affects job performance.
14. The County establishes a drug, alcohol, and cannabis awareness program, as communicated within this policy, informing County employees regarding:
 - a. The County's policy of maintaining a drug, alcohol, tobacco and cannabis free workplace.
 - b. The dangers of drug, alcohol, tobacco and cannabis abuse and misuse, specifically in the workplace.
 - c. The availability of counseling, rehabilitation, and an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to support individuals in addressing drug, alcohol, tobacco or cannabis use/misuse or
 - d. dependence. Employees may contact the Personnel Department or visit the County's employee intranet site] for information on available resources including through the County's health insurance and via EAP referral.

- e. The penalties that may be imposed upon employees for drug, alcohol, and cannabis violations in the workplace.
15. Employees with concerns regarding a violation of this policy have an affirmative duty to communicate the concerns to the Personnel Department.
 16. Any violation of this Drug, Alcohol, Tobacco and Cannabis Free Workplace Policy may constitute just cause for disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.
 17. Violations of this policy will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, including an evaluation of the severity, and specific circumstances of the situation.



**Board of County Commissioners
Houston County, Minnesota**

Resolution 25-44 Adopting Houston County Policies and Procedures Manual

Date: December 16th, 2025

Whereas, the Houston County Board of Commissioners has authority to establish and revise county personnel policies; and

Whereas, these policy recommendations have been reviewed in consultation with the management team; and

Whereas, the County Human Resources Officer recommends the adoption of new and updated policies to promote positive, productive, safe, and effective workplace culture and practices, and to support continued compliance with applicable law and regulations, and effective delivery of public services; and

Therefore, be it resolved, Houston County shall establish a personnel policy manual including the following sections and policies effective:

Section A – Purpose, Adoption, and Administration

- A-1 Purpose
- A-2 Adoption
- A-3 Administration
- A-4 Application
- A-5 Definitions

Section B – Staffing and Employment Practices Policies

- B-1 Equal Employment Opportunity
- B-2 Recruitment and Selection
- B-3 Background Investigation
- B-4 Probationary and Trial Periods
- B-5 Separation from Employment
- B-6 Layoff
- B-7 Outside Employment
- B-8 Personnel Records, Forms, and Transactions
- B-9 Performance Management
- B-10 Hours of Work and Time Reporting
- B-11 Photo ID / Building Access Policy
- B-12 Dress Code – next to hours and time
- B-13 Disability and Workplace Accommodation
- B-14 Acceptable Use of Computers and IT Resources
- B-15 Telework / Remote Work



- B-16 Nepotism
- B-17 Vehicle Use
- B-18 Travel Reimbursement
- B-19 Data Privacy / Not Public Data
- B-20 Nursing and Lactation Support
- B-21 Vacation Donation

Section C – Classification and Compensation Policies

- C-1 Classification Plan
- C-2 Compensation Plan
- C-3 Administration of Compensation Plan

Section D – Benefits / Entitlements Policies

- D-1 Insurance
- D-2 Holidays
- D-3 Vacation
- D-4 Sick Time / ESST
- D-5 Family Medical Leave (FMLA)
- D-6 Minnesota Paid Leave (MPL)
- D-7 Leaves of Absence
- D-8 Employee Training and Development

Section E – Code of Conduct Policies

- E-1 Discrimination and Harassment Prevention
- E-2 Respectful Workplace
- E-3 Workplace Violence
- E-4 Code of Conduct
- E-5 Discipline and Discharge
- E-6 Grievance Procedure
- E-7 Political Activity
- E-8 Conflict of Interest
- E-9 Commercial Driver's License (CDL)

Section F – Workplace Safety and Health Policies

- F-1 Emergency Closure of County Government Offices and Adverse Weather Conditions
- F-2 Cell Phone and Wireless Communications
- F-3 Communicable Disease Prevention Management
- F-4 DOT Drug and Alcohol Testing
- F-5 AWAIR Program
- F-6 Drug, Alcohol, Tobacco and Cannabis Free Workplace



Be it Finally Resolved that the County reserves the right to make additional changes and updates to County Personnel Policies by amendment or future Board Actions.

**State of Minnesota
County of Houston**

I, Brent Parker, duly appointed County Coordinator / HR Director of Houston County, State of Minnesota, do hereby certify that I have compared the foregoing copy of this resolution with the original minutes of the proceedings of the Board of County Commissioners, Houston County, Minnesota, at its session held on the 16th day of December, now on file and have found the same to be a true and correct copy thereof.

Dated: 12/16/2025

Brent Parker – County Coordinator / HR Director

HOUSTON COUNTY – CITY OF SPRING GROVE
Professional Services
Inter-Agency Agreement

THIS CONTRACT, and amendments and supplements thereto, is between the County of Houston, acting through the Houston County Sheriff, (hereinafter HCSO), and the City of Spring Grove, acting through its City Counsel, (hereinafter CITY);

WHEREAS, CITY and HCSO pursuant to Minn. Stat. §436.05, Contracts for Police Services, are empowered to procure and supply professional/technical services; and

WHEREAS, CITY is in need of professional licensed police services to assist with its public safety obligations and duties; and

WHEREAS, HCSO represents it has employees that are duly qualified and willing to perform the services set forth in this CONTRACT.

WHEREAS, the provision of services, the standard of performance the discipline of the deputies, and other matters incident to the performance of such services, and control of personnel so employed, shall remain in and under the control of the Houston County Sheriff. In the event of dispute between the parties, as to the extent of the duties and functions to be rendered hereunder, or the level or manner of performance of such services, the determination made by the Sheriff shall be final and conclusive as between the parties.

NOW THEREFORE, it is agreed:

I. TERM OF CONTRACT

A. The term of this contract between HCSO and the CITY for professional services shall begin on January 1, 2026, and end on December 31, 2028.

II. CITY and HCSO DUTIES

HCSO will provide professional services and equipment set forth in Exhibit A, Contracted Law Enforcement Services Proposal.

The Sheriff and the on duty deputy shall, within the CITY's corporate limits, assume all duties and exercise the police powers of CITY police officers as provided by Minnesota statutes and CITY ordinances. Such services shall encompass the duties and functions set forth in relevant Minnesota statutes, regulations, and rules, including but not limited to Minn. Stat. §626 governing the POST Board and Minn. Rules Chapter 6700 governing the licensing, training, and standards for peace officers; CITY ordinances, and Houston County Sheriff's Office Policies.

In the event that HCSO determines that the on duty deputy is needed in other areas of Houston County to respond to an emergency situation, the Houston County Sheriff reserves the right to temporarily move the on duty deputy from the CITY.

CITY, its officers, employees, and agents shall cooperate and assist HCSO so as to facilitate the performance of this CONTRACT. Assistance shall include the CITY to immediately, upon request by HCSO or the Sheriff's designee, provide access to any CITY law enforcement data maintained in electronic or hard copy, created, stored, or possessed, prior to the signing of this CONTRACT.

III. CONSIDERATION AND TERMS OF PAYMENT

A. Consideration. All services performed, equipment, and supplies supplied by HCSO pursuant to this CONTRACT shall be paid by CITY as follows:

- For CONTRACT year 2026, CITY agrees to pay HCSO TWO HUNDRED TWENTY THOUSAND dollars (\$220,000.00) for one deputy for 70 hours of coverage every two weeks.
- For CONTRACT year 2027, CITY agrees to pay HCSO TWO HUNDRED THIRTY ONE THOUSAND dollars (\$231,000.00) (5% increase from 2026) for one deputy for 70 hours of coverage every two weeks.
- For CONTRACT year 2028, CITY agrees to pay HCSO TWO HUNDRED FORTY TWO THOUSAND, FIVE HUNDRED FIFTY dollars (\$242,550.00) (5% increase from 2027) for one deputy for 70 hours of coverage every two weeks.

B. Payments. HCSO will provide CITY a pro-rated monthly invoice by the 15th of each calendar month. All payments are due within thirty (30) days of the date of the invoice.

IV. PROSECUTORIAL AUTHORITY/RESPONSIBILITIES

This CONTRACT and exhibits attached hereto, are not intended to alter the responsibility for the prosecution of offenses that occur within the CITY's jurisdiction as provided by Minnesota law. All fine monies collected by CITY shall remain in the sole control of CITY as set forth in law.

V. AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVES

All official notifications, including but not limited to, cancellation of this contract must be sent to the other party's authorized representative.

A. Houston County's authorized representative for the purpose of administration of this CONTRACT is:

Name: Brian Swedberg
Address: Sheriff
306 South Marshall Street
Caledonia, MN 55921
Telephone: (507) 725-3379
E-Mail: bswedberg@hocomn.gov

B. CITY of Spring Grove's authorized representative for the purpose of administration of this CONTRACT is:

Name: Jana Elton
Address: 118 First Ave NW
PO Box 218
Spring Grove, MN 55974
Telephone: (507) 498-5221
E-Mail: Jana@springgrovemn.com

VI. TERMINATION OF CONTRACT

A. Termination: The parties may terminate this CONTRACT:

- a. Upon mutual agreement; or
- b. For cause upon the failure of a party to comply with any material terms and/or conditions of the CONTRACT or Exhibit A.

B. Termination by mutual agreement:

- a. The parties may agree to mutually terminate the CONTRACT and agree to an end date of the CONTRACT.
- b. The CITY will pay HCSO the remainder of the monthly invoice for the month that the CONTRACT was terminated.
- c. The parties shall put the mutual termination agreement in writing.

C. Termination for Cause:

- a. If a party terminates for cause, the terminating party's Authorized Representative shall provide written notice to the other party's Authorized Representative within 30 days.
- b. The CITY will pay HCSO the remainder of the monthly invoice for the month that the CONTRACT was terminated.
- c. Termination for Cause does not include budgetary related issues.

D. Effect of Termination. Termination of this CONTRACT shall not discharge any liability, responsibility or right of any party which arises from the performance or fail to adequately perform the terms of this CONTRACT prior to the effective date of termination.

VII. ASSIGNMENT

CITY or HCSO shall neither assign nor transfer any rights or obligations under this contract.

VIII. LIABILITY

Deputies are employees of Houston County and are not employees of CITY and at all times shall remain under the direction and supervision of Houston County Sheriff. CITY employees at all time remain under the direction and supervision of CITY. It is agreed that nothing herein contained is intended or should be construed in any manner as creating or establishing a partnership or agency relationship.

Notwithstanding, each party shall be liable for its own acts to the extent provided by law and hereby agree to indemnify, hold harmless and defend the other, its officers and employees against any and all liability, loss, costs, damages, expenses, claims or actions, including attorney's fees which the other, its officers and employees may hereafter sustain, incur or be required to pay, arising out of or by reason of any act or omission of the other party, its agents, servants or employees, in the execution, performance, or failure to adequately perform its obligations pursuant to this CONTRACT.

IX. INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS

Houston County and CITY shall maintain General Liability, Commercial Auto, Professional liability, and Workers' Compensation coverage through the parties' respective insurance providers, the Minnesota Counties Inter-Governmental Trust (MCIT) and the League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust (LMCIT) as recommended by those providers. Each party agrees to immediately notify the other party should it cease to maintain the MCIT and LMCIT recommended levels of coverage.

X. GOVERNMENT DATA PRACTICES

The parties agree to comply with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, Minnesota Statutes Chapter 13 as it applies to all data created, collected, received, stored, used, maintained, or disseminated by the parties in accordance with this contract. The civil remedies of Minnesota Statute §13.08 apply to the release of the data referred to in this clause by either CITY or Houston County. Further, the parties will notify the other party within two business days of any request it receives to release data as a result of this CONTRACT.

XI. AUDITS

The books, records, documents, and accounting procedures and practices of the CITY and Houston County relevant to this CONTRACT shall be subject to examination by the other party and to the Office of the State Auditor for a minimum of six (6) years from the end of the CONTRACT.

XII. AMENDMENTS

Any amendments to this contract shall be in writing and shall be executed by the same parties who executed the original contract, or their successors in office.

The attached law enforcement services contractual attachment (Exhibit A) can be amended by the Houston County Sheriff and the authorized representative of the City of Spring Grove as needed. Any amendments to the law enforcement services contract shall be in writing.

XIII. JURISDICTION AND VENUE

This contract, and amendments and supplements thereto, shall be governed by the laws of the State of Minnesota. Venue for all legal proceedings arising out of this CONTRACT, or breach thereof, shall be in the state or federal court with competent jurisdiction in Houston County, Caledonia, Minnesota.

XIV. SURVIVAL OF TERMS

The following clauses survive the expiration, cancellation or termination of this contract: VIII (Liability); X (Government Data Practices Act); XI (Audits); and XIII (Jurisdiction and Venue).

SIGNATURE PAGE FOLLOWS

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have caused this contract to be duly executed intending to be bound thereby.

APPROVED:

HOUSTON COUNTY
By: (authorized signature)

APPROVED:

CITY OF SPRING GROVE
By: (authorized signature)

Name: Eric Johnson
Title: County Board Chair
Date:

Name: Bryan Wilhelmson
Title: Mayor of Spring Grove
Date:

By: (authorized signature)

By: (authorized signature)

Name: Brian Swedberg
Title: Sheriff
Date:

Name: Jana Elton
Title: City Administrator
Date:

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND EXECUTION:

By:

By:

Name: Suzanne Bublitz
Title: Interim Houston County Attorney
Date:

Name: Greg Schieber
Title: City Attorney
Date:

EXHIBIT A

Law Enforcement Services Contractual Attachment

Houston County Sheriff's Office

And

City of Spring Grove, Minnesota

Exhibit A is an agreement that is attached to the contract between the County of Houston, the Houston County Sheriff's Office and the City of Spring Grove.

This attachment will set forth the expectations of services to be provided not already stipulated in the contract.

- ❖ Houston County Sheriff's Office shall be referenced to as HCSO.
- ❖ City of Spring Grove shall be referenced to as SG

Contracted Law Enforcement Services

HCSO will provide general law enforcement services to the City of Spring Grove under the renewal contract for successive periods starting on January 1, 2026. See Article I, page 1, and Article III, page 2, above.

Services are defined as follows:

❖ **Patrol Functions:**

- HCSO will provide one licensed deputy to respond to calls for service and provide law enforcement presence and patrol functions within the City of Spring Grove. HCSO would reserve the ability to utilize the deputy in the surrounding Spring Grove area as needed.

❖ **Investigations:**

- HCSO will provide investigative services for crimes reported either through patrol deputies or our investigations unit. The Sheriff, or his designee, would have the sole discretion to assign investigations to the HCSO investigations unit or to a patrol deputy. Most felony level crimes would normally be assigned to our fulltime investigations unit.

❖ **Ordinance enforcement:**

- HCSO will respond to and enforce City ordinance violations that are classified as criminal in nature. Non-criminal ordinance violations that are designated as civil in nature would be the responsibility of SG to enforce. However, the HCSO deputy will assist SG with enforcement of offenses deemed civil in nature by way of issuing a citation for civil offenses when deemed appropriate and requested by the designated SG city official.
- HCSO agrees to investigate and enforce the following criminal SG City ordinances:
 - Chapter 140 curfew ordinance
 - Chapter 704 Public parks and recreation
 - C. 1, 7, 8, 9
 - Chapter 706 Traffic Parking Regulations
 - Chapter 710 Recreational Vehicles

❖ **Supervision:**

- HCSO will provide supervision of the deputy that would be under the direct control of the Sheriff or his designee. HCSO Patrol Sergeants will provide direction and supervision during nighttime hours.

❖ **Hours of Service:**

- HCSO will provide 70 hours of coverage every two weeks.

❖ **Patrol Vehicle Equipment:**

- HCSO will provide a marked patrol vehicle and all related emergency equipment for the purposes of providing law enforcement services to SG. This would include updates, repairs, and replacements of equipment when necessary.
- **Technology Equipment:** HCSO will provide:
 - Computer related equipment: laptop, printer, docking station and all necessary hardware.
 - Deputy issued cell phone with hotspot for laptop
 - In-squad camera system.

❖ **Vehicle Maintenance and Repair:**

- HCSO will provide for fuel, maintenance, and repair of the designated patrol vehicles.

❖ **Personnel:**

- HCSO will provide 70 hours of coverage every two weeks coinciding with HCSO pay periods.

❖ **Personnel Benefits:**

- HCSO will be responsible for workers comp insurance premiums and PERA obligations for the deputy. HCSO would be responsible for FICA, Medicare contributions as well as provide the personal health care coverage.

❖ **Training and licensing:**

- HCSO will provide mandated training to personal as well as required Minnesota POST licensing.

❖ **Office furnishings and building occupancy:**

- SG will provide for adequate and secure office space with office furniture: desk, chairs, adequate storage and adequate restroom facilities. Office space would include acceptable climate control, telephone service and high-speed internet service. SG would provide for a secure, indoor facility to park designated patrol vehicle.
- HCSO will provide relevant computer equipment for a deputy.

❖ **Administrative:**

- HCSO will oversee all administrative duties:
 - Assignment of deputy and administrative support staff schedule
 - Records management and mandated reporting requirements
 - Evidence custody and management
 - Citizen complaints
 - Internal investigations
 - Disciplinary actions
 - Timecards
 - Payroll

❖ **Point of Contact:**

- HCSO will designate a point of contact to work with the city administrator and council. HCSO agrees to provide for regular deputy presence at city council meetings. It is further agreed to by both parties, that calls for service will take priority to deputy presence at city council meetings.
- HCSO to provide quarterly statistical reports and an annual report for the council's information and review.

Brian Swedberg
Houston County Sheriff
Date:

Jana Elton
City Administrator
Date:

Amy Sylling

From: Lynn Coisch
Sent: Thursday, December 11, 2025 11:54 AM
To: HoCo BOC
Cc: Carol Lapham; Susan Tostenson; Eliana Babinski
Subject: Commissioner Warrants 2025/12/16

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

REQUEST APPROVAL FOR PAYMENT

2025/12/16 COMMISSIONER'S WARRANTS:

VENDOR NAME	AMOUNT
ABILITY BUILDING COMMUNITY	2,062.27
ACENTEK	4,472.50
AVFUEL CORPORATION	10,978.67
BOLTON & MENK INC	6,000.00
CALEDONIA OIL CO INC	5,577.50
CALEDONIA/CITY OF	13,036.14
COMPUTER FORENSIC SERVICES LLC	48,301.41
ENTERPRISE FM	11,199.61
HOUSTON COUNTY TREASURER	2,315.42
HOUSTON COUNTY TREASURER	20,965.63
HOUSTON COUNTY TREASURER	61,636.99
KRIS ENGINEERING INC	9,282.52
LA FLEUR LAW OFFICE LLC	4,095.00
LIBERTY TIRE RECYCLING LLC	3,565.40
LITTLE FALLS MACHINE INC	2,723.04
MIENERGY COOPERATIVE	2,233.46
MINNESOTA ENERGY RESOURCES	7,062.46
MN STATE TREASURER	3,735.00
NEDLAND INDUSTRIES INC	28,930.00
OLYMPIC BUILDERS GENERAL CONTRAC	57,855.00
REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNE	37,500.00
RICHARD'S SANITATION LLC	21,789.19
SHI INTERNATIONAL CORP	8,059.20
VISA	9,337.95
WEX BANK	5,640.76
WIEBKE TIRE CO	2,018.50
	<hr/>
	390,373.62
50 VENDORS PAID LESS THAN \$2000.00	24,405.74
	<hr/>
	414,779.36

PUBLIC HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

182,723.64

597,503.00

Lynn Colsch
Finance Clerk
Houston County
304 South Marshall Street
Caledonia MN 55921
507-725-5825
LColsch@HoCoMN.gov

Amy Sylling

From: Lynn Colsch
Sent: Thursday, December 11, 2025 12:00 PM
To: HoCo BOC
Subject: Auditor Warrants 2025/12/01

REVIEW LICENSE CENTER PAYMENTS

2025/12/01 AUDITOR WARRANTS:

VENDOR NAME	AMOUNT
HOUSTON COUNTY TREASURER	7,090.29
ISD 300 TREASURER	87,148.55
MN PACE-ST PAUL PORT AUTHORITY	3,749.15
TREASURER CCWSD	27,851.14
TREASURER CITY OF BROWNSVILLE	77,214.59
TREASURER CITY OF CALEDONIA	583,635.82
TREASURER CITY OF EITZEN	50,966.37
TREASURER CITY OF HOKAH	155,577.38
TREASURER CITY OF HOUSTON	275,214.40
TREASURER CITY OF LA CRESCENT	1,726,282.78
TREASURER CITY OF SPRING GROVE	310,468.52
TREASURER SCHOOL DISTRICT 238	4,912.45
TREASURER SCHOOL DISTRICT 239	28,482.74
TREASURER SCHOOL DISTRICT 294	134,473.66
TREASURER SCHOOL DISTRICT 297	160,541.60
TREASURER SCHOOL DISTRICT 299	224,634.57
TREASURER TWP OF BLACKHAMMER	53,003.45
TREASURER TWP OF BROWNSVILLE	79,386.13
TREASURER TWP OF CALEDONIA	87,942.87
TREASURER TWP OF CROOKED CREEK	45,649.58
TREASURER TWP OF HOKAH	58,980.30
TREASURER TWP OF HOUSTON	78,525.25
TREASURER TWP OF JEFFERSON	14,291.90
TREASURER TWP OF LA CRESCENT	146,652.28
TREASURER TWP OF MAYVILLE	65,708.44
TREASURER TWP OF MONEY CREEK	115,513.27
TREASURER TWP OF MOUND PRAIRIE	114,713.31
TREASURER TWP OF SHELDON	42,864.40
TREASURER TWP OF SPRING GROVE	66,195.80
TREASURER TWP OF UNION	50,262.72
TREASURER TWP OF WILMINGTON	90,285.73
TREASURER TWP OF WINNEBAGO	56,980.34
TREASURER TWP OF YUCATAN	57,254.06

	5,082,453.84
1 VENDOR PAID LESS THAN \$2000.00	<u>326.35</u>
	<u>5,082,780.19</u>

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Amy Sylling

From: Lynn Colsch
Sent: Thursday, December 11, 2025 12:01 PM
To: HoCo BOC
Subject: Auditor Warrants 2025/12/10

REVIEW LICENSE CENTER PAYMENTS

2025/12/10 AUDITOR WARRANTS:

VENDOR NAME	AMOUNT
PITNEY BOWES GLOBAL FINANCIAL SERV LLC	20,000.00
	<u>20,000.00</u>

Lynn Colsch
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Houston County
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Caledonia MN 55921
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