

BLOUNT COUNTY

Employee Handbook



Blount County Government
Maryville, TN

Revision Date: January 2008

Original Policy & Procedure Handbook Adopted: January 1996
Modification: Adopted 02/20/97 Effective 03/13/97
Modification: Adopted 04/17/97 Effective 05/08/97
Revision Date: March 2001

Table of Contents

Introduction

Introduction	1
Policies for Employees of Elected Officials	1

State and Federal Policies

Equal Employment Policy	2
Equal Employment Opportunity Grievance Procedure	2
No Harassment	3
Reasonable Accommodations/Modified Job Duties	4
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964	4
HIPAA	5

Code of Ethics

Ethical Conduct	5
Conflict of Interest	5
Political Activity	8
Secondary Employment	8
Nepotism	9
County Equipment	9
Gifts and Contributions	9

Classification and Compensation

Introductory Period	10
Employment Terms	10
Employment at-Will	10
Pay Periods	11
Overtime Compensation/Compensatory Time	11
Working During Lunch Periods	11
Working Before/After Regular Hours	12

General Personnel Policies

Attendance	12
Work Hours and Time Records	12
Canvassing or Solicitation	12
Inclement Weather	13
Personnel Files	13
Performance Evaluations	14
Bonus Policy	15
Promotions, Transfers, and Reassignments	15
Progressive Discipline Procedure	16
Basic Work Rules	16
Resignations	18
Reduction in Force	18
Safety	19
Workplace Chemicals	19
Garnishments and Levies	19
Alcohol and Drugs Policy	19
Tobacco Use	20
Electronic Communications	20
Workplace Violence Prevention Policy	23
Personal Appearance	23

Leave Policies

Annual Leave/Vacation	24
Annual Leave Scheduling	24
Sick Leave Accrual	25
Use of Sick Leave	25
Sick Leave Bank Guidelines/Procedures	25
Personal Leave.....	27
Bereavement/Funeral Leave	28
Holidays.....	28
Leave of Absence	28
Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)	29
Maternity Leave	31
Parental Leave	31
Military Leave	33
Jury Duty or Court Appearance	33
Voting Leave/Elections	33

Employee Benefits

Benefits Eligibility	34
Benefits Effective and Termination Dates	34
Medical/Dental Coverage	34
Identification Cards	34
Annual Open Enrollment Period	34
Benefit Premiums/Payroll Deductions	35
COBRA	35
Employee Assistance Program (EAP)	35
Flexible Spending Account.....	35
Change in Status	35
Supplemental Benefits	36
Workers' Compensation	36
Life Insurance	37
TCRS/Retirement.....	37
Tuition Reimbursement	37
Professional Development Courses	39
Employee Handbook Acknowledgment.....	40

Introduction

We are pleased to introduce the revised Blount County employee handbook. This handbook has been designed to outline and summarize basic personnel policies, employee benefits, employee responsibilities, and employee rights. This handbook is intended to be useful for all Blount County employees.

Blount County is committed to providing a quality workplace for employees. It is our goal to:

- Provide management that is skilled, fair, and concerned about the welfare of our employees.
- Equitably compensate each employee in accordance with our classification and compensation plan.
- Fill vacancies or new positions, where appropriate, by transfer or promotion from within the County.
- Discuss willingly and frankly any problems, complaints, or questions on County personnel policies.
- Keep employees informed of any changes that may affect them or their families.

This handbook revokes and supersedes all prior handbooks, amendments, and any policy or communication related to the employee handbook.

This handbook was developed to provide general guidelines about Blount County Government's policies and procedures for employees; however, it does not contain promises to any employee about how any particular situation will be handled. It is a guide to assist employees in becoming familiar with some of the benefits and obligations of employment, including our policy of at-will employment. None of the guidelines in this handbook are intended to give rise to contractual rights or obligations, or to be construed as a guarantee of employment for any specific period of time or any specific type of work. These guidelines are subject to modification, amendment, or revocation by Blount County Government at any time, without advance notice.

It is the intention of Blount County Government to adhere to all State and Federal laws. Any personnel policy found to be in conflict with a State or Federal law will be changed to ensure compliance with the law.

Amendments to the handbook may be made periodically and communicated to all Blount County employees.

All questions pertaining to information found in this handbook should be referred to the Human Resources Department.

Policies for Employees of Elected Officials

Elected Officials have the jurisdiction to create, maintain, and administer additional personnel policies and procedures. In these cases, the Elected Officials will provide the additional policies for their employees.

State and Federal Policies

Equal Employment Opportunity Policy

Blount County maintains an equal employment opportunity policy and does not discriminate in hiring practices or terms and conditions of employment. All applicants and employees receive equal employment opportunities and all personnel decisions, actions, and conditions affecting employees, including, but not limited to assignment, transfer, promotion, and compensation, will be governed by the principles of equal opportunity.

Discrimination against any person in recruitment, examination, appointment, training, promotion, retention, or discipline because of political or religious opinions or affiliations or because of race, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, veteran status, or any other category protected by law, shall be prohibited.

The Human Resources Director has been designated as the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Officer for Blount County. The EEO Officer has overall responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of the County's Equal Employment Policy.

Equal Employment Opportunity Grievance Procedure

Any employee who has a concern regarding discrimination or harassment should utilize the following procedure:

1. If you are not able to resolve the matter with your supervisor, or if you are not comfortable addressing the matter with your supervisor for any reason, bring your concern to the attention of your Department Head. If this does not resolve the matter address the situation with the Director of Human Resources.
2. If you are not able to resolve the matter with your supervisor, or if you are not comfortable addressing the matter with your supervisor for any reason, bring your concern to the attention of the Director of Human Resources.
3. You may be able to resolve the matter via meeting with the Director of Human Resources. Where an investigation is in order, one will be conducted. You will be advised of the results and proposed solution. Also, the complaint, investigation and findings will become part of the investigation record, which will be maintained separately from your personnel file.
4. If you are not satisfied with the results or proposed solution via meeting with the Director of Human Resources, you may request a meeting with the appropriate Department Head/Elected Official. The decision of the Elected Official will be final.

No one will be retaliated against for using this procedure to bring a good faith concern to the attention of management. Of course, intentionally making a false complaint or otherwise misusing this procedure can subject the offender to discipline.

No Harassment

The County does not tolerate the harassment of applicants, employees, customers, or vendors. Any form of harassment relating to an individual's race, color, sex (including same sex), religion, age, national origin, handicap or disability, citizenship status, veteran status, political affiliation, retaliation for protected activity, or any other protected activity or category is a violation of this policy and will be treated as a disciplinary matter.

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

If you have any questions about what constitutes harassing behavior or what conduct is prohibited by this policy, please discuss the questions with your immediate supervisor. At a minimum, the term "harassment" as used in this policy includes:

- Offensive remarks, comments, jokes, slurs, or verbal conduct pertaining to an individual's race, color, sex, religion, age, national origin, handicap or disability, citizenship status, or any other protected category
- Offensive pictures, drawings, photographs, or other graphic conduct or communications, including e-mail, faxes, and copies pertaining to an individual's race, color, sex, religion, age, national origin, handicap or disability, citizenship status, or any other protected category
- Offensive sexual remarks, sexual advances, or requests for sexual favors regardless of the gender of the individuals involved
- Offensive physical conduct, including touching, regardless of the gender of the individuals involved
- Threatening an employee for refusing to respond to requests for sexual favors, for reporting a violation of this policy, or for participating in an investigation conducted under this policy.

Our supervisors and managers also are covered by this policy and are prohibited from engaging in any form of harassing conduct. No supervisor or other member of management has the authority to suggest to any applicant or employee that employment or advancement will be affected by the individual entering into (or refusing to enter into) a personal relationship with the supervisor or manager. Such conduct is a direct violation of this policy.

Harassment of our employees in connection with their work by non-employees also may be a violation of this policy. Any employee who experiences or observes any harassment of an employee by a non-employee should report such harassment to a member of management or the human resources department.

Employees who believe that our No Harassment policy may have been violated should immediately

report the matter to their immediate supervisor. If the matter involves your immediate supervisor or another manager, or if you believe that a previously reported matter was not handled to your satisfaction, you should immediately contact the Director of Human Resources, or the Department Head. You should report any actions that you believe may violate our policy no matter how slight the actions may seem.

We will investigate the report and, where appropriate, take prompt remedial action including disciplinary action up to and including immediate termination. The County will protect the confidentiality of employees making complaints about suspected violations of this or any other County policy to the extent possible consistent with our investigation and applicable law.

You will not be penalized or retaliated against for reporting improper conduct, harassment, or other actions that you sincerely believe violate this policy.

We are serious about enforcing our policy against harassment. However, we cannot resolve a potential policy violation unless we know about it. You are responsible for bringing your concerns about possible policy violations to our attention so that we can take appropriate actions to address your concerns.

Reasonable Accommodations/Modified Job Duties

To assist our employees who are or become disabled and those employees who suffer on-the-job injuries, we will make reasonable accommodations to enable such employees to continue performing the essential functions of their jobs. Consistent with this policy, we may modify job duties to comply with medical requirements or restrictions. Other accommodations, such as transfer to a vacant position for which the employee is qualified, may be appropriate, depending upon specific facts and circumstances of individual situations.

Obviously, there are limits to the accommodations which we can realistically make. For example, where an accommodation would cause an undue hardship to the County we would be unable to make the particular accommodation. Similarly, where placing an individual in a position, with or without accommodation, would cause the employee to be a direct threat to the employee or others, we may be unable to place the employee in a particular position.

If you need to request a reasonable accommodation because of a disability or on-the-job injury, please follow the procedure set forth in our EEO Grievance Procedure. We will discuss the matter with you, investigate your request and attempt, to the extent possible, to reasonably accommodate you.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

Blount County Government complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This Act requires that agencies receiving federal money develop and implement plans to ensure that no one receiving benefits under a federally funded program is discriminated against on the basis of race, color, or national origin.

To report any complaints or to receive additional information about Title VI, contact the Compliance Coordinator at 273-5781.

HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act)

Blount County Government complies with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) and follows guidelines involving the protected health information of employees and dependents.

Code of Ethics

Ethical Conduct

It is the policy of Blount County Government to uphold, promote, and demand the highest standards of ethics from all employees and officials, whether elected or appointed. Accordingly, all County employees should maintain the utmost standards of personal integrity, truthfulness, honesty, and fairness in carrying out their public duties; avoid any improprieties in their roles as public servants; and never use their county position or powers for improper personal gain.

You are required to maintain the highest ethical standards in the conduct of your duties. This also applies to non-work situations when you identify yourself as a County employee (i.e. wearing a County identification badge, distributing a County business card, wearing a County uniform, driving a County vehicle, etc.). In order to fulfill this requirement, the following will apply:

- Personal characteristics such as honesty, courtesy, dependability, and use of sound judgment are required for all employees in all classes of work in County government.
- There shall be no activity which is in conflict with the interest of your official duties.
- You cannot use your position with the County for private interest.
- You must comply with the County's Code of Ethics Policy.

Conflict of Interest

Employment with Blount County Government is a public trust. You must not have any financial interest in, or receive any financial benefit from, any acquisition or expenditure related to County activities that interferes or conflicts with the full discharge of your duties. If the circumstances would cause a reasonable person to believe that a conflict of interest may exist, you must file a conflict of interest form with the County Clerk's Office as instructed by the County's Code of Ethics Policy.

CODE OF ETHICS POLICY

(1) "County" means Blount County, which includes all boards, committees, commissions, authorities, corporations or other instrumentalities appointed or created by the County or an official

of the County, and specifically including the County School Board, the County Election Commission, the County Health Department, and utility districts in the County.

(2) "Officials and employees" means and includes any official, whether elected or appointed, officer, employee or servant, or any member of any board, agency, commission, authority or corporation (whether compensated or not), or any officer, employee or servant thereof, of the County.

(3) "Personal interest" means, for the purpose of disclosure of personal interests in accordance with this Code of Ethics, a financial interest of the official or employee, or a financial interest of the official's or employees' spouse or child living in the same household, in the matter to be voted upon, regulated, supervised, or otherwise acted upon in an official capacity.

An official or employee with the responsibility to vote on a measure shall disclose either during the meeting at which the vote takes place, or before the vote and to be included in the minutes, any personal interest that affects or that would lead a reasonable person to infer that it affects the official's or employee's vote on the measure. In addition, the official or employee may, to the extent allowed by law, recuse himself or herself from voting on the measure.

An official or employee who must exercise discretion relative to any matter other than casting a vote and who has a personal interest in the matter that affects, or that would lead a reasonable person to infer that it affects, the exercise of the discretion shall disclose, before the exercise of the discretion when possible, the interest on a disclosure form and file the disclosure form with the County Clerk. In addition, the official or employee may, to the extent allowed by law, recuse himself or herself from the exercise of discretion in the matter.

An official or employee, or an official's or employee's spouse or child living in the same household, may not accept, directly or indirectly, any gift, money, gratuity, or other consideration or favor of any kind from anyone other than the County:

- 1) For the performance of an act, or refraining from performance of an act, that he would be expected to perform, or refrain from performing, in the regular course of his duties; or
- 2) That a reasonable person would understand was intended to influence the vote, official action, or judgment of the official or employee in executing County business.

It shall not be considered a violation of this policy for an official or employee to receive entertainment, food, refreshments, meals, health screenings, amenities, foodstuffs, or beverages that are provided in connection with a conference sponsored by an established or recognized statewide association of County government officials or by an umbrella or affiliate organization of such statewide association of County government officials. It shall not be considered a violation of this policy for an official or employee to receive an occasional meal or other items of nominal value.

A County Ethics Committee (the "Ethics Committee") consisting of five members shall be appointed to one-year terms by the County Mayor with confirmation by the County Legislative Body, to be appointed each year at the same time as internal committees of the County Legislative

Body. At least three members of the committee shall be members of the County Legislative Body; one member shall be a constitutional County Officer or, should no Constitutional County Officer be willing to accept appointment, an additional member of the County Legislative Body; and the remaining member may be either a member of a board, committee, commission, authority, corporation, or other instrumentality governed by this policy, or an additional member of the County Legislative Body. The Ethics Committee shall convene as soon as practicable after their appointment and elect a chair and a secretary. The records of the Ethics Committee shall be maintained by the secretary and shall be filed in the office of the County Clerk, where they shall be open to public inspection.

Questions and complaints regarding violations of this Code of Ethics or of any violation of state law governing ethical conduct should be directed to the Ethics Committee. Complaints shall be in writing and signed by the person making the complaint, and shall set forth in reasonable detail the facts upon which the complaint is based.

The Ethics Committee, or designee, shall investigate any credible complaint against an official or employee charging any violation of this Code of Ethics. They may undertake an investigation on its own initiative when it acquires information indicating a possible violation, and make recommendations for action to end or seek retribution for any activity that, in the Committee's judgment, constitutes a violation of this Code of Ethics. If a member of the Committee is the subject of a complaint, such member shall recuse himself or herself from all proceedings involving such complaint.

The Committee may:

(1) refer the matter to the County Attorney for a legal opinion and/or recommendations for action;

(2) in the case of an official, refer the matter to the County Legislative Body for possible public censure if the County Legislative Body finds such action warranted;

(3) in the case of an employee, refer the matter to the official responsible for supervision of the employee for possible disciplinary action if the official finds discipline warranted;

(4) in a case involving possible violation of state statutes, refer the matter to the district attorney for possible ouster or criminal prosecution.

The interpretation that a reasonable person in the circumstances would apply shall be used in interpreting and enforcing this Code of Ethics. When a violation of this Code of Ethics also constitutes a violation of a personnel policy or a civil service policy, the violation will generally be dealt with as a violation of the personnel or civil service provisions rather than as a violation of this Code of Ethics.

In addition to the ethical principles set out in this Code of Ethics, state laws also provide a framework for the ethical behavior of County Officials and employees in the performance of their duties. Officials and employees should familiarize themselves with the state laws applicable to their

office or position and the performance of their duties. To the extent that an issue is addressed by state law (law of general application, public law of local application, local option law, or private act), the provisions of that state law, to the extent they are more restrictive, shall control. Additional information on the Ethics Policy is located on the blounttn.org/hr web site.

Political Activity

You may join or affiliate with civic organizations of a partisan or a political nature and may attend political meetings. You may advocate and support the principles or policies of civic or political organizations in accordance with the Constitution and laws of the State of Tennessee and in accordance with the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America.

However, you may not:

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

Secondary Employment

You shall not engage in any outside employment which adversely affects your work performance as an employee of the County or creates a conflict of interest.

If you engage in other employment, you must notify your supervisor in writing stating the name of the employer, the nature of work or business, specific duties, and hours worked per week. Your supervisor will send a copy of these statements to the Human Resources Director for placement in your personnel file. If your supervisor believes there may be a potential incompatibility between the outside employment and County employment for any reason, he/she shall submit appropriate recommendations to the Human Resources Director. The final decision will be made jointly by the Human Resources Director and your Department Head/Elected Official.

You shall at all times give first priority to the performance of your Blount County job. County work schedules will not be adjusted to accommodate non-County work schedules.

Nepotism

Members of an employee's immediate family, (excluding seasonal/part-time students) will be considered for employment on the basis of their qualifications. Immediate family may not be hired, however, if employment would:

- 1) Create a relationship whereby one immediate family member is within the chain of command of another,
- 2) Have the potential for creating an adverse impact on work performance; or
- 3) Create either an actual conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest.

This policy must also be considered when assigning, transferring, or promoting an employee. For the purpose of this policy, immediate family includes: spouse, parent, child, sibling, in-law, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, grandparent, grandchild, members of household.

Employees who become immediate family members may continue employment as long as it does not involve any of the above. If one of the conditions outlined should occur, attempts will be made to find a suitable position within the County to which one of the employees will transfer. If employees become immediate family members, Blount County Government will make reasonable efforts to assign job duties so as to minimize problems of supervision, safety, security or morale. If accommodations of this nature are not feasible, the employees will be permitted to determine which of them will resign. If the employees cannot make a decision, the County will decide in its sole discretion who will remain employed, if either.

This policy does not apply to "immediate family" who already are employed by Blount County as of the effective date of this policy; this waiver, however, may not be used as a basis for further exceptions subsequent to the effective date of this policy.

Policy effective date 12/2006

County Equipment

County equipment, materials, vehicles, and/or other resources assigned to you shall be used with care and economy, and shall be used only for County purposes. Waste or misuse of County resources may result in disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

Gifts and Contributions

You may not solicit or accept, either directly or indirectly, for yourself or for any member of your household, any gift, gratuity, service, favor, entertainment, lodging, transportation, loan, loan guarantee, or anything of monetary value from any person who:

- has, or is seeking to obtain, contractual or other business or financial relations with the department or agency of Blount County by which you are employed; or
- conducts operations or activities that are regulated by the department of Blount County

which you are employed; or

- has an interest that may be substantially affected by the performance or non-performance of your official duties.

Classification and Compensation

Introductory Period

All new employees will be considered on “introductory” status for the first six (6) months of employment. At the end of the regular introductory period, the Department Head can elect to remove the introductory status, or extend the introductory period. During the introductory period, the full-time employee will accrue sick days at the stated rate, but will not be eligible for vacation days until successfully completing six (6) months of consecutive employment. Successful completion of an introductory period does not alter the employee’s at-will status.

EMPLOYMENT TERMS

- **“Full-Time Regular Employee”** is defined as an employee who works at least thirty seven and one half (37.5) hours per week on a regular and continuous basis throughout the calendar year. The single word “employee” will be used to designate a full-time or regular employee on leave policies.
- **“Part-Time Regular Employees”** are defined as an employee who works fewer than twenty nine (29) hours per week on a regular and continuous basis throughout the calendar year.
- **“Temporary Employee”** is defined as an employee who is engaged to work either full-time or part-time with the understanding that their employment will terminate upon the completion of a specific assignment. These employees may be “exempt” or “non-exempt” as defined below.
- **“Exempt Employee”** is defined as an employee who is not required to be paid overtime, or receive comp time in accordance with federal wage and hour laws, for hours worked over forty (40) in a workweek. Executive employees, professional employees, and certain employees in administrative positions are typically exempt. However, classifying a position as exempt is made on the basis of comparing actual job duties with criteria established by the Department of Labor.
- **“Non-exempt Employee”** is defined as an employee who is required to be paid overtime or receive comp time at time and one-half of their regular rate of pay, in accordance with federal wage and hour laws, for hours worked over forty (40) in a workweek.

Employment at-Will

Blount County Government is an at-will employer and as such there is no specific length or guarantee of continued employment. Either you or the County may terminate your employment at-will, without cause or prior notice, at any time. None of the County's policies may be construed to create a contract of employment or any other legal obligation, express or implied, and any policy

may be amended, revised, supplemented, rescinded or otherwise altered, in whole or in part, at any time, at the sole and absolute discretion of Blount County.

Pay Periods

All General County employees are paid on a semi-monthly basis, the 15th and 30th except the Highway Department. They are paid bi-weekly on every other Friday. Some pay dates may occur earlier due to holidays.

Overtime Compensation/Compensatory Time

No overtime or compensatory time will be earned until the employee has worked on the job over 40 hours during the work period.

- A. **Overtime/Compensatory Time:** All eligible employees may be paid overtime or given compensatory time for all work performed over 40 hours during the workweek.
- B. **Overtime Rate:** Hourly rate employees who work overtime will receive overtime pay at a rate of time and one-half their regular hourly pay. Salaried employees who are eligible will receive overtime pay at a rate of time and one-half their equivalent hourly rate (the salaried employee's equivalent hourly rate is calculated by dividing his/her annual salary by 52 weeks and dividing that number by the number of hours in a normal workweek.) The overtime rate for both hourly and salaried employees applies only to those hours worked over 40 during a week. For salaried employees, no additional compensation will be paid for hours worked under 40. For hourly rate employees, the overtime rate will apply only to hours worked over 40 and the regular rate will apply to hours worked up to 40 hours.
- C. **Selection of Compensatory Time:** Employees who are required to work in excess of 40 hours per week may request to receive compensatory time off in lieu of overtime. Such compensatory time shall be earned at a rate of one and one-half hours for each hour of employment worked over 40 hours per week. An employee cannot accrue more than 240 hours of compensatory time. Any employee who has accumulated 240 hours of compensatory time shall be paid for any additional overtime that is worked. An employee who has accrued compensatory time upon termination of employment will be paid the greater of the average regular rate the employee received during the last three years, or the final regular rate of pay received by the employee. The use of compensatory time is subject to approval by the Officeholder/Department Head.

Working during Lunch Periods

Lunch period is time set aside for eating. The time is not considered part of the basic workday and no pay is earned during this period.

A workday may not be shortened by "working through" or reducing the lunch period on a voluntary basis. Eliminating or reducing your lunch period requires prior approval from your immediate supervisor. Such approvals must be limited and will typically be for one day due to unusual or special circumstances. Working through the lunch period is not to be used as an on-going solution

for scheduling issues.

Working Before/After Regular Hours

You may not voluntarily begin work early, work after hours, or extend your workday for the purpose of accumulating compensatory time. Prior approval from your immediate supervisor is required for any adjustment to the work schedule.

General Personnel Policies

Attendance

You are an important member of the Blount County Government team. We are committed to providing the highest level of government services and functions to better serve the community. In order to accomplish this, your prompt and regular attendance is required.

In case of an illness or injury that would prevent you from reporting to work at the scheduled time, you are required to speak directly to your supervisor. If your supervisor is unavailable, you are required to speak directly to the next-level manager or director, or to the person designated by your supervisor.

Failure to provide notification of absence for three (3) consecutive workdays may result in removal from the payroll as having resigned without notice. Employees who resign under such circumstances may be deemed not eligible for rehire.

Work Hours and Time Records

The normal workweek consists of 37.5 hours or 40 hours depending on the job classification and work location. Core business hours are 8:00 am to 4:30 pm. Some jobs may require other hours of service. In such cases, the immediate supervisor will inform you of your work hours.

You will be responsible for completing a Blount County time sheet with your beginning and ending work times, including lunch. This is necessary for payroll calculation of your earnings. Even if you are classified as "exempt" (from overtime), completing your time sheet in full provides the most complete information to the Payroll Department.

Anyone who willfully falsifies a time record will be subject to immediate dismissal. A workday may not be shortened by "working through" or reducing the lunch period on a voluntary basis, nor may you voluntarily begin work before or after your regularly scheduled hours for the purpose of accumulating compensatory time. Every adjustment to the work schedule requires advance approval from your immediate supervisor.

Canvassing or Solicitation

Non-employees are not permitted to solicit verbally or by distribution of written material to Blount County employees or the general public for commercial purposes during work hours in work areas.

Solicitations by Blount County employees made to other Blount County employees are permitted only in non-work areas and during non-work hours.

Non-work areas include lobbies, hallways, elevators, stairs, sidewalks, parking areas, patios, lunchrooms, or other areas not regularly scheduled for work activities. Non-work hours include before and after scheduled work hours, lunch periods, and approved breaks.

Employees or outside charitable organizations who wish to solicit Blount County employees for charitable purposes or to schedule activities in Blount County offices, must submit a written request and must be approved by the County Mayor.

Inclement Weather

Inclement weather usually does not warrant closing of County offices. Absence due to inclement weather requires you to make a personal judgment pertaining to your safety in traveling to and from work. Loss of work time for this reason is charged to your accrued compensatory time or annual leave. If you have no compensatory time or annual leave, then the time is charged as leave without pay.

If you make the effort to report on time and actually report within a reasonable period of time (based on the circumstances of the event), you will not be required to use leave for the absence. Your supervisor will determine if you must use accrued leave for late arrival.

The County Mayor will decide if Blount County offices will be closed on normal work days during inclement weather. Closing information will be given to the major media outlets including WIVK (fm 107.7) and WNOX (fm 99.1, am 990) radio stations, and WATE, WBIR, and WVLT television stations. Department Heads or their designees may determine closing for departments that work evenings and/or weekends (i.e. Library). If you have any questions about an official closing, you should contact your immediate supervisor.

Personnel Files

Tennessee law requires that "all state, county, and municipal records ... shall at all times, during business hours, be open for ... inspection by any citizen of Tennessee." The statute applies to personnel records and allows you to review your personnel file, as well as allowing any member of the public to do so. (Medical records are not part of the personnel file.)

There is, however, restricted access to certain types of employee information. The following records of government employees will not be open for inspection by members of the public:

- unpublished telephone numbers;
- bank account information;
- social security numbers;
- driver's license information - unless driving a vehicle is part of the employee's duties or incidental to the performance of the job;

- the same information about an employee's immediate family

The personnel files are maintained in the Human Resources Department. To review a file, contact the Human Resources Office. A sign-out sheet will be in each file showing who reviewed the file and the date. An employee of the Human Resources Department will remain in the room while the file is being reviewed.

It is important that you promptly report any change in personal information to the Human Resources Department. Other records, such as educational accomplishments, should also be reported as they are factors in consideration for future promotional opportunity. Be sure that the Human Resources Department always has:

1. Your correct address and contact numbers such as telephone, cellular phone, pager, etc.;
2. your marital status;
3. any increase or decrease in number of dependents;
4. any change affecting Social Security records; and
5. your correct beneficiary.

Performance Evaluations

The performance evaluation is a systematic method of appraising and strengthening your performance. On a semi-annual basis your supervisor makes a rated evaluation based on the following performance variables:

Job Knowledge	Quality of Work
Quantity of Work	Organization
Communication	Dependability
Safety	Attitude
Attendance/Punctuality	Appearance/Professional Image

Your supervisor reviews your job description for any necessary changes and provides you feedback about your performance. Together you may develop goals to improve your job skills and enhance your performance. Forms are provided so each employee's performance can be effectively evaluated and compared against standardized performance variables. These are measurable in the duties and responsibilities of all positions and are used to evaluate the quality of total job performance during a defined period.

Bonus Policy

From time to time, and depending on the availability of funds and other factors, the County may provide incentive compensation to certain employees. To be eligible for the bonus payment, an employee must have completed the introductory period and be on the payroll at the time the bonus is paid.

All bonus award recipients must meet the following general criteria:

- The employee's accomplishments exceed the normal standards/expectations for the job.
- The employee has fulfilled all normal job duties in addition to performing added duties to accomplish a special project or achieve a certain goal.
- The employee serves as a role model for others, displaying desirable characteristics such as outstanding customer service, positive attitude, team leadership, etc...
- Length of service. A commitment to the County by their long-term service.

Decisions about the amount of a lump-sum bonus should be dependent upon the nature and complexity of the accomplishment and the ability of the department to fund the payout. Managers should clearly communicate to the recognized employees what outstanding achievements led to the bonus recognition. The payment will be taxed at the Federal withholding rate established by the IRS in addition to other required taxes.

The Bonus Plan is provided at the discretion of Blount County Government. Both the fact and amount of any incentive compensation are within the sole and absolute discretion of the County.

Promotions, Transfers and Reassignments

Promotions: Blount County continually strives to promote employees and fill job vacancies on an equal opportunity basis. Promotions are based on an objective evaluation of each vacancy and the candidates involved. Vacancies will be advertised and, where appropriate, Blount County will promote from within. Outside recruitment may be necessary based on the qualifications and skills of internal applicants.

Job postings may be viewed on the job position bulletin boards outside Human Resources, on various bulletin boards throughout the County system and on the Blount County web site www.blounttn.org/hr.

Transfers and Reassignments: It is the policy of Blount County Government that it may, at its discretion, initiate or approve employee job transfers.

You may request a voluntary job transfer by applying for a posted open position. However, to be eligible for a voluntary transfer, you must be able to meet the requirements of the new position, must have satisfactory performance, must have held your current position for at least six months, and must have no adverse disciplinary actions during the same time period.

Progressive Discipline Procedure

In cases where an employee displays inappropriate conduct or poor performance - and the circumstances do not warrant prompt dismissal from employment-Blount County generally employs a progressive discipline process. Although the county typically prefers to utilize the steps below, the County reserves the right to employ any level of discipline that it considers appropriate under the circumstances.

- **Verbal** - The first step is often a verbal warning from the supervisor which identifies the issue and the corrective action needed from the employee. The supervisor documents this step by providing appropriate documentation to the Human Resources Director for review and placement in the employee's personnel file. The employee may submit a statement for the file, if desired.
- **Written** - The second step is often a written warning, which appropriately describes the issue and the corrective action needed. The written warning will be discussed with the employee, and a copy of the warning will be sent to the Human Resources Director for review and placement in the employee's file. The employee may submit a statement for the file, if desired.
- **Adverse Action** - If previous attempts at correction have not been successful, the County may take a form of adverse action such as suspension, demotion, or termination. Adverse actions must be approved in advance by the Department Head/Elected Official and/or Human Resources.

Basic Work Rules

The County has certain policies and rules to govern the conduct and performance of our employees. Our most important rule is to use "good sense" at all times. We also have established some other basic work rules that should not be violated. Violation of these or similar rules may result in discipline up to and including immediate termination.

Absenteeism or Tardiness: When an employee fails to report to work as scheduled, it makes it more difficult for us to serve our citizens. Every employee plays an important role in our operation, and his or her absence or tardiness places an unnecessary burden on fellow employees. Employees are expected to report to work on time as scheduled, to limit breaks to the time allowed, and to stay on the job until the end of his or her scheduled work day.

Breach of Confidence or Security: Because of the nature of our work, we cannot tolerate any breaches of our security measures or of our confidential relationships.

County Premises: Except for areas that are open to the general public, you are allowed on County premises only during your scheduled work hours, unless otherwise authorized by your supervisor.

Damage to Property: We have made a tremendous investment in our facilities, and equipment to better serve our citizens and to make your job easier. Deliberate, reckless, or careless damage to the County's property, or property of others, will not be tolerated. If appropriate, damage to property will be reported to law enforcement agencies.

Discourtesy or Disrespect: We expect all employees to be courteous, polite, and friendly to our citizens and others, and to their fellow employees. No one should use profanity or show disrespect to a citizen or co-worker, or engage in any activity which could harm our reputation.

Fighting, Threats, or Weapons: We do not allow fighting, threatening words or conduct, loud or abusive language, or any other actions that could injure a citizen, fellow employee, or member of the public, regardless of where such words or actions occur. We also do not allow the possession of weapons of any kind on County premises, with the exception of authorized law enforcement officials.

Fraud, Dishonesty or False Statements: No employee or applicant may falsify or make any misrepresentations on or about any application, resume, document establishing identity or work status, medical record, insurance form, invoice, paperwork, time sheet, time card, or any other document. If you observe such a violation, please report it to your supervisor immediately.

Gambling: Employees may not engage in any form of gambling on County premises.

Harassment: Our No Harassment Policy, which we have set forth in detail in this Handbook, strictly prohibits harassment based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, citizenship, age, handicap or disability, or any other category protected by law.

Injuries and Accidents: Every injury, no matter how slight, must be immediately reported to your supervisor for first aid treatment or medical care. If you have a job-related injury/accident, you must choose a provider from the County's panel of physicians. We may require that you present a doctor's release before returning to work.

Insubordination: We all have duties to perform and everyone, including your supervisor, must follow directions from someone. Employees must not refuse to follow the directions of a supervisor or member of management.

Leaving Early and Returning Late: Leaving early or returning late from breaks or lunch is prohibited. Leaving your work assignment before quitting time to change clothes or make preparations to leave before the end of your scheduled shift is also prohibited.

Misuse of Property: Employees may not misuse or use without authorization any equipment, vehicle, or other property of customers, vendors, other employees, or the County.

Poor Performance: We expect all employees to make every effort to learn their job and to perform at a satisfactory level. Employees who fail to maintain a satisfactory level of performance are subject to immediate termination.

Shortages: Employees who handle cash as a part of their job duties will be held accountable and may be required to pay for all shortages. Employees who handle cash as a part of their job duties may also be disciplined for such shortages, up to and including immediate termination.

Sleeping or Inattention: To protect the safety of all employees and to properly serve our customers, everyone needs to be fully alert while on the job. We cannot tolerate sleeping or inattention on the job.

Solicitation or Distribution: We prohibit solicitation by an employee of another employee during the working time of either employee for any reason. Distribution of advertising materials, handbills, or other literature is prohibited in all working areas at all times. We also prohibit solicitation and distribution by non-employees on County premises at all times.

Substance Abuse: We will not tolerate substance abuse. Employees who test positive for the presence of drugs or alcohol may be subject to immediate termination.

Theft: Our society has laws against theft and so do we. Stealing or attempting to steal County property or property belonging to others is strictly prohibited. If you wish to remove any County property from the premises, you must obtain written permission in advance from your supervisor.

Unlawful Activity: Employees should not engage in any unlawful or unethical activity, including, but not limited to activity either on County property, or off the job, since such activity can adversely affect the County's reputation and/or the employee's ability to effectively perform the duties of his or her position.

Unsafe Work Practices: We are committed to providing a safe place for you to work, and we have established a safety program to ensure that everyone understands the importance of safety. This program requires all of us to exercise good judgment and common sense in our day-to-day work. Horseplay and practical jokes can cause accidents and injuries and, therefore, are prohibited.

Violation of these or similar rules may lead to discipline, up to and including immediate termination.

Obviously, this list is not all inclusive and there may be other circumstances for which employees may be disciplined or terminated. If you have any questions about these rules, or what we expect of our employees, please discuss them with your supervisor.

Resignations

If you choose to resign your position, you should notify your immediate supervisor or the department head in writing no less than ten (10) working days before your expected termination date. Failure to provide such a notice will be recorded in your personnel file and may constitute deeming you not eligible for re-hire.

Reduction in Force

A reduction in force is the release of an employee due to lack of funds, curtailment of work, or reorganization. If a reduction in force becomes necessary, the County will make decisions based on the needs of the Department(s) affected and the job knowledge, skills, work performance and

seniority of the employees.

Safety

Blount County is concerned for your health and safety in the performance of your job. You must observe all safety rules and report any unsafe activity to the Risk Management Department.

Any workplace accidents, incidents, or injuries must be reported immediately to your direct supervisor and the Risk Management Department. If you are injured and unable to report the incident immediately, then you should report the incident as soon as possible.

For additional information about any safety concern, please consult the Risk Management Department or the web site www.blounttn.org/risk.

Workplace Chemicals

The County maintains a Hazard Communication Program which includes lists of all chemicals with which you work which may in any way be hazardous. We also maintain copies of Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) on each chemical, which explain how to safely work with that chemical, and a written description of our program. We will provide training before you are assigned to work with or be exposed to a chemical that OSHA has declared "hazardous" in any way. Before you start a job using chemicals, you should always read container labels or consult with your supervisor about the MSDS, including what, if any safety equipment you should use. You should evaluate any unusual or non-routine task for chemical hazards and approach your supervisor or manager if necessary. Immediately notify your supervisor of any chemical containers which are leaking, are unlabeled, or where you are uncertain of how to dispose of a chemical.

If you buy new chemicals, always obtain a copy of the MSDS and give it to your supervisor before you use the chemical.

Garnishments and Levies

In the event that garnishment or similar proceedings are instituted against an employee, Blount County Government will deduct the required amount from the employee's paycheck.

Alcohol and Drugs Policy

Blount County Government has the responsibility to maintain a safe and efficient working environment. Employees who use drugs or who work while under the influence of drugs or alcohol presents a safety hazard to themselves and fellow employees. Moreover, the use of drugs and alcohol by employees limits their ability to perform their work with the highest amount of efficiency. The purpose of this policy is to ensure employees the right to work in a drug and alcohol free environment. Blount County Government will make an ongoing effort to maintain a drug free workplace.

Employees are prohibited from being under the influence of drugs or alcohol, while on duty or on County property. Employees may not possess, sell, solicit, or receive illegal drugs or alcohol while

on duty or on County property. The violation of this policy is grounds for immediate discharge.

The County reserves the right to require employees, while on duty or while on County property, to agree to inspections of all County property at any time. Searches of individual or personal property may be conducted as authorized by law. If an employee withholds consent to such an inspection, the County may discipline the employee, up to and including discharge.

The County reserves the right to conduct drug/alcohol testing in the following situations:

- An applicant for employment
- Where an employee has been involved in an accident on the job that resulted in, or could have resulted in, substantial injury to person or property
- Reasonable suspicion

If an employee tests positive for the use of drugs or alcohol, a confirmatory test will be given. If the employee also tests positive on the confirmatory test, the County may discipline the employee, up to and including discharge. If an employee refuses to submit to a drug test when requested, the County may discipline the employee up to and including discharge.

Certain employees are subject to federally required DOT drug and alcohol testing. For those employees, compliance with the federally mandated testing program is a condition of employment.

This policy is for the benefit of all employees and cooperation with the policy is required. We believe the policy is necessary to ensure a safe and secure working environment for everyone at Blount County.

Tobacco Use

Pursuant to the Non-Smoker Protection Act, Tennessee Code, smoking is prohibited in enclosed areas of County property, including but not limited to, cafeteria, employee lounges, hallways, meeting rooms, offices, restrooms, and company vehicles (unless occupied solely by the operator). Smoking may take place only in designated unenclosed areas. Any violation of this provision may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Electronic Communications

This policy contains guidelines for the use, access, monitoring and disclosure of Electronic Communications created, sent, received, transmitted, or stored by employees using any County-provided communication system or equipment and employee-provided systems or equipment used either in the workplace or during working time. "Electronic Communications" include, among other things, messages, images or any other information contained in e-mail, voice mail, fax machines, computers, personal digital assistants, pagers, telephones, cellular and mobile phones, Intranet, or Internet. (In the remainder of this policy, all of these communication devices are collectively referred to as "Systems.")

Acceptable Uses of Our Systems: Employees may use Our Systems to communicate internally

with co-workers or externally with constituents, suppliers, vendors, advisors, and other business acquaintances for business purposes. The County provides employees with access to our Systems to facilitate these business communications and to enhance productivity.

Management's Right to Access Electronic Communications: All Electronic Communications contained in County Systems are County records. Although each employee may have an individual password to access these Systems, the Systems belong to the County and the contents of the Systems and Electronic Communications conducted on the Systems are accessible by the County at all times for any business purpose. These Systems will be subject to periodic unannounced inspections and should be treated like other shared filing systems. The contents of our Systems will also be monitored by and disclosed to the County without further notice to employees. Thus, employees should not assume that Electronic Communications are confidential or private. Back-up copies of Electronic Communications in our Systems also will be maintained and referenced.

Personal Use of Our Systems: The County provides Systems to assist employees in the performance of their jobs. The County reserves the right and employees agree to permit the County to use, access, monitor and disclose all Electronic Communications on our Systems without regard to content. Since employees' personal communications and information can be accessed without advance notice, employees should not use our Systems for communication or information that employees would not want discussed with or known to third parties. For example, employees should not use the Systems for gossip; personal information about themselves or others; for forwarding messages under circumstances likely to embarrass themselves or others; or for emotional responses to business correspondence or work situations. Employees also should not use these Systems for such purposes as soliciting for commercial ventures, religious or personal causes, outside organizations, or other similar, non-job-related situations.

Although incidental and occasional personal use of our systems that does not interfere or conflict with the County's business is permitted, personal communications in our Systems are treated the same as all other Electronic Communications, and will be used, accessed, monitored, and disclosed by the County at any time without further notice.

Employees may not install any software on any County-provided System or copy software from any County-provided System without the prior written permission of our Systems Supervisor. Involving the Systems Supervisor ensures that the County can manage the software on its Systems, prevent the introduction of computer viruses, and meet its obligations under any applicable software licenses and copyright laws. Computer software is protected from unauthorized copying and use by federal and state law. The unauthorized copying or use of computer software exposes the County and individual employees to substantial fines and/or imprisonment.

Forbidden Uses of Our Systems: Employees may not use our Systems in a manner that violates our No Harassment Policy, Equal Employment Opportunity Policy, or other County policies. Employees may not use our Systems in any way that may be seen as insulting, disruptive, obscene, offensive, or harmful to morale. Examples of forbidden transmissions include, among other things, sexually-explicit messages, images, cartoons, or jokes; propositions or love letters; ethnic or racial slurs; or any other message or image that may be in violation of our No Harassment policy.

In addition, employees may not use our Systems:

- to carry any defamatory, discriminatory or obscene material;
- in a manner that violates the terms of any telecommunications license or any laws governing transborder data flow including but not limited to laws dealing with data collection, protection, privacy, confidentiality and security;
- in connection with any attempt to penetrate computer or network security of any County or other system, or to gain unauthorized access or attempted access to any other person's Electronic Communications systems or equipment;
- in connection with any infringement of another person's intellectual property rights, including but not limited to copyrights; and,
- in connection with the violation or attempted violation of any law.

Electronic Forgery: Electronic forgery is defined as misrepresenting, disguising, or concealing your identity or another's identity in any way while using Electronic Communications; making changes to Electronic Communications without clearly indicating that you have made such changes; or using another person's account without prior written approval of the account owner and without identifying that you are the author. Electronic forgery is not allowed for any purposes.

Intellectual Property Rights: Employees must always respect copyrights and trademarks of third parties and their ownership claims in images, text, video and audio material, software, information, and inventions. Employees should not copy, use, or transfer proprietary materials of others without appropriate authorization. Downloaded software and other copyrighted material may be subject to licensing obligations or restrictions. Even when software is labeled "freeware" or "shareware" there may be retained licensing restrictions that prohibit or limit the usage or commercialization of such items. If questions arise in this regard, contact the Systems Supervisor. The County will cooperate with the copyright holder and legal officials in all copyright matters.

System Integrity, Security, and Encryption: All Systems passwords and encryption keys must be available to the County and employees may not use passwords that are unknown to the County. Employees may not install password or encryption programs without the written permission of our Systems Supervisor and without turning over encryption keys to their supervisor. Further, employees are prohibited from the unauthorized use of passwords and encryption keys belonging to other employees to gain access to the other employee's messages, information, or communications.

Consequences of Violations of the County's Electronic Communications Policy: Violations of this Policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including **immediate termination of an employee's employment, as well as possible civil liabilities or criminal prosecution.** Where the County deems it appropriate, we may advise legal officials or other appropriate third parties of any illegal violations. The County will cooperate in investigations conducted by legal officials or appropriate third parties. We will not, of course, retaliate against anyone who reports violations or

assists with our investigation of possible violations of this policy.

Workplace Violence Prevention Policy

Blount County Government is committed to preventing workplace violence and to maintaining a safe work environment. Given the increasing violence in society in general, Blount County has adopted the following guidelines to deal with intimidation, harassment, or other threats of (or actual) violence that may occur during business hours or on its premises.

All employees should be treated with courtesy and respect at all times. No one other than law enforcement officials, carrying a weapon while in the course of their duties, may bring firearms, weapons, or other dangerous or hazardous devices of substance on the premises of Blount County Government.

Conduct that threatens, intimidates, or coerces another employee, or a member of the public will not be tolerated. This prohibition includes all acts of harassment, including harassment that is based on an individual's sex, race, age, or any characteristic protected by federal, state, or local law.

All threats of (or actual) violence, both direct and indirect, should be reported as soon as possible to your immediate supervisor or any other member of management. This includes threats by employees, as well as threats by vendors, solicitors, or other members of the public. When reporting a threat of violence, the employee should be as specific and detailed as possible.

All suspicious individuals or activities should also be reported as soon as possible to a supervisor. Do not place yourself in danger. If you see or hear a commotion or disturbance near your work area, do not try to intercede or see what is happening.

Blount County Government will promptly and thoroughly investigate all reports of threats of (or actual) violence and of suspicious individuals or activities. The identity of the individual making a report will be protected as much as is practical. In order to maintain workplace safety and the integrity of its investigation, the County may suspend employees, either with or without pay, pending investigation.

Anyone determined to be responsible for threats of (or actual) violence or other conduct that is in violation of these guidelines will be subject to prompt disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

Blount County Government encourages employees to bring their disputes or differences with other employees to the attention of their supervisor or the Human Resources Department before the situation escalates into potential violence. Blount County is eager to assist in the resolution of employee disputes, and will not discipline employees for raising such concerns.

Personal Appearance

Our professional atmosphere is maintained, in part, by the image we present to our constituents and vendors. We expect all employees to present a neat, well-groomed appearance and a courteous

disposition. These qualities go further than any other factors in making a favorable impression on the public and your fellow workers.

You should avoid extremes in dress. Flashy, skimpy or revealing clothing is unacceptable. Employees should dress in a businesslike manner. Good personal hygiene is also important in terms of our constituents' favorable opinion and in terms of your respect for your fellow employees. Accordingly, employees are expected to come to work in a clean condition.

Employees are expected to observe our Personal Appearance Policy at all times while at work. Employees who report to work in unacceptable attire or appearance may be requested to leave work and return in acceptable attire or appearance. Such time off from work will be without pay for non-exempt employees.

Managers are responsible for insuring that employees project a professional image and adhere to our Personal Appearance Policy.

Leave Policies

Annual Leave / Vacation

If you are a Full-Time Regular Employee (including your introductory period), you are eligible for annual leave. The following guidelines currently apply:

- During the first year of employment five (5) days vacation leave may be taken after successfully completing the six (6) month introductory period, with supervisor approval.
- The following January, two (2) weeks vacation leave may be given to be taken with supervisor approval.

Example

Date of Hire ----- March 5, 2008
6 Months of Employment-----September 5, 2008
Eligible Vacation Days-----5 days (1 week)
January 1, 2009 – December 31, 2009 ----- 10 days (2 weeks)

1 – 10 years of Service
10 days or 2 weeks

11 – 15 years of Service
15 days or 3 weeks

16 plus years of Service
20 days or 4 weeks

Vacation leave is not accumulative and is not carried over into the following calendar year unless approved in writing by your supervisor due to operational demands.

Upon termination of employment, employees will be paid for the balance of their unused annual leave.

Annual Leave Scheduling

You must submit your annual leave request to your supervisor and receive approval prior to taking the leave.

Check with your Department Head regarding the procedure for requesting use of annual leave.

Sick Leave Accrual

Full-time employees will receive full pay during incapacity caused by illness when accumulated sick leave is available, approved and taken. Employees may accumulate sick leave, however it is non-compensable upon the employee's termination of employment. In the event of death, a maximum of up to 30 days accumulated sick leave will be paid to the employee's estate.

A. Earning and Accumulating Sick Leave

1. Employees will earn one sick day per month of employment, beginning on the 31st day of employment.
2. There is no maximum on the accumulation of sick days.

Use of Sick Leave

An employee may use sick leave for absence due to his or her own illness or injury or that of an immediate family member defined as:

1. The employee's spouse
2. The employee's parents
3. The spouses' parents
4. Children or children under legal guardianship of the employee and/or spouse

Sick leave may also be used for appointments with a licensed doctor, dentist or recognized practitioner.

A. Documentation of sick leave

Employees are required to notify their immediate supervisor prior to their scheduled start time of their need for sick leave. After three (3) consecutive days of absence, a doctor's excuse may be required. The Department Head may also request a doctor's statement anytime they deem necessary.

B. Exhaustion of sick leave

Employees who have used all of their accumulated sick leave will not receive financial compensation for additional days needed due to illness or injury. For any additional time needed, the employee will be considered on leave without pay unless the employee has vacation or comp time available. The employee may request the additional sick leave be credited against the vacation or comp time.

Sick Leave Bank Guidelines/Procedures

The purpose of the Employee Sick Leave Bank is to provide sick leave to full-time employees of Blount County Government who have suffered a qualifying personal illness, injury or disability.

All full-time employees of Blount County Government who are entitled to sick leave under the Sick Leave Policy will be eligible to participate in the Sick Leave Bank provided they meet the requirements:

1. Worked for one (1) continuous year.
2. Have a minimum of six (6) accumulated sick leave days.
3. Three (3) days of sick leave will be deducted from his or her personal accumulation and deposited to the Sick Leave Bank.

Employees electing to participate will do so during the month of November with the effective date of January 1st. Donations of sick leave to the Sick Leave Bank are non-refundable and non-transferable.

If at any time the number of hours in the Sick Leave Bank is less than one (1) day per member, the Trustees will assess each member one (1) or more (up to a maximum of 3) days of accumulated sick leave. If a member has no accumulated sick leave at the time of assessment, the first earned day(s) will be donated as they are accrued by the employee.

By written notice to the Trustees, a member may withdraw from the Sick Leave Bank participation on December 31st. Membership withdrawal, however, will result in the forfeiture of all days contributed.

Members of the Sick Leave Bank will be eligible to apply to the Bank for sick leave, only after having been a member of the Bank for thirty (30) calendar days.

Use of the Sick Leave Bank is restricted to illness, surgery or accident resulting in an absence of ten or more consecutive working days. A member must first utilize accumulated vacation or sick leave per the following schedule, before receiving leave from the Sick Leave Bank:

Vacation- Member's available time must be reduced to forty hours
Sick leave- Member's available leave must be reduced to three days

After utilizing the Member's available vacation and sick leave as indicated above, and any available comp time and personal days, receipt of leave from the Sick Leave Bank may begin.

Granted leave from the Bank, approved by the Trustees, will be awarded as needed not exceeding twenty (20) working days for which the individual applicant would have otherwise lost pay. Applicants may submit requests for an extension of such leave grants before or after prior grants expire. The maximum number of days any participant may receive in any fiscal year, which presently begins on July 1 and ends on June 30, is sixty (60). In the event a member is physically or mentally unable to make a request to the Sick Leave Bank for use of sick leave days, any member of the immediate family or agent may file the request.

A physician's statement stating that the illness or accident will require more than a ten (10) day

absence is **required** as a part of the application to receive sick leave days from the Sick Leave Bank. Also, a physician's statement of condition is required from any member requesting additional leave beyond the first twenty (20) days. Refusal to comply will result in denial of the pending request for use of sick leave days from the Bank.

Sick leave granted to a member from the Sick Leave Bank need not be repaid by the individual except at such time as it is deemed necessary to uniformly assess all members.

Grants of sick leave from the Sick Leave Bank will not be made to any members on account of elective and or cosmetic surgery, or illness of any member of the participant's family, or during any period the member is receiving workers' compensation.

A member will lose the right to obtain the benefits of the Sick Leave Bank by:

- (a) Resignation or termination of employment with Blount County Government;
- (b) Cancellation of participation which is effective on January 1st next;
- (c) Refusal to honor such assessment as may be required by the Trustees;
- (d) Retirement;
- (e) Any documented proof of fraud or misrepresentation of facts in making application for use of sick leave from the Sick Leave Bank; or
- (f) Changing to part-time employment status. (29 hours or less per week)

Sick leave used from the Sick Leave Bank shall not constitute creditable service for sick and annual leave accrual or for longevity purposes.

The Board of Trustees may vote to expel any member if the member is found to have violated any of the provisions set forth herein.

Any member who receives Sick Leave Bank benefits through the use of fraud or any misrepresentation of facts shall be liable for the reimbursement of all salary and benefits expended by the bank.

In the event the Sick Leave Bank is dissolved, the total number of days on deposit shall be returned to the participating members and credited to their personal sick leave accumulated in proportion to the number of days each has contributed individually. Days returned under this section and credited to the individual participants accumulation shall be rounded to the nearest one-half (1/2) days.

Personal Leave

After successful completion of the 6 month introductory period, all full-time regular employees may be entitled to three (3) days of paid personal leave per year. Personal leave may not be used to extend vacation or holiday time and all three days may not be taken at one time. Personal leave is not accumulative and may not be carried over into the following calendar year. The only exception is during the first year of employment (defined as anniversary year) up to 3 days of personal leave time may be carried over, if approved, into the following calendar year.

Example

<u>Date of hire</u>	<u>Completion of introductory period</u>	<u>Eligible</u>
March 2, 2008	September 5, 2008	3 days

You will be eligible for three (3) days personal leave after six (6) months of employment. The following January the employee is entitled to three days personal leave.

Earned but unused personal days are not paid upon separation of employment.

Bereavement Leave / Funeral Leave

In the case of death in the employee's immediate family, (immediate family defined as the spouse, parents, spouses' parents, children, brother, sister, grandparents, grandchildren, and spouses' grandparent) the employee can be given up to three (3) working days paid bereavement leave. If additional leave is needed up to two (2) sick days may be used. The Department Head may request the employee to provide written documentation indicating the name of deceased, relationship to employee and dates of bereavement leave.

Holidays

Blount County publishes a holiday schedule each year to be uniformly observed, unless otherwise determined by the Department Head to avoid interruption of a public service. Full-time, regular and introductory employees who are not required to work on the holiday will receive their regular rate of pay for the day. If a holiday falls within an employee's scheduled vacation period, vacation time will not be charged for the holiday. Non-exempt employees required to work the holiday will be compensated with holiday pay, (time and a half) unless otherwise specified or provided for. A non-exempt employee must work the day before and the day after a holiday to be paid for the holiday, unless prior approval for the absence was granted.

Part-time employees are not eligible to receive holiday pay.

Leave of Absence

All full-time regular employees may be granted a period of personal leave without pay wholly at the discretion of the Officeholder or Department Head.

- Leave of absence must be requested in writing to your Department Head. This request should be made long enough in advance to provide the supervisor time to assess workload and consider planned leave of other employees. Your Department Head reserves the right to deny or cancel leave of absence.
- Officeholders may elect not to allow leave of absence within their department. Check with your supervisor first to find out whether leave of absence is allowed within your department. Where

leave of absence is allowed, it must be approved in writing, and the written approval must be given to the Payroll Department along with the employee's time sheet.

Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

Blount County offers leave under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) for eligible employees.

Eligibility: If you have worked for at least one year and for 1,250 hours during the twelve (12) month period preceding the request, you are eligible to take up to twelve (12) weeks of unpaid leave annually when the absence is necessitated by any of the following circumstances:

- the birth or placement for adoption or foster care of a son or daughter;
- your own serious health condition that prevents you from performing the essential functions of your job; or
- the serious health condition of a son or daughter, parent, or spouse if you are needed to help provide care.

Applications: Applications (available in the Human Resources Department) for FMLA leave must be submitted in writing. Applications should be submitted at least thirty (30) days before the leave is to start, or as soon as possible if leave is not foreseeable. You should provide the County with an appropriate medical certification when you request FMLA.

Certification: If you request leave for your own serious health condition, or to care for the serious condition of a son or daughter, parent or spouse, you may be required to provide Blount County with certification by a treating healthcare provider. Healthcare Provider Certification Forms are available from the Human Resources Department.

Measuring: Blount County has chosen the "measured forward" method that entitles you to 12 weeks of leave during the year beginning on the first date the FMLA leave is taken after the previous 12-month period ends.

Example: The 12-month period begins Sept. 1, 2007 if that is the first day of FMLA leave. If you exhaust all of your FMLA leave, the next date when you could again take FMLA leave would be Sept. 1, 2008.

Intermittent or Reduced-Time Leave: FMLA leave can be taken on an intermittent or reduced-time basis under certain circumstances. You may request intermittent or reduced leave for the following reasons:

- When medically necessary to care for a seriously ill family member, or because of your own serious health condition.
- For the birth or placement of a child for adoption or foster care. Intermittent or reduced time leave shall not exceed 12 weeks combined if both spouses are employed by the County.

Only the amount of leave actually taken while on intermittent/reduced schedule leave may be charged as FMLA leave. If you need intermittent/reduced schedule leave for planned medical treatment, you should work with your supervisor to schedule the leave so it does not unduly disrupt

the department's operations.

The County may, in its sole discretion, temporarily transfer an employee on intermittent leave to an alternative job with equivalent pay and benefits that accommodate recurring periods of leave better than the employee's regular job.

Serious Health Condition: "Serious health condition" means an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves:

- any period of incapacity or treatment connected with inpatient care (i.e. an overnight stay) in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical care facility; or
- a period of incapacity requiring absence of more than three calendar days from work that also involves continuing treatment by (or under the supervision of) a healthcare provider; or
- any period of incapacity due to pregnancy, or for prenatal care; or
- any period of incapacity (or resulting treatment) due to a chronic serious health condition (e.g. asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, etc.); or
- a period of incapacity that is permanent or long-term due to a condition for which treatment may not be effective (e.g. Alzheimer's, stroke, terminal diseases, dialysis, etc.), or,
- any absences to receive multiple treatments (including any period of recovery) by, or on referral by, a healthcare provider for a condition that likely would result in incapacity of more than three consecutive days if left untreated (e.g. chemotherapy, physical therapy, dialysis, etc.).

Medical/Dental Insurance Premiums: During FMLA leave, the County will continue to pay its portion of the medical/dental insurance premiums and you must continue to pay your portion of the premium. Your contribution of insurance premiums should be paid continually according to your pay periods (i.e. semi-monthly).

If you do not return to work at the end of FMLA leave, you may be required to reimburse the County for payment of insurance premiums, unless you do not return because of the presence of a serious health condition which prevents you from performing your job or circumstances beyond your control. You may then choose to elect COBRA coverage. Sufficient notice will be given to you at the end of FMLA when and if this event occurs. You will be responsible for any other elected contributions while out on FMLA.

Accrued Leave: You are required to use your available vacation time during FMLA leave, and available sick days will be used when family leave is taken because of serious health conditions. Accrued leave and FMLA leave are used at the same time; you do not take your accrued leave first and then take FMLA.

During FMLA leave; if unpaid, you will not accrue employment benefits, such as vacation pay, sick pay, pension, etc. Employment benefits accrued up to the day on which the family leave of absence begins will not be lost.

Return to Work: Upon returning from a family and medical leave, eligible employees will normally be restored to their job, or an equivalent job with equivalent pay, benefits, and other employment terms and conditions. However, an employee does not continue to accrue additional benefits such as

personal leave and vacation, for example, while on family and medical leave.

Use of family and medical leave cannot result in the loss of any employment benefit that employees earned or were entitled to before using family and medical leave.

When you are on FMLA leave, you must periodically report (if possible) to your supervisor or Department Head on your status and indicate when you intend to return to work. Appropriate forms must be submitted to Human Resources to initiate FMLA leave or to return to active status.

Extensions: Family and medical leave is available for up to 12 weeks. The County may, in its discretion, approve an extended personal leave without pay beyond that time. Any such leave will not be job protected. Requests for extended personal leave should be submitted to the Human Resources Department, and whenever possible, should be submitted two weeks in advance of the previously scheduled return to work date.

Maternity Leave

Pregnancy, childbirth, and related conditions will be treated the same as any other temporary medical disability with regard to leave policies. Leave is available under the same terms and conditions as for other similar purposes, for a period not to exceed four (4) months which is counted as part of Family Medical Leave (*see Family Medical Leave*). In addition to any other accrued paid leave, Blount County will allow up to six (6) weeks of paid maternity leave available to full-time regular employees with the following terms and conditions:

1. the employee must have been employed by the County for at least twelve (12) consecutive months as a full-time employee;
2. in cases of adoption or foster care, the child must be under the age of one (1) year at the time of placement;
3. the employee must give the County at least three (3) months advance notice of the anticipated date the leave is to begin, except in cases of emergency; the entitlement to leave begins on the date of birth or placement, and ends six weeks thereafter.

Parental Leave

An employee who has been employed by Blount County Government for at least twelve (12) consecutive months as a full-time employee, may be absent from employment for a period not to exceed four (4) months in connection with pregnancy and childbirth. If you become eligible for leave under this policy and the Family and Medical Leave policy, the leave counts against your entitlement under both laws. The specific content of the Tennessee Parental Leave Act found at T.C.A. § 4-21-408 is reproduced as follows:

Leave for adoption, pregnancy, childbirth and nursing an infant:

Employees who have been employed by the same employer for at least twelve (12) consecutive months as full-time employees, as determined by the employer at the job site or location, may be absent from such employment for a period not to exceed four (4) months for adoption, pregnancy, childbirth and nursing an infant, where applicable, referred to as "leave" in this section. With regard to adoption, the four-month period shall begin at the time an employee receives custody of the child.

Employees who give at least three (3) months' advance notice to their employer of their anticipated date of departure for such leave, their length of leave, and their intention to return to full-time employment after leave, shall be restored to their previous or similar positions with the same status, pay, length of service credit and seniority, wherever applicable, as of the date of their leave.

Employees who are prevented from giving three (3) months' advance notice because of a medical emergency that necessitates that leave begin earlier than originally anticipated shall not forfeit their rights and benefits under this section solely because of their failure to give three (3) months' advance notice.

Employees who are prevented from giving three (3) months' advance notice because the notice of adoption was received less than three (3) months in advance shall not forfeit their rights and benefits under this section solely because of their failure to give three (3) month's advance notice.

Leave may be with or without pay at the discretion of the employer. Such leave shall not affect the employees' right to receive vacation time, sick leave, bonuses, advancement, seniority, length of service credit, benefits, plans or programs for which the employees were eligible at the date of their leave, and any other benefits or rights of their employment incident to the employees' employment position; provided, that the employer need not provide for the cost of any benefits, plans or programs during the period of such leave, unless such employer so provides for all employees on leaves of absence.

If an employee's job position is so unique that the employer cannot, after reasonable efforts, fill that position temporarily, then the employer shall not be liable under this section for failure to reinstate the employee at the end of the leave period.

The purpose of this section is to provide leave time to employees for adoption, pregnancy, childbirth and nursing the infant, where applicable; therefore, if an employer finds that the employee has utilized the period of leave to actively pursue other employment opportunities or if the employer finds that the employee has worked part-time or full-time for another employer during the period of leave, then the employer shall not be liable under this section for failure to reinstate the employee at the end of the leave.

Whenever the employer shall determine that the employee will not be reinstated at the end of the leave because the employee's position cannot be filled temporarily or because the employee has used the leave to pursue employment opportunities or to work for another employer, the employer shall so notify the employee.

Nothing contained within the provisions of this section shall be construed to:

- Affect any bargaining agreement or County policy that provides for greater or additional benefits than those required under this section;
- Apply to any employer who employs fewer than one hundred (100) full-time employees on a permanent basis at the job site or location; or
- Diminish or restrict the rights of teachers to leave pursuant to title 49, chapter 5, part 7, or to return or to be reinstated after leave.

Military Leave

The County allows employees who require time off from work to fulfill military duties to meet those commitments.

Employees with such commitments are expected to notify their immediate supervisor and to provide the County with a copy of the orders as soon as possible. We ask that you be sensitive to the County's needs when scheduling military duty or training.

Jury Duty or Court Appearance

When you must miss work due to jury or witness duty, you will be excused from your job. Notice must be given to your direct supervisor.

Witness duty must pertain to job-related business for excused absence with regular pay. This also includes if subpoenaed to court on non-work related issues.

If you are paid your regular salary, you are required to submit to the Payroll Department any pay you receive from the court for jury duty. This does not include witness fees and expenses paid from other sources.

Employees who work day shift, and whose jury service was under three hours, are expected to return to work upon being released from service. Employees who work second or third shift are excused from the shift before their first day of jury duty, and if they have served for 3 hours or more on the day they are released, are also excused from the first shift that follows their release from jury duty.

Voting Leave / Elections

In accordance with Tennessee State Law, if you are entitled to vote in an election held in this state, you may be absent from work on the day of the election for a reasonable amount of time, not to exceed three (3) hours.

If your shift begins three (3) or more hours after the opening of the polls or ends three (3) or more hours before the polls close in the county in which you live, this leave does not apply to you.

If you need to take leave for voting, the leave must be arranged with your direct supervisor before 12:00 noon of the day before the election. Your supervisor may select the hours during which you may be absent for voting.

Employee Benefits

Benefits Eligibility

You are currently eligible for benefits when you work a minimum of thirty (30) hours per week. These benefits include: medical coverage, dental coverage, and supplemental benefit options.

If your hours drop below thirty (30) hours per week on a regular basis you will lose eligibility for medical/dental and other insurance coverage. You and all covered dependents will be offered COBRA.

You are responsible to list only dependents that are eligible for coverage as defined by the plan rules. If a covered dependent becomes ineligible based on the plan rules, it is your responsibility to notify Human Resources immediately.

Benefits Effective and Termination Dates

Currently benefits begin the 31st day of continuous employment. For example, if you were hired on January 18th your medical and dental benefits will start on February 17th. Benefits terminate the last day which you are actively at work.

Medical/Dental Coverage

Currently you must enroll for coverage within thirty (30) days of employment or an eligible qualifying event. Temporary employees, seasonal employees, and interns are not eligible for medical/dental coverage. Complete benefit packets are provided at new hire orientation. Additional packets may be obtained by contacting Human Resources.

Information about the current medical/dental plan and premiums is available from Human Resources or on the web site www.blountn.org/hr.

Identification Cards

If you enroll in medical or dental benefits, identification cards will be mailed to your home address.

Annual Open Enrollment Period

Medical/dental plans, benefit designs, eligibility rules, and premiums are subject to change each plan year based on the previous year's claims experience. Announcements concerning changes for the upcoming plan year are made during the annual open enrollment period each fall. You are required to review your notices, home mailings, and department memos for information about the

benefits for the upcoming year.

Human Resources conduct sessions at various locations to accommodate those needing assistance and information regarding benefit changes. Typically, the enrollment/change period is from September until October. It is your responsibility to stay informed of benefit changes.

Benefit Premiums/Payroll Deductions

You are responsible for reviewing your paycheck to ensure the appropriate benefit deductions have been taken. Deductions from your paycheck will begin the first pay period of the month in which your coverage starts. Your medical and dental deductions will be taken out of 24 pay periods per year.

If you miss a paycheck due to work absence or unpaid time, it is your responsibility to contact Human Resources to make payment arrangements.

COBRA

If you lose insurance coverage due to termination of employment, a reduction in work hours, or other qualifying event, you and your covered dependents may be eligible to continue coverage through COBRA.

For a full explanation of COBRA terms and eligibility, contact Human Resources or refer to the "General COBRA Notice" received at time of enrollment.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Blount County Government is very concerned with the physical and emotional well-being of its employees and their families. The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides free and confidential counseling and information to employees and their immediate families who are dealing with difficult issues.

If you have questions about the EAP or would like more information regarding any of the programs, contact Human Resources.

Flexible Spending Accounts

Flexible spending accounts allow an employee's medical out-of-pocket expenses and dependent day care expenses to be paid with "before tax" dollars. If you elect this benefit, you choose a dollar level based on your individual or family needs and a portion of this amount is deducted from each paycheck. The maximum is \$5,000 annually.

You do not have to be enrolled in Blount County's medical plan in order to participate in a flexible spending account. You may enroll during the annual open enrollment period. Re-enrollment is required each year to continue participation.

Change in Status

You are required to report personal changes and/or changes in work status to Human Resources within thirty (30) days of any status change. This includes:

- dependent status change,
- address change,
- divorce,
- marriage,
- birth or adoption,
- reduction in work hours, or
- any other change that could affect benefit plan eligibility.

Supplemental Benefits

Currently Blount County offers supplemental voluntary benefits you may purchase such as: long term disability, short term disability, accident, term life, cancer, hospital intensive care, cardiac care, critical care, vision.

These additional benefit options can be administered through payroll deduction. Information on these products is provided at orientation and during the annual open enrollment period. For more information on these products contact Human Resources.

Workers' Compensation

If you experience an on-the-job injury or illness you are required to:

- Report the incident to your supervisor immediately.
- Ensure that your supervisor completes the First Report of Injury form provided by the State of Tennessee.
- Select a physician by completing the County's panel of Physician form.

When notified, Risk Management will schedule the appointment with the medical service provider you selected. You or your supervisor are not authorized to schedule the initial appointment with a medical provider for Workers' Compensation injuries.

You are required to attend all scheduled appointments with your physician. If you need an appointment rescheduled, notify Risk Management and they will reschedule it for you.

It is your responsibility to notify Risk Management and your supervisor if the physician instructs you not to return to work, or to return to work with restrictions. It is also your responsibility to notify Risk Management and your supervisor when the physician releases you to full duty.

Copies of all paperwork, including return to work forms, must be turned into your supervisor and Risk Management.

If you require emergency medical treatment you should go to the nearest emergency room of your choice. If the situation is warranted contact the local ambulance service for transport. Notification

to Risk Management should be made as soon as possible. If there is a follow up appointment required after the initial visit to the emergency room, you need to choose a physician from the County's Panel of Physicians. You are not authorized to return to the emergency room for follow up treatment (i.e. removal of stitches, change of injury dressing, etc.).

If you are released to return to work with restrictions from your physician, and Blount County is able to provide you with a job that meets those restrictions, you are required to return to work and complete the assigned tasks.

Life insurance

Currently Blount County provides Life Insurance to employees who work at least 30 hours per week on a regular basis. The County provides (1) one times the employee's salary, up to a maximum benefit of \$50,000; the coverage is two (2) times the amount for accidental death.

The plan document is available in the Human Resources Office or on the HR web site at www.blounttn.org/hr.

Tennessee Consolidated Retirement Systems (TCRS)

Membership: Employed six months (full-time) to be a member

Contribution Requirement: Five percent of salary

Vesting: Vesting rights after 5 years of service

A vested member is one who has accrued enough years of service to guarantee a retirement benefit once age requirements are met.

Refunds: Upon separation of employment, participants may apply for a refund of account balance.

Federal withholding tax requirements apply to early withdrawals.

Benefit Eligibility: Age 60 or 30 full years of service for unreduced benefits
Age 55 for reduced benefits.

Average Final Compensation: The average of the five highest consecutive years of salary, which cannot exceed 75% of average final compensation.

Contact the Human Resources Department for additional information.

Tuition Reimbursement

Tuition reimbursement is a plan which offers financial assistance to an employee who takes college-level courses directly related to his/her work or to a position the employee might

conceivably be considered for in the future and which is likely to increase his/her value to the County. This program is not specifically intended to support a full-time course of study, but is designed to enhance the quality of work that the individual brings to the job. It is provided to those employees classified as regular full-time who have satisfactorily completed one year of continuous service.

To receive reimbursement under this policy, an employee must agree to continue in employment with Blount County for at least one year from the date of completion of the course(s) being reimbursed and to return the reimbursement if the employee does not continue employment for at least one year. Tuition Reimbursement is available when the following requirements have been met:

A. Courses are job-relevant, college-level courses taken at an institution that is accredited (as recognized by the US Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education), found at <http://www.ope.ed.gov/accreditation/search.asp>, and must be on a for-grade basis and printed out and attached to the approval form. Courses taken on a pass/fail or audit basis that are job-relevant, or are required for a degree program that is job relevant, may be eligible for tuition reimbursement; however, such courses must be presented to his/her immediate supervisor and then to the Department Head/Elected Official of the employee for consideration and approval. It is the responsibility of the employee making the request to make it clear on his/her pre-approval form that the course is pass/fail or is on an audit basis.

B. Employee has submitted a Tuition Reimbursement Form for pre-approval to his/her immediate supervisor. The Department Head/Elected Official will review the pre-approved form to determine whether or not the course is eligible for reimbursement. Tuition Reimbursement Forms are available on the Blount County web site/Human Resources Department. Failure to obtain pre-approval from his/her immediate supervisor may result in denial of the tuition reimbursement request.

C. Upon completion of the course, the employee must submit proof that he/she has received a grade of C or better if a course was taken on a for-grade basis, or the employee must submit written proof from the instructor and/or sponsor that the employee satisfactorily completed a course on a pass/fail and/or audit basis. Proof must be submitted by official transcript, delivered unopened by the employee or sent directly from the school. The employee must also submit the itemized tuition receipt verifying cost and payment of tuition. This receipt must show a listing of all costs by item (e.g. maintenance/tuition, activity fee, etc.) must show the dates the fees were assessed and paid, must show payment amount(s) and method of payment (e.g. check, credit card, financial aid, etc.), and must indicate a zero balance on the account. Submission for completed course will be returned to the Department Head/Elected Official of the employee for review and forwarded to the Accounting Department for reimbursement. Copies of completed course work will be placed in the employee's training and/or personnel file.

D. The employee affirms that he/she has not been totally reimbursed for this approved educational training by some other funding source. Persons being supplemented under any other program(s) (e.g. state supplements, G.I. Bill, scholarships including the Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship program, government funding, etc.) are only eligible for benefits under Blount County Government's reimbursement program for the difference

between the cost of the approved training and any other funding source(s) up to the maximum reimbursement cap of \$1,800 per fiscal year, \$600 per semester or \$450 per quarter.

E. Employees will not be reimbursed for late fees, cost of books, service fees, technology fees, athletic fees. Employees will be reimbursed for maintenance/tuition fees upon submission of a transcript as follows:

<u>For Grade Basis</u>	<u>% Reimbursement</u>
A	100%
B	90%
C	80%
Below C	No Reimbursement
Pass/Fail or Audit	50% Undergraduate Coursework 100% Graduate Coursework

By January, an employee who intends to take courses must have forms in before the start of the next fiscal year. Approval forms must be completed prior to the start of each semester. Each approval must have the authorization of the Department Head/Elected Official to ensure funds are available for reimbursement. The Elected Official may suspend tuition reimbursement at any point due to lack of funding. Any violation of this policy or procedure will result in the employee refunding all tuition back to Blount County and will be considered a serious violation.

Professional Development Courses

Professional development courses paid by Blount County will follow the same procedure for pre-approval by the immediate supervisor and the Department Head/Elected Official. Completed course documentation (certifications, transcripts, etc.) will also be placed in the training/personnel file.

To encourage all employees to become more computer literate, Blount County will reimburse employees under this policy for the successful completion of up to one non-accredited computer course per year taken during non-work hours. The course must be approved in advance on the Tuition Reimbursement Form by the Department Head/Elected Official as cost effective and appropriate for education in standard computer software skills. This provision does not apply to or have any effect on computer training that a department may approve and fund during work hours.

Employee Handbook Acknowledgment Form

I acknowledge I have received, read, and understand the policies outlined in the Blount County Government Employee Handbook. I agree to conform to the rules and regulations of Blount County Government as described in the handbook which is intended as a guide to human resources policies and procedures.

I understand the County has the right to change the handbook without notice. It is understood that future changes in policies and procedures will supersede or eliminate those found in this book, and that employees will be notified of such changes through normal communication channels.

I also understand and agree that the information contained in this handbook does not constitute an employment contract between Blount County Government and me, and that either I or Blount County may terminate our employment relationship at any time, with or without cause.

I understand no manager or representative of Blount County has any authority to enter into any agreement for employment for any specified period of time, or to make any agreement contrary to the foregoing.

I hereby acknowledge that neither this manual nor any of the policies or statements contained herein constitutes a contract or guarantee of employment and that I am an employee-at-will.

Employee Signature: _____

Date: _____

Employee Name (please print): _____

Witness: _____