

EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

And Safety Handbook

For



Rev: 05/01/2023

Table of Contents

I. THE AGENCY	5
A. Introductory Statement	5
B. Mission Statement	5
C. Management Objectives	5
D. Management Rights	6
E. Employee Obligations	6
F. Equal Opportunity Employer	6
II. EMPLOYMENT	7
A. Immigration Law Policy	7
B. Licensure/Certification and Registration	7
C. Employment Documents	7
D. Employee Classification	7
E. Employee Status	7
F. Introductory Period	8
G. Hours of Work	8
H. Promotion/ Transfer Request Policy	10
I. Performance Evaluation	11
J. Phone and Mail Systems Use	11
K. Outside Employment Policy	11
L. Confidentiality of Records	12
M. Disciplinary Action	12
N. Employee Termination	14
O. Personnel Records	15
P. Conflicts of Interest	15



- Q. Employee Owned Business 16
- R. Personnel Data 16
- S. Criminal History Checks 16
- T. Grievance..... 19
- U. Attendance 19

- III. PAY PRACTICES 20**
- A. Payroll Procedures..... 20
- B. Overtime Policy 20
- C. Compensation Policy 21

- IV. EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT..... 22**
- A. Business Travel Expenses 22

- V. STAFF BENEFITS 23**
- A. Time-Off Requests 23
- B. Paid Time Off (PTO) 23
- C. Bereavement 24
- D. Holiday 25
- E. Leave of Absence 25
- F. Employee Benefits 27
- G. Jury Duty..... 27
- H. Worker’s Compensation Insurance 27
- I. Medical Care 28

- VI. COMPANY PREMISE AND WORK AREA 29**
- A. Employee Break Area..... 29
- B. Smoking Policy..... 29
- C. Visitors Policy 29
- D. Inclement Weather Policy..... 29



E. Eating And Drinking Policy 29

F. Security..... 29

G. Solicitation..... 29

H. Work Area 29

I. Technology 30

J. Communications Policy..... 30

VII. PERSONAL CONDUCT 32

A. Drug and Alcohol Policy 32

B. Harassment..... 32

C. Dress Code/Appearance 33

D. Substance Abuse..... 34

E. On-The-Job Injury 34

F. Lifting..... 34

G. Concealed Weapons 35

H. Personal Electronic Equipment 35

VIII. INFECTION CONTROL..... 36

A. Infection Control - Employee 36

B. Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus..... 38

C. HIV/Hepatitis B Curriculum..... 40

D. AIDS 41

IX. SAFETY HANDBOOK 43

A. Safety Policy 43

B. Staff Member Safety..... 43

C. Vehicle Safety 48

D. Office Fire Safety 49

E. Office Electrical Safety 50

I. THE AGENCY

“Eligible employees” refers to full-time employees who have completed the 90-day introductory period.
“The Agency” refers to Compassion Hospice.

A. Introductory Statement

The contents of this handbook are for general information and represent general guidelines of Compassion Hospice, hereafter referred to as the Agency. The Agency reserves the right to modify or terminate any plans, policies, rules, and procedures at any time, with or without notice. The language used in this manual is not intended to make an offer or create a contract of any kind between the Agency and its employees.

Nothing contained in this handbook is intended to be or should be construed as a guarantee that employment will be continued for any length of time. No representative of the Agency, other than the Administrator, has the authority to make such an offer or create such a contract. No oral statement by the Administrator or any other employees of the Agency shall be considered binding unless reduced to writing and signed by the Administrator.

Due to changing conditions in Human Resources Management, expanding and changing employment benefits, increasing government regulations, and continual changes in labor law, the contents of this handbook are subject to change at any time. Changes are at the discretion of the Administrator and /or the executive management team. Personnel will be notified in the form of document revisions when changes occur.

B. Mission Statement

The Agency is committed to providing a world-class hospice experience to our patients and their families in a cost effective manner. As part of its mission, the Agency is also committed to providing a work place which is healthy and conducive to personal growth and development for all employees.

C. Management Objectives

In its continuing efforts to implement fair and effective personnel policies, the Agency endeavors to:

1. Employ all applicants on the basis of qualifications and provide equal opportunity employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, physical and mental disability unrelated to job performance, and any other characteristic protected by law;
2. Provide salary and benefits that are fair, reasonable, and competitive within the community;
3. Maintain a safe and healthy work environment;
4. Establish reasonable hours of work;
5. Place employees in positions suited to their abilities and the needs of Agency,
6. Provide training and development opportunities as funding allows;
7. Provide a grievance procedure for employees to present their concerns to management;
8. Encourage qualified employees to apply for promotional opportunities whenever possible; and
9. Use compassion toward employees when making decisions.

D. Management Rights

The Agency Management Team consists of the Chief Executive Officer, President of Operations and Chief Financial Officer, retains the right to exercise customary managerial functions, including the right to:

1. Assign, supervise, dismiss, and discipline employees;
2. Evaluate employees' performances;
3. Determine and change reporting times, quitting times, and shifts;
4. Transfer employees within departments or into other departments and job classifications;
5. Determine and change the size and qualifications of the work force;
6. Determine and change methods by which operations are carried out;
7. Assign duties to employees according to the Agency's needs and requirements in order to carry out administrative functions; and
8. Establish, enforce, change, and abolish policies, procedures, rules, and regulations as needed.

E. Employee Obligations

The Agency expects employees to work productively to the best of their skills and abilities:

1. Arrive at assigned department and begin working on time;
2. Demonstrate a considerate, friendly, and constructive attitude toward co-workers, supervisors, and managers;
3. Refrain from holding any public office or employment that could create a conflict of interest as determined by the Agency.
4. Hold in complete confidence anything that pertains to the Agency's patients, internal operations, employee salaries, and/or financial data; and
5. Adhere to policies adopted by the Agency.
6. Comply with the following principles to which the Agency, its partners and management are committed:
 - (a) Avoiding profane and vulgar language
 - (b) Avoiding the use of alcoholic beverage during work .
 - (c) Avoiding conversations, jokes, comments or innuendos which have sexual, prejudicial or inflammatory meanings, implications or suggestions.

F. Equal Opportunity Employer

The Agency recruits, hires, trains, and promotes employees at all levels regardless of race, color, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, place of national origin, veteran status or genetic information and any other characteristics protected by law.

The Agency makes good faith efforts to identify obstacles and barriers to individuals in the work place who have disabilities. Reasonable accommodations are made to provide individuals with disabilities effective opportunity to perform their jobs, providing such actions do not cause undue hardship on the business. If an individual has indicated that he or she has a disability, the supervisor should notify the Human Resources Department.

II. EMPLOYMENT

A. Immigration Law Policy

The Agency is committed to full compliance with the immigration laws and employs only persons who are authorized to work in the United States. As a condition of employment, each new employee must properly complete, sign, and date the first section of the Immigration and Naturalization Service Form I-9 and return it to HR. Before starting work, rehired employees must also complete an I-9 if they have not previously filed one with this company, if their previous I-9 is over (3) years old, or if their previous I-9 is no longer valid.

B. Licensure/Certification and Registration

All licensed and registered personnel must furnish evidence of proper licensures and certifications at the time of employment as required by the State of Texas. These employees must also maintain their licensures and certifications and keep them in good standing for the duration of employment. Failure to do so will result in suspension without pay and may result in termination.

Driving records on employees may be checked upon hire and on an annual basis. Employees who are uninsured or uninsurable may be terminated. All tickets are to be reported to the Human Resource Department within 24 hours of the occurrence, no matter how minor.

C. Employment Documents

1. Employment Applications - The Agency relies on the accuracy of information in employment applications and other documents presented throughout the hiring process and employment. Any misrepresentations, falsifications, or material omissions in any application may exclude the applicant from further consideration for employment. If the individual who submitted the information has been hired, employment will be terminated.
2. Employment References - To ensure candidates are well qualified and have a strong potential to be productive and successful, the Agency checks the employment references of all applicants.

D. Employee Classification

1. Full Time - Employees regularly scheduled to work forty (40) hours per week or an agreed amount over thirty-two (32) hours per week or a part-time employee who has worked 60 consecutive days averaging 32 hours or more per week is considered a full-time employee.
2. Part Time - Employees not regularly scheduled to work forty (40) hours per week or an agreed amount under thirty-two (32) hours per week.
3. Temporary - Employees hired as interim replacements to supplement the work force or to assist in the completion of specific projects. Employment assignments in this category are limited in duration.

Employees wishing to change classification must request the change from their immediate supervisors who will request the approval of Executive Management. Approval is based on staffing needs.

E. Employee Status

1. Exempt Employees - Employees who are not subject to the minimum wage and overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act.
2. Non-Exempt Employees - Employees who are subject to the minimum wage and overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

F. Introductory Period

During the first three (3) months of employment or promotion, job performance will determine an employee's suitability for continued employment in a new position. After successfully completing the introductory period, new full-time employees are eligible for employee benefits. The health insurance and cafeteria plans are available on the 1st day of the month following 60 days of employment if all necessary paperwork is completed and submitted by that date. Current employees placed in new positions retain their benefits during the introductory period. After the completion of the introductory period and through one year of continuous employment, employees are eligible to participate in the 401-K plan. To join the plan, eligible employees can contact the Human Resources Department. The following procedures apply to the introductory period:

1. During the introductory period, the employee's work is planned and observed by the supervisor. Unsatisfactory performance is brought to the employee's attention for corrective action.
2. At the end of the introductory period, the supervisor submits a recommendation for continued employment if job performance is satisfactory.
3. The Agency may extend the introductory period up to three (3) months if the employee is making progress but has not yet reached a satisfactory performance level. The employee is notified in writing of this decision.
4. The introductory period may also be extended by the number of days the employee is absent from scheduled work during that period.
5. A new employee whose job performance is unsatisfactory may be terminated at any time prior to completion of the introductory period. The employee will be notified of this decision on or before the effective date.
6. A promoted employee who is unable to perform satisfactorily in a new position is demoted, without prejudice or loss of any rights or privileges, to his/her former position if it is still available. If the position is not available, management will place the employee in a comparable position for which he/she is qualified. The employee then serves a new introductory period and retains all benefits.
7. During the introductory period, new employees are not eligible for leaves of absence, vacation time, paid holidays, personal days, or sick days.
8. New employees are eligible for employee benefits only after the introductory period has been satisfactorily completed.
9. Any regular full-time or part-time employee may be placed on probationary status by management for up to one month when his/her performance has deteriorated. An employee who improves during this period may be restored to regular status. Failure to achieve a satisfactory rating during this new introductory period may result in demotion or termination. The employee retains all benefits unless employment is terminated.
10. Hiring new employees is based on a mutual benefit to employer/employee. Expenses are incurred to train the employee during the introductory period. If termination is as a result of the employee quitting/resigning during the introductory period those expenses not able to be used for any other employee will need to be reimbursed on the final paycheck. They may include (but aren't limited to) licensed seats for education, drug tests, TB tests, name badges and equipment.

G. Hours of Work

The Agency establishes work hours to meet workload, fulfill staffing requirements, and manage operations efficiently. The Agency provides 24-hour patient care, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Regular office hours are 8:00AM to 5:00PM, Monday through Friday.

1. Hours of Work Procedures

- a) The standard workweek begins on Sunday at 12:00 AM and ends on Saturday at 11:59 PM. Standard work hours are eight hours per day, excluding lunch and meal periods. Depending on operational needs, the work hours may be altered to go beyond the regular scheduled hours, from time to time, to meet patient needs.
- b) Non-exempt employees are required to keep time records, which may include clocking in at the beginning of each shift or lunch period and clocking out at the end of each shift or lunch period. Intentional or carelessly working off the clock is prohibited. Employees are required to punch in before performing any work and are not permitted to punch out before they actually stop working. Once an employee clocks out they must not perform any duties associated with their job.
- c) Excessive tardies or early departures (a combination of 3 or more days in a 30 day period) will result in an occurrence. If being late is unavoidable, the employee is to contact his/her immediate supervisor or management personnel.
- d) Unexcused absences or call-ins which result in an Occurrence will be monitored in a rolling twelve month period. Occurrences are detrimental to the Agency and will result in disciplinary action.
- e) Falsifying any time card/sheet will result in termination.
- f) Exempt executive, professional, and administrative personnel are not required to complete detailed time sheets and are not eligible to receive overtime. The Human Resources Department tracks time for exempt personnel's base salaries, vacations, sick leave, etc. with an approved calendar remittance system.
- g) Rest breaks are considered a privilege and a part of total hours worked. Full-time employees are granted one fifteen- (15) minute break in the morning and one fifteen- (15) minute break in the afternoon when patient schedules and workloads permit.
- h) Employees are informed of their daily work schedule, including lunch periods, rest breaks, and any changes deemed necessary by management.
- i) Lunch periods are thirty minutes to an hour long, as determined by Management. The length of lunch periods depends on each employee's work schedule. Lunch periods are not included in the hours of work used to determine the length of the workday. All employees are required to take a lunch break.
- j) Under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), leaves of absence are a maximum of twelve (12) weeks long under any circumstances.
- k) Full-time employees are expected to work a minimum of 32 hours/week (64 hours/pay period) to maintain their full-time status. The agency will make sure there are assignments available to maintain those hours though we can't promise it will always be in your preferred area.
- l) Each pay period the employee is expected to review their hours worked/paid.
- m) Those full-time employees who fail to maintain their full-time work hours for 3 consecutive pay periods will have their status changed to part-time with the resulting loss of full-time benefits (company paid health insurance, PTO, paid holidays, etc.) Company cars may also go to full-time staff first as necessary.
- n) Those full-time employees who fail to maintain full-time work hours for 2 consecutive pay periods will need to discuss their work goals with the administrator with a plan to return to full-time hours.
- o) The agency survives and thrives based on delivering excellent care, we must take into consideration the needs of the patient and agency. There are limited numbers of part time positions available.

2. Work Schedule Policy - Work schedules for employees vary throughout the organization. Supervisors will advise employees of their individual schedules. Staffing needs and demands may necessitate variations in starting and ending times, as well as variations in the total number of hours scheduled each day and week.

H. Promotion/ Transfer Request Policy

The Agency fills vacancies from within whenever possible. Promotions are made based on current job performance records, performance evaluations, experience, education, knowledge, skills, abilities, and other qualifications. Seniority is considered only when two or more applicants possess equal qualifications.

1. Promotion Review Period - Employees selected for promotion serve an introductory period for ninety days, and retain all benefits in place at the time of promotion.

If the promoted employee proves incapable of holding the position, he/she is reinstated, without prejudice or loss of any rights or privileges, to the former position. Pay will be reduced to the rate prior to the promotion. If the former position is not available, the employee will be placed in a comparable position for which management believes he/she is qualified and will be compensated accordingly.

2. Special Promotion Provisions - The promotion policy is not applicable in the following situations:
 - a) Temporary positions;
 - b) Reassignment of personnel, which is not a promotion but a reorganization of a department within the Agency.
3. Transfer Request- Employees who desire to be considered for other positions in the company must submit a written request to Human Resources outlining the position in which they are interested. The employees must have been in their current position for not less than six months to be considered. Human Resources will then:
 - a) Review prior performance evaluations and ensure that the employee has met or exceeded in all areas.
 - b) Review the qualifications of the employee and ensure that they meet the qualifications of the open position.
 - c) Contact the employee's current supervisor to determine if there is a valid reason the employee should not be considered for the position requested.
 - d) Discuss with the Agency's EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM or his/her designee when appropriate.
 - e) The employee is then notified of the decision.

I. Performance Evaluation

The Agency plans, reviews, and evaluates each employee's performance periodically in an objective, consistent, and uniform manner. The evaluation consists of a performance plan written according to a standard format, discussing the plan with the employee, and then reviewing the evaluation with employee. The following procedures apply to the Performance Evaluation Policy:

1. At the beginning of the performance period, management will establish and document performance objectives and standards outlined in a job description. The job description is given to the staff member upon hire and are used as the performance tool.
2. Information derived from performance evaluations is used to identify training needs of employees and determine eligibility for salary increase, promotions, transfers, layoffs, or retention.
3. In addition to periodic reviews, performance appraisals are completed when an overall evaluation is below standard. In such cases, additional evaluations may be performed every three (3) months until an acceptable performance level is reached. If performance does not improve to an acceptable level within 90 days, the employee is subject to termination.

J. Phone and Mail Systems Use

Employees may be required to reimburse the Agency for any charges resulting from their personal use of the telephone. The mail system is reserved for business purposes only, and employees should refrain from sending or receiving personal mail at the workplace. To insure effective telephone communications, employees should always use the approved greeting, speak in a courteous and professional manner, confirm information received from the caller, and then hang up only after the caller has done so.

K. Outside Employment Policy

The Agency does allow its employees to hold second jobs, subject to certain restrictions outlined below. Since outside employment can cause problems, the employee must discuss the situation with management before accepting an outside position. Under all circumstances, the Agency is considered the employee's primary employer. The following procedures apply to the Outside Employment Policy:

1. The Agency recognizes the right of its employees to do as they please outside of regular work hours. However, employee rights are balanced against the Agency need to ensure full productivity during work hours.
2. The employee submits an outside employment request to management via email, who approves or denies the request.
3. In considering requests to accept outside employment, the following standards are used:
 - (a) Will the outside employment in any way lessen the employee's productivity?
 - (b) Does the outside employer do business with the Agency, or is the outside employer a competitor of the Agency?
 - (c) Will the nature of the outside employment adversely affect the Agency's image?
 - (d) Will the employee be distracted from committing to the efforts needed to achieve the strategic goals of the Agency?
4. Outside employment is not considered an excuse for poor job performance, absenteeism, tardiness, or refusal to work overtime. Should outside employment contribute to any of these conditions, it must be discontinued or the employee will be asked to resign from the Agency.
5. Employees who violate the policy are subject to disciplinary action and/or dismissal.
6. Employees who accept outside employment are not eligible for paid absences when the absence is the result of injury on the second job.

L. Confidentiality of Records

The Agency will protect and hold in confidence all information relating to patients, physicians, productivity, operations, finances, policies, employees, costs, salaries, etc. This policy applies to inquiries concerning all Agency records. Records are handled in the following manner:

1. Verbal Inquiries - All verbal inquiries to employees concerning Agency physicians, productivity, operations, finances, internal policies, employees, costs, salaries, etc. are to be brought to the immediate attention of the Administrator or designee.
2. Written Inquiries - The Agency responds, in writing, to appropriate written inquiries regarding data, only if the employee, former employee, or patient has signed a release. No verbal response is given.
3. Release Authorization - If an employee or patient wants certain information released, he/she should submit to management in writing precisely what information the facility is authorized to release and give permission to the Agency to do so.

The Agency complies with all legal requests for employee data. If the Agency is subpoenaed, management will notify the employee and give him/her the opportunity to object to the subpoena before releasing the requested information.

Due to Federal Law, it is necessary that each employee that has access to Agency information is to insure that data they access is protected at all times. This includes securing a computer system after accessing it with your password, locking files when you are not in your assigned area and not allowing your assigned password to be used/known by anyone in the Agency.

Failure to adhere to these guidelines will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

M. Disciplinary Action

Every employee is responsible for observing Agency policies, procedures, and standards of conduct. The primary purpose of the disciplinary policy is to ensure conformance with the established rules and regulations of the Agency and promote efficient and effective patient care.

While the Agency believes that progressive, corrective action is a very important tool, employment with the Agency is at-will. This means that either party to the employment relationship, the Agency or the employee, has the right to terminate the relationship at anytime and for any reason, with or without notice.

Occasionally, disciplining an employee becomes necessary because of poor performance, attitude, appearance, attendance, behavior, or other reasons. Depending on the circumstances and the employee's record, these disciplinary actions may include oral or written warning, suspension without pay, or dismissal. Management and/or the Executive Management Team determine the level of discipline used after reviewing the conduct, the surrounding circumstances, and the employee's records. Listed below are infractions resulting in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. This does not include all infractions.

1. Work Hours
 - a) Loitering around the office before, after or during scheduled work hours.
 - b) Taking more than one-hour for lunch without written approval from the Chief Operating Officer or Department Manager.
 - c) Excessive abuses of break periods.
 - d) Failing to begin and resume work at the scheduled time.

- e) Excessive tardies or early departures (Combination of 3 in a 30 day period).
- f) Distracting or disturbing other employees who are not on a work break while on a break.
- g) Failing to notify immediate supervisor of absence. Employees are required to give at least two hours notice before shift begins.

2. Confidential Information

- a) Releasing or misusing Agency data regarding physicians, employees, productivity, operations, policies, salaries, cost reporting, etc.
- b) Releasing or misusing confidential information concerning patients and their families, fellow employees, other personnel associated with the Agency, or medical and business affairs of the Agency.
- c) No electronically stored and/or submitted report, analysis, list, data or other materials related to Agency are to be forwarded to a non-Agency owned computer, a personal computer, or any other means of storing such information or data which is not owned by, controlled by or authorized in writing by the Agency without the expressed, written permission of the Executive Management Team of the Agency.

3. Agency Property

- a) Destroying or abusing property that belongs to the Agency, patients, visitors, or fellow employees
- b) Stealing property or money that belongs to the Agency, patients, visitors, or fellow co-workers
- c) Conducting any type of personal business or enterprise on Agency property without permission during the business day, including promoting, selling, or soliciting contributions to any cause.
- d) Posting notices or signs on official Agency bulletin boards without permission or removing official notices already posted.
- e) Using Agency supplies or equipment for unauthorized personal use, including using telephones for personal calls.
- f) Gambling on Agency property.

4. Alcohol, Drugs, and Firearms

- a) Possessing, using, or working under the influence of non-prescribed drugs, controlled substances, or alcohol on company time or property.
- b) Misuse of prescribed drugs.
- c) Refusing to be tested for alcohol, drugs, or controlled substances.
- d) Possessing or concealing unauthorized weapons during Agency time or on Agency property.

5. Falsifying

- a) Forging, altering, or falsifying any document, authorization, time card/sheet, or record used by the Agency.

6. Conduct

- a) Engaging in conduct that is unlawful, violent, abusive, indecent, or considered by management or the Board of Directors as immoral or inappropriate.
- b) Refusing to obey instruction of supervisor, management, and/or the Board of Directors (insubordination).
- c) Concealing an employee's misconduct or inadequate performance.

- d) Being discourteous or rude to patients, physicians, visitors, employees, or others affiliated with the Agency.
- e) Using obscene or abusive language towards physicians, patients, supervisors, or fellow workers.
- f) Accepting or soliciting tips, gifts, or other donations from patients, physicians, fellow employees, and/or visitors.
- g) Being absent three days without prior notification.
- h) Failing to maintain standards of performance, dress and hygiene.
- i) Failing to perform work duties involving the care of HIV/AIDS patients.
- j) Refusing to work with employees known or suspected to be HIV positive.
- k) Failure to maintain an acceptable level of performance for the position.
- l) Demonstrating discourteous, rude, prejudicial or unkind conduct toward anyone due to race, creed, color, gender, national origin, religion, physical impairment or sexual orientation.

7. Safety

- a) Violating safety rules, doing anything to create a safety hazard, or contributing to unsanitary conditions.
- b) Failing to follow safety guidelines.
- c) Failure to report an incident to supervisor immediately, before the end of a shift or within 24 hours of its occurrence.
- d) Failure to report driving infractions e.g., tickets etc. to the Human Resource Department within 24 hours of its occurrence.

N. Employee Termination

The Agency strives to maintain continuous employment for all regular employees. The Agency also recognizes that conditions may develop which preclude continuous employment. These conditions include employee resignation, retirement, discharge, or a reduction in the work force (layoff).

1. Discharge Procedures

- a) An employee may be discharged for poor performance and/or misconduct when there is a reasonable basis for the termination. Relevant factors and circumstances may include the individual's conduct and employment records and the appropriateness of the termination.
- b) Earned but unused PTO is not considered a dismissal benefit and will not be paid when an employee is terminated for misconduct or performance as determined by Management.
- c) It is the responsibility of the Administrator or the designee to interpret and administer policy of the Agency fairly and impartially. The Administrator or designee will be responsible for treating violations of the Agency's policy by verbal counseling, written counseling, disciplinary actions, suspension, or dismissal/ termination according to the seriousness and/or frequency of the violation.
- d) No set rules or regulations can possibly be complete enough to cover every violation, and therefore, reasonable interpretation must be applied in identifying appropriate on-the-job conduct. (For examples, please refer to Disciplinary Action).

2. Resignation Procedures

- a) Employees are expected to give written notice of their intention to resign. Supervisors, Managers, Licensed Nurses, Social Workers and Chaplains are expected to give four (4) weeks notice. All other employees are expected to give two (2) weeks notice.
- b) Failure to give the required notice results in a loss of accrued benefits.

- c) Employees who are absent from work for three consecutive days without approval of their immediate supervisors are considered to have abandoned the job and resigned.
 - d) Employees must return identification badges, office keys, and other property belonging to the Agency upon resignation. Failure to do so will result in a pay deduction for the replacement cost of the property.
 - e) The Agency will pay a resigned employee on the next regularly scheduled payday after the resignation.
 - f) Paychecks must be picked up from the Human Resources Department
3. Layoff Procedures
- a) The Agency is an at-will employer, and it reserves the right to reduce its current work force either temporarily or indefinitely.
 - b) Layoffs may occur on a departmental basis or throughout the Agency.
 - c) Staffing decisions are at the discretion of the Chief Operating Officer. Each position is reviewed on a case by case basis.
 - d) Managers and supervisors review their employees' performance evaluations for the previous three years. The manager first retains those employees whose evaluations show the best performance. Depending on the extent of the reductions, employees are retained in descending order according to their performance levels. In cases of similar performance records, the less senior employee is laid off first.
 - e) The Administrator informs employees of the reason for the layoff, its estimated length, and the chances of recall.
 - f) Recalls are based on:
 - (a) The date of the layoff; the last laid off are the first recalled; and
 - (b) Performance appraisals. The Agency brings back the most competent personnel.
 - g) No paid absences, vacation days, or other employee benefits are earned during layoff.
 - h) Any accumulated vacation days are paid at the time of layoff.

O. Personnel Records

The Agency maintains a set of personnel files on each employee. The personnel files include such information as the employee's job application, resume, records or training, documentation of performance appraisals and salary increases, and other employment records.

Personnel files are the property of the Agency, and access to the information they contain is restricted. Generally, only supervisors and management personnel of the Agency who have a legitimate reason to review information in a file are allowed to do so.

Employees who wish to review their own file should contact Human Resources. With reasonable advance notice, employees may review their own personnel files in the Human Resources Department while the individual appointed by the Agency to maintain the files is present.

P. Conflicts of Interest

Employees have an obligation to conduct business within guidelines that prohibit actual or potential conflicts of interest as determined by the Administrator. This policy establishes the framework in which the Agency operates.

The purpose of the guidelines is to provide general direction so employees can seek further clarification on acceptable standards of operation. The Administrator retains sole authority to determine if a conflict of interest exists.

An actual or potential conflict of interest occurs when an employee is in a position to influence a decision that may result in personal gain for that employee or a relative from Agency business dealings. For purposes of this policy, a relative is any person who is related by blood or marriage.

No “presumption of guilt” is created by the mere existence of a relationship with outside companies. However, any employee who becomes involved in a conflict of interest situation should submit a letter containing all relevant information to the Administrator as soon as possible so that safeguards can be established to protect all parties.

Some activities that might cause conflicts of interest are:

1. An employee or member of the employee's family owns a substantial financial interest in any outside organization that does business with the Agency. This excludes securities of any publicly owned corporation that are regularly traded on the open markets.
2. An employee offers and renders directional, managerial, or consulting services to any outside organization that does business with the Agency without the Agency's full knowledge and consent.
3. An employee or member of the employee's family accepts gifts of more than token value, loans, excessive entertainment, or other substantial favors from any outside organization that does business with or seeks to do business with the Agency. This excludes loans obtained from banks and other established financial institutions.
4. An employee uses confidential company information for personal profit or advantage or discloses information to any other third party.

Q. Employee Owned Business

To prevent conflicts of interest and protect the reputations of employees, the Agency will not conduct business with employees. This includes companies that are owned by employees or that may purchase or lease any type of goods from employees or members of their families.

R. Personnel Data

It is the responsibility of each employee to notify the Human Resources Department promptly of any changes in personal data. This includes personal mailing addresses, telephone numbers, name changes, number or names of dependents, marital status, individuals contacted in an emergency, educational accomplishments, professional licenses, and professional affiliation memberships.

Failure to notify the Agency that personal data has changed can affect an employee's benefit status, affecting medical coverage, life insurance coverage, beneficiaries, etc.

S. Criminal History Checks

A criminal history check (CHC) is completed on all employees of the Agency. The employee's name is submitted to the Texas Department of Public Services or a private agency that obtains criminal history checks. The Agency will also search the nurse aide registry and the employee misconduct registry, if applicable, to verify that an applicant/employee is not listed as having committed an act that constitutes a “reportable conduct”. The CHC will be requested within 72 hours of employment of the person.

The Agency will discharge an employee at any time the Agency determines that a person has been convicted of an offense listed in section S.1.b; or becomes informed of a person's conviction under the laws of another state, federal law or the Uniform Code of Military Justice for an offense containing elements that are substantially similar to the elements of an offense listed in section S. 1. b.; determines that a person is listed in the nurse aide registry as unemployable due to findings of abuse, neglect or mistreatment of a consumer of any Agency or facility licensed under the Health and Safety Code or misappropriation of a consumer's property or determines a person is listed in the employee misconduct registry. A person convicted of an offense under Chapter 31, Penal Code, (noted below in Section S. 1. b.) that is punishable as a felony is not employable by this Agency.

The Agency may determine that any charge that warrants posting on the Texas Department of Public Services web site may warrant an employee's discharge, no matter its relation to the felony convictions listed in Section S. 1. b. An Agency may request a criminal history conviction check on employees at any time the agency determines appropriate.

The employability of persons with criminal history records is determined by Agency Management using the following criteria and the written documentation submitted by the individual.

1. Criteria For Hire of a Non-Licensed Person With a Criminal Record

- a) The individual will submit written information related to:
- b) The convicted offense(s) as it applies as a possible threat to the health and safety of clients, their families, or their visitors.
- c) The date the conviction occurred and any subsequent convictions since that date.
- d) If the conviction was a single occurrence, the date of that occurrence. The length of time that has transpired since the conviction (e.g. a conviction that occurred over ten years ago) may have impact on the decision of the administrative review panel.
- e) If the conviction involved an offense(s) that violated the Controlled Substance Act, evidence of rehabilitation.
- f) The mitigating circumstances surrounding the conviction(s).
- g) The individual's personal and professional achievements following the conviction(s).
- h) The individual's contributions to society following the conviction(s).
- i) An person convicted of an offense as specified in Convictions Barring Employment, will not be employed by the Agency:

- 1) An offense under Chapter 19, Penal Code (Criminal Homicide)
 - 2) An offense under Chapter 20, Penal Code (Kidnapping and False Imprisonment)
 - 3) An offense under Section 21.11, Penal Code (Indecency With A Child)
 - 4) An offense under Section 22.011, Penal Code (Sexual Assault)
 - 5) An offense under Section 22.02, Penal Code (Aggravated Assault)
 - 6) An offense under Section 22.04, Penal Code (Injury to a Child, Elderly Individual, or Disabled Individual)
 - 7) An offense under Section 22.041, Penal Code (Abandoning or Endangering a Child)
 - 8) An offense under Section 22.08, Penal Code (Aiding Suicide)
 - 9) An offense under Section 25.031, Penal Code (Agreement to Abduct from Custody)
 - 10) An offense under Section 25.08, Penal Code (Sale or Purchase of a Child)
 - 11) An offense under Section 28.02, Penal Code (Arson)
 - 12) An offense under Section 29.02, Penal Code (Robbery)
 - 13) An offense under Section 29.03, Penal Code (Aggravated Robbery)
- j) The Agency will not employ a person convicted of an offense if the Agency determines there is a contraindication to employment.
- k) Individuals may appeal directly to the DPS Error Resolution Center if the information on the criminal history is inaccurate.

T. Grievance

All work related concerns and complaints are to be brought to the attention of the immediate supervisor. When an employee believes, a situation is unjust, inequitable, or a hindrance to the effective operation, or perceives that a problem exists, the employee shall be allowed to voice such opinions without fear of recrimination through a grievance process.

1. This process begins when an employee believes that their concern has not been properly addressed by their supervisor, they can then verbally address their grievance with the Department Manager. The Department Manager will respond in writing to the employee within three working days.
2. If the grievance is not resolved by the Department Manager, the employee can contact Human Resources. The grievance will be documented and submitted in writing to the appropriate Executive Manager. The Executive Manager will respond in writing within five working days.

The aggrieved employee must ensure that the facts, as presented in the grievance, are truthful and accurate to the best of his/her knowledge. Because of the seriousness and concern with which management reviews a grievance, the use of this grievance system in an untruthful or capricious manner can result in a range of disciplinary action being taken.

U. Attendance

This policy is established to maintain appropriate staffing levels and insure the orderly reporting and processing of absences, tardies and early leaves.

Each employee shall be required to report any absences to their immediate supervisor in an appropriate timeframe prior to the start of the schedule work shift. The employee must state the reason for the absence and the anticipated duration of the absence. If the absence is for more than one day, the employee shall notify their supervisor each day prior to the scheduled work assignment unless other arrangements have been made.

1. Occurrences are each absence or period of consecutive absences that have not been prearranged and approved by the employee's supervisor or designee by noon of the work day prior to the beginning of the scheduled work shift. Occurrences are also an accumulation of tardies and early leaves.
An accumulation of seven occurrences in a floating 12 month period will result in progressive disciplinary action up to and including termination. Occurrences begin accumulating after all awarded PTO time has been used.
2. Unexcused Absence is when an employee does not report to work as scheduled and fails to report the absence to their immediate supervisor. Progressive disciplinary action, up to and including termination will occur with unexcused absences.

III. PAY PRACTICES

A. Payroll Procedures

Pay periods are biweekly, Sunday through Saturday. Pay is issued according to the time reported for each pay period, including overtime. Should paychecks reflect an error, the error must be brought to the Human Resource Department's attention by 3:00 p.m. on payday in order for the error to be corrected timely, otherwise the error will be corrected on the next pay day.

1. Employees Submit Records of Time Worked

a) All Direct Care Employees

- 1) Productivity reports are submitted with your notes the day visits are performed. This includes RNs, LVNs, Hospice Aides, Social Workers, Chaplains, Homemakers, etc.
- 2) On-call time must be noted on a written time sheet. On-call is paid along with the normal payroll.
- 3) Time sheets are verified by the QAPI Department for correctness.
- 4) A Payroll Summary Report detailing hours, on-call, patient visits, and mileage is authorized by the Administrator.
- 5) The Payroll Summary Report is submitted to the Administrator for approval.
- 6) The approved Payroll Summary Report is then submitted to the Payroll Department.

b) Hourly Non-Exempt Employees

- 1) Time is recorded using the time record specified by the supervisors.
- 2) Time sheets are submitted for the previous two weeks of work to the Payroll Department by 9:00 am on the Monday before payday.

c) Exempt Employees

- 1) Exempt employees are not required to record time or submit time sheets to the Payroll Department.
- 2) Normally scheduled hours not worked must be documented on a Time-Off Request Form and submitted to Payroll by 9:00 AM on the Monday before payday.

2. Payroll Checks

- a) Payday is every other Friday, via direct deposit to the employees bank account.
- b) No payroll checks are mailed unless approved by Human Resources.
- c) Checks are available to terminated staff members within six days after termination. Staff members who resign may pick up checks on the following payday.
- d) Staff members pick up final payroll checks at the Human Resources Department unless otherwise approved by Human Resources.

3. Direct Deposit

- a) Employees are invited to register at viewmypaycheck.com for a record of their current pay and pay history.
- b) Employees may elect to have their pay deposited in up to two financial institutions.
- c) If the Agency's accounting firm erroneously deposits funds into an employee's account, the employee authorizes the company to initiate the debit entries necessary to correct the error.
- d) Final pay is issued in a payroll check and are to be picked up at the Human Resources unless otherwise approved by Human Resources or Executive Management Team.

B. Overtime Policy

The Agency pays non-exempt staff members overtime for hours worked exceeding 40 hours a week. Staff members work schedule is designed to inhibit overtime. All deviations from the work schedules are to be approved, in advance of the change, with the supervisor. Any deviation from the work schedule without supervisor's approval will result in disciplinary action and possible termination.

1. Hourly Staff - Must maintain scheduled hours as directed by your supervisor. Hourly staff is responsible for informing their supervisor in advance of potential overtime. Advance notice of overtime will assist the supervisor to determine adjustments in the schedule, should the situation warrant change.
2. Salary Staff - Are responsible for ensuring no more than 40 hours per week are routinely worked. Overtime is unnecessary since Salary Staff are responsible for ensuring the hourly staff they supervise and their own schedule maintains 40 hours per week or less.
3. Salary Exempt Staff - Are not eligible for overtime.

C. Compensation Policy

1. The Agency pays a competitive rate for similar jobs in our geographical area. Similarities include shift hours, days of week worked and other factors that may affect the amount being paid.

IV. EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT

Expenses are recorded on the Expense Reimbursement Form, and receipts are stapled to the back of the report.

Reimbursed expenses are paid on a separate check and issued on payday. Paychecks may be picked up from the Human Resources Department beginning at 2:00 PM on the Friday following the closing of the pay period.

A. Business Travel Expenses

The Agency will reimburse employees for reasonable business travel expenses incurred while on assignments away from the normal work location. All business travel must be approved in advance by Administrator.

When approved, the actual costs of travel, meals, lodging, and other expenses directly relating to accomplishing business travel objectives will be reimbursed by the Agency. Employees are expected to limit expenses to reasonable amounts.

Expenses that are generally reimbursed include airfare in economy class, car rental for low-priced compact cars, shuttle or taxi service, personal vehicle mileage, low- to mid-priced hotel rooms, tips up to 15% of bill, and telephone charges- one personal call per day is allowed. Personal entertainment and personal care items are not reimbursed. Meals are reimbursed up to \$25/day. Money spent in excess of the limit and purchases of alcohol/adult beverages are not reimbursed.

Any employee involved in an accident while traveling on business must promptly report the incident to the immediate supervisor. Vehicles owned, leased, or rented by the Agency may not be used for personal reasons without prior approval.

Abuse of this policy, including falsifying expense reports is grounds for termination.

V. STAFF BENEFITS

A. Time-Off Requests

1. Employees submit time-off requests to their supervisors for approval.
2. Time-off requests for more than one day are to be submitted to their supervisors for approval with at least a two weeks advance notice.
3. If a request is approved, the supervisor forwards it to the Human Resources Coordinator who checks the master calendar for any conflicts with other approved requests.

Time off requests for a full day or more will require benefit time to be used before non-paid time is approved. Management may deny requests for time-off to insure proper coverage for the Agency. Reasons for denial may include no benefit time available, previously submitted time-off requests from other staff or other reasons as identified by management.

B. Paid Time Off (PTO)

The Agency compensates eligible employees (at their existing rate of pay) up to an established limit during absences for illness, injury, or vacation. Unused PTO benefits will not be paid to employees while they are employed or upon termination of employment.

1. PTO Time
 - a) Full-time employees, who routinely work 32 or more hours per week, are eligible for PTO, but temporary and part-time employees are not.
 - b) Eligible employees are awarded fifteen (15) PTO days per anniversary year. PTO time begins accrual after the introductory period at the rate of 3min 27 seconds per hour worked (~ 4 hours 36min per 80 hour pay period).
 - c) After 5 years of continuous employment, eligible employees are awarded twenty (20) PTO days per anniversary year. PTO time begins accruing after the 5 year anniversary at the rate of 4min 37 seconds per hour worked (~ 6 hours 9min per 80 hour pay period).
 - d) During the first three (3) months (introductory period), new employees are not eligible to earn PTO time. However, time off without pay is allowed in the event of illness or injury.
 - e) Time-off Requests are provided by the management staff. Management makes every effort to grant PTO to employees. However, supervisors must provide for adequate staffing levels, and employees must cooperate with their supervisors when scheduling vacation.
 - f) Unused PTO time may be carried over to succeeding years up to an accumulation maximum of 30 days (240 hours).
 - g) Employees are not paid PTO time the day (s) prior to or after a holiday or vacation leave without physician verification and management approval.
 - h) Excessive use of unplanned/ without notice PTO leave may be cause for disciplinary action, including dismissal. Excessive use of PTO leave is defined as using more than the allowed time of PTO leave per anniversary year, except for major illness for which Family Medical Leave must be requested.
 - i) For absences resulting from illness in excess of three (3) consecutive working days, a doctor's excuse (including prognosis) satisfactory to management will be required upon returning to work. The excuse must state that the employee was physically unable to

perform his/her duties during this period and is now physically able to return to work. In the case of a serious medical condition, a Medical Leave must be requested.

- j) Any physician statement, including evaluations by Agency physicians, may be reviewed by department management and/or the Executive Management Team. Management makes the final decision whether to approve any PTO leave request.
- k) Eligible employees may use PTO benefits for an absence due to their own illness or injury or that of a family member who resides in the employee's household.
- l) Upon separation from employment with the Agency for reasons other than cause i.e. termination of the employee by the Agency or resignation without due notice, an employee will receive PTO pay for any unused PTO during the year in which separation occurs.
- m) If separation from employment with the Agency occurs and PTO allowance has been advanced prior to anniversary date, actual time not earned will be deducted from the final pay period.
- n) PTO leave is not granted to extend an employee's period of employment beyond the last day worked.

2. Employees Who are Ill and Unable to Report to Work

- a) Ill employees must call their immediate supervisors before their scheduled time so that coverage can be arranged. Compensation will be paid only when employees comply with this procedure.
- b) If requested by management, an employee may be required to furnish a physician statement supporting any sick leave request.

3. Employees Who Become Ill at Work

- a) Employees who are too ill to remain at work are required to submit a Time-Off Request form to their supervisors.
- b) To collect PTO benefits, a Time Off form must be submitted as soon as possible to ensure benefits are credited in the appropriate pay period.

4. Changes in Employee Status

- a) A full time employee who has accumulated PTO time and transfers to part-time or temporary status retains accumulated PTO time but does not accrue future PTO time credits; and
- b) If such an employee returns to a full-time status, benefits are reinstated.

C. Bereavement

The Agency grants every eligible full-time employee up to three (3) days of bereavement leave, paid at the regular hourly or salary rate, whichever applies to the individual employee. Additional time may be requested and taken without pay if approved by management.

Part time employees are allowed to take up to (3) days for bereavement, without pay, if workload permits. Time taken for bereavement may be made up at the regularly hourly rate regardless of what pay period the make up time falls in.

Since bereavement needs cannot be predetermined, requests for bereavement leave must be submitted in as timely a manner possible to allow adequate personnel coverage.

The Agency acknowledges the closeness of family ties and allows bereavement leave to be granted for the following family members:

- Spouse
- Child
- Mother
- Grandmother
- Mother-in-law
- Father-in-law
- Father
- Grandfather
- Foster Child
- Grandchild
- Step children
- Legal Guardian
- Brother
- Sister

D. Holiday

The Agency grants all full-time employees paid holidays after their 90th day of employment.

The Agency observes the following holidays:

1. New Year's Day
2. Memorial Day
3. Independence Day
4. Labor Day
5. Thanksgiving Day
6. Christmas Day

The Administrator will notify employees of any changes in the holiday schedule. The working schedules of these holidays are subject to change at the discretion of the Executive Management Team depending on the day of the week they fall on. A holiday that occurs on a Saturday is observed on the preceding Friday. A holiday that occurs on a Sunday is observed on the following Monday.

To receive holiday pay, an eligible employee must be at work or on authorized absence on the work days immediately preceding and following the day on which the holiday is observed. If an employee submits a request for PTO time due to illness on these days, the employee must provide a physician statement supporting this request. Management reserves the right to approve or disapprove the PTO request. Employees on leaves of absence or on disability covered by worker's compensation do not accrue holiday pay.

The Agency recognizes that some employees may wish to observe certain days not included in the holiday schedule, such as religious holidays. In these instances, employees may request personal time allotted instead of a designated holiday. Management makes every effort to accommodate these requests if such absences do not result in undue hardship on the Agency.

Direct patient care employees who perform direct patient care on the observed holidays are paid at a rate of 1.5 times their base salary and, if eligible, their holiday pay as well.

E. Leave of Absence

The Agency grants eligible employees unpaid leaves of absence when it is required by law or in the best interests of the employee and the Agency. A Leave of Absence may be granted at the discretion of the Administrator of the Agency. Although no request is unreasonably denied, each request is considered on its merit. Extensions are granted only in extenuating circumstances and must be approved in writing by the Administrator.

1. Types of Leaves of Absence

- a) Military Leave - Employees who enter the military will be given Leaves of Absence in accordance with prevailing federal laws and regulations. Reservists and National Guardsman will also be granted short-term leaves for training and special active-duty assignments.
 - b) Family Leave - Family Medical Leave (FMLA) may be granted to employees who have completed twelve (12) months and 1250 hours of employment. Eligible employees may take up to twelve (12) weeks per year for disability, pregnancy, childbirth, adoption, or care of a seriously ill dependent, parent, or spouse.
 - c) Personal Leave - Leaves of Absence for valid personal reasons may be granted for two (2) weeks, or fourteen (14) calendar days, or more to employees who have completed 1250 hours and twelve (12) months of continuous employment. Management makes every effort to grant personal leaves of absence that are properly justified and in the best interests of employees and the Agency.
2. Procedures for Leaves of Absence
- a) Military Leave
 - (i) Employees who must report for military training or assignments must request military leave as soon as they receive their orders.
 - (ii) Military Leave Requests are submitted to the Administrator.
 - (iii) Employees who fail to return to work after military leaves are terminated.
 - b) Family Leave
 - (i) Employees must submit a formal leave request, a physician's statement with prognosis, and verification of relationship to the disabled, if applicable, to management for approval. Unless a leave is for an emergency, requests are submitted at least thirty (30) days in advance.
 - (ii) Before employees take FMLA leave, unused vacation and sick time must first be exhausted.
 - (iii) When an employee returns to work, he/she is restored to the same position or to an equivalent position with equal pay and benefit eligibility, and similar duties and responsibilities.
 - (iv) Employees who fail to return to work after FMLA leaves are terminated.
 - c) Personal Leave
 - (i) Employees must submit a formal leave request to management for approval. Unless the leave is for an emergency, requests are submitted at least thirty (30) days in advance.
 - (ii) Leave is granted at the discretion of the Administrator based on the nature of the request and the operational requirements of the department.
 - (iii) When an employee returns to work, he/she is restored to the same position if it is still available. If the position is not available, the employee will be placed in comparable position for which he/she is qualified at the same rate of pay, unless

circumstances have changed which make reinstating the employee impossible or unreasonable.

Leaves of Absence, other than military leave will require that all appropriate benefits be exhausted at the beginning of the leave period and will result in an adjustment to the benefit eligibility date based on the number of days/weeks the employee is absent due to leave.

F. Employee Benefits

The Agency provides full-time employees with economic and personal security benefits as part of their employment. Available benefits may be utilized at the discretion of the Agency to insure the economic security of the employee when time is lost. Employee benefits may include paid time off utilizing available vacation, personal time, sick time or medical benefits through employee purchased supplemental insurance. Medical group benefits are designed to meet employees' needs in a fair and equitable manner consistent with group objectives. Requests for additional information should be directed to the Human Resources Department, where the summary plan description and benefit summaries are available. The Agency reserves the right to modify or terminate any benefits provided to employees at any time, consistent with the terms of the plans.

G. Jury Duty

The Agency grants jury duty to eligible employees who are summoned to report to any federal, state, or municipal court, or who are subpoenaed to testify as witnesses concerning matters arising out of their professional job responsibilities. The following procedures apply to the Jury Duty Leave Policy:

1. Full-time employees who submit a jury summons or a subpoena from a federal, state, or municipal court are granted jury duty leave.
2. Employees must report the jury duty summons to supervisors as soon as possible so that arrangements can be made to accommodate the absences, and they will work whenever the court schedule permits
3. The time spent on jury duty will not be counted as hours worked for the purpose of overtime calculations and will not be counted in determining excessive absences.
4. Employees who are summoned for jury duty or subpoenaed as witnesses must present the original document from the court to their supervisors.
5. When employees are excused from court service, they must return to work
6. A signed statement from the court clerk or other evidence showing the actual time of attendance must be turned in with time sheet information at the conclusion of the court duty.

H. Worker's Compensation Insurance

The Agency provides a comprehensive worker's compensation insurance program as part of the agency's general liability insurance at no cost to the employees. This program covers any injury or illness sustained in the course of employment that requires medical, surgical, or hospital treatment. Subject to applicable legal requirements, worker's compensation insurance provides benefits after a short waiting period or, if the employee is hospitalized, immediately.

Employees who are injured or ill on the job should inform their supervisors immediately. Accidents must be reported on the same day they occur before the end of the shift to insure employees qualify for coverage. No matter how minor on-the-job injuries appear, they should be reported immediately so eligible employees qualify for coverage as quickly as possible.

Employees who miss three or more days and qualify for FMLA will fall under FMLA guidelines and are notified of their eligibility.

I. Medical Care

The Agency strives to meet the needs of its patients, especially when a patient is an employee or an employee's family member. The Agency provides access to health insurance coverage for eligible full-time employees to assist with medical costs.

VI. COMPANY PREMISE AND WORK AREA

A. Employee Break Area

An employee break area is provided by the Agency for the benefit of all employees. It is the responsibility of all employees to pick up after themselves to keep the break room clean and in order.

B. Smoking Policy

The Agency is dedicated to promoting health and healing and to providing a safe and healthy environment for its patients, visitors, and personnel. Smoking is prohibited on Agency property, during Agency time, and at any time an employee is representing the Agency.

C. Visitors Policy

Due to the potential disruption to patients and fellow co-workers, employees are prohibited from bringing visitors to their working areas during business hours. Visitors are to wait in the waiting room.

D. Inclement Weather Policy

In emergency weather conditions, the Administrator can declare an official weather emergency.

1. Early Closing - If the Administrator/Designee declares an early closing, non-exempt employees are paid until time they clock out for the day.
2. Delayed Opening - Non-exempt employees who report to work after their designated time of arrival are paid from the time they clock-in up to the time they clock-out.
3. Full Closing - If the Administrator/Designee declares a full closing, employees are not to report to work. At Management's discretion, they may receive their regular pay for the day.

E. Eating And Drinking Policy

In order to maintain a professional appearance, eating and drinking are not permitted in areas where there is patient contact or other areas designated by the Executive Management Team. Employees will keep areas clean where eating and drinking are permitted. In addition, no gum chewing is allowed during work hours when patients and/or their families or potential referral sources are present.

F. Security

The last person to leave the office site at the end of the day is responsible for making sure all doors are locked and office equipment, computers, and appliances are turned off.

Employees are encouraged to avoid being in the building alone after hours and on weekends. Going to and from automobiles before and after hours in the dark requires two or more persons going together. Anything of a suspicious nature must immediately be reported to the local police department.

G. Solicitation

The Agency prohibits solicitation or distribution of literature on its premises by anyone during working hours.

H. Work Area

In order to maintain a professional appearance, it is important that the work area is kept clean, neat and personal items are limited. Radios and stereos (with or without headsets) are not allowed in the work areas during work hours. These systems may have magnets that will affect the operations of certain company equipment. Management reserves the right to use their discretion in determining what constitutes a professional work area.

I. Technology

The Agency respects the privacy of its employees. However, privacy rights do not extend to the use of Agency-owned systems, property, equipment, supplies, or to work-related conduct.

Employees are prohibited from removing information maintained in company supply containers including computer files, computer databases, desks, lockers, cabinets, etc.

1. Right to Access

Employees may have individual passwords to e-mail, voice mail, and computer network systems. These systems are accessible to the Agency at all times and may be subject to unannounced, periodic inspections. This policy applies to all telephone, electronic, and computer files that are accessed on or from Agency premises and used in a manner that identifies the user as an employee of the Agency.

2. Restrictions

Employees are expected to use company e-mail, voice mail, and computer systems for Agency business, not personal reasons. Personal reasons include, but are not limited to, non-job-related communications, research, or solicitations, or soliciting for political or religious causes.

Employees are not to share files that have not been properly set-up for sharing through the IT Department.

Using the internet for purposes other than company related business is strictly prohibited. Failure to adhere to this policy will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

3. Prohibited Content

Employees are prohibited from using Agency telephones and electronic or computer systems in any manner that may be offensive or disruptive to others. This includes, but is not limited to, the transmission of messages that would offend others on the basis of their age, political beliefs, religious beliefs, disabilities, national origins, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientations, or messages that may be interpreted as harassing others. Inappropriate or excessive personal use of Agency property, telephones, or electronic or computer network systems will result in disciplinary action, including termination.

J. Communications Policy

To insure that information is communicated accurately, timely and efficiently the Agency depends on our internal e-mail system. All employees are assigned e-mail access upon hire and are expected to routinely read their received e-mails. Routinely is described as daily unless otherwise specified by the job description.

The IT Department is responsible for alerting all e-mail users of viruses that pose a threat to our communications system. Therefore, each time you routinely review your e-mails, first look for e-mails titled

“Virus Alert” and open and read the directions. The IT Department will take you step by step through the process of eliminating the virus before it poses a problem for the Agency.

Failure to routinely read your e-mails or deleting e-mails sent by the IT Department, a member of the Executive Committee or other members of management will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Electronic mail is the principle means of communications with the employees and colleagues of the Agency. As such, all e-mails marked “high priority” must be read by all employees. Because of the strategic use of electronic communication within the Agency, failure to read mail marked “high priority” will result in counseling. Repeated failure of such offenses will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

In addition, Agency electronic mail is not to be used for the distribution of chain mail, jokes or “interesting” materials. Forwarding of e-mail received from outside the Agency, which is not related to the Agency’s business is not allowed. If an employee wishes to communicate with other employees about non-Agency business via Agency e-mail, prior permission must be obtained from the Executive Management Team.

In the e-mail distribution list there is an “Everyone” function. This is reserved for the use of those who have reason to communicate with all employees simultaneously about Agency business. Those who have permission to use this function without prior permission are members of the Executive Management Team and the Partners of the Agency. All others desiring to communicate with all employees via Agency e-mail will require prior written permission of the Executive Management Team, or their designee.

VII. PERSONAL CONDUCT

A. Drug and Alcohol Policy

The Agency has the right to determine if employees are under the influence, using, transporting, distributing, concealing, or are in possession of any prohibited substances. At the discretion of the Administrator/Designee, employees may be required to consent to unannounced medical tests, including hair, urine or blood tests.

1. Condition of Pre-Employment - The Agency requires each potential candidate to complete a satisfactory drug screen. No formal offer will be made to the elected candidate until after the results are received.
2. For-Cause - A for-cause drug screen can be performed at any time on any current employee who appear to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol during working hours. The employee may then be suspended with pay until the results are received.
3. Random - The Agency reserves the right to conduct random drug screens. Employees who test positive for alcohol or drugs (other than prescribed medications that have already been verified) will be terminated.

Possessing, distributing, selling, or under the influence of any alcohol, inhalants, or drugs (illegal or controlled) while on Agency premises or in vehicles owned or operated for the Agency is prohibited. Employees will not attend any Agency function or report to work under the influence of any substances. Violators are subject to discipline up to and including termination.

B. Harassment

The Agency is committed to providing a working environment in which its employees are treated with courtesy, respect, and dignity. The Agency does not tolerate or condone any actions that constitute harassment of any employees.

Harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, written, or physical conduct of a sexual nature by employees or supervisors where such conduct is either an explicit or implicit term or condition of employment; is used as the basis for employment decisions; or has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an employee's work performance, creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. +

Deliberate, repeated, and unsolicited comments with sexual overtones, sexual jokes or ridicule, physical gestures or actions of sexual nature, and solicitations or sexual favors are examples of violations of this policy. Offenders are subject to discipline up to and including termination.

Harassment complaints should be directed to the Administrator/Designee, who investigates all complaints of harassment. The privacy of the persons involved must be protected, except to the extent necessary to conduct a proper investigation. If the investigation reveals that a complaint is valid, action is taken to stop the harassment immediately and prevent its recurrence. Disciplinary action is taken if necessary.

Any employee who has been or is being sexually harassed, or who believes he/ she observed sexual harassment should report the matter. No employee will be retaliated against or adversely treated, with respect to terms and conditions of employment, because of making a sexual harassment report.

C. Dress Code/Appearance

Employees of the Agency are health professionals and are expected to look and act professionally. Employees should always be clean, well groomed, and dressed in a manner appropriate for their positions, including wearing name badges provided by the Agency. Due to the medical environment of the Agency, wearing perfume, cologne, or other toiletry items containing scents is prohibited. A medical condition can be affected by certain scents resulting in adverse health conditions for patient/employees. Chewing gum is unprofessional and is prohibited during working hours.

1. Staff members involved in patient care are required to either wear scrubs or a white medical jacket over the scrubs. Tops are to be of a coordinating with their pants solid color or print material. Medical Providers involved in intermittent patient care including on call may wear street clothing with a white lab jacket. All staff members will wear a name badge provided by the Agency. The personal appearance and wearing of jewelry by patient care staff members is as follows:
 - a) Rings and bracelets should be removed before performing direct patient care to prevent the spread of bacteria to the patient.
 - b) Earrings are not acceptable for males.
 - c) Visible body piercing and tattoos are not acceptable.
 - d) All jewelry should be discreet.
 - e) Makeup should be modest and reflect a image befitting the medical profession
 - f) Fingernail length should be modest and moderate. Loud or extreme polish and nail art are inappropriate.
 - g) Shoes with slip resistant soles are to be worn. Open-toed shoes, open- back shoes, or sandals are not acceptable.

2. Since no uniform dress code is required for non-clinical personnel, management establishes office dress standards, considering public contact, and reserves the right to determine what is inappropriate. Some examples of inappropriate attire not permitted in the office are:
 - a) Blue jeans, blue jean looking material, overalls, or form fitting leggings
 - b) Skirts shorter than three inches above the knee cap
 - c) T-shirts, sweat shirts, blouses that expose the midriff and see-through shirts
 - d) Shorts of any kind
 - e) Any shirt or dress that has no straps, spaghetti straps or expose the back
 - f) Inappropriate leather or suede attire
 - g) Hats and/or caps
 - h) Earrings are not acceptable for males.
 - i) Visible body piercing and tattoos are not acceptable.
 - j) All jewelry should be discreet.
 - k) Makeup should be modest and reflect a image befitting the medical profession
 - l) Fingernail length should be modest and moderate. Loud or extreme polish and nail art are inappropriate.
 - m) Flip flops, open-toed shoes, open- back shoes, or sandals are not acceptable.

Executive Management Team reserves the right to determine what is inappropriate attire.

D. Substance Abuse

The Agency is entrusted with the responsibility of providing quality patient care and a safe, healthy work place. An employee's use of alcohol, drugs, and controlled substances that interfere with or adversely affects the employee's work performance is not tolerated and may result in termination.

E. On-The-Job Injury

Staff members must report work-connected injuries to their supervisors so injuries can be documented and medical attention can be sought, if needed.

1. Employees must report each incident immediately to their Supervisor and provide written notification within twenty-four hours of its occurrence. Every injury must be reported regardless of how minor it is, including simple secondary needle sticks.
2. If an injury warrants treatment, or if an injured employee asks to be seen by a doctor, that employee's treatment will take priority.
3. Staff members who must leave work for medical attention should notify their supervisors and arrange for relief if their job requires it.
4. Supervisors must fill out accident/incident reports and submit them to the Human Resource Department within twenty-four hours.
5. It is routine for a drug screen to be performed on any employee involved in an accident on the job.
6. The agency pays for the day an injury occurs. Lost time after this will be handled through the workers compensation company based on the procedures they have in place.

F. Lifting

All staff members should use body belts and harnesses when lifting loads, helping patients ambulate or change positions, or performing any other lifting, pushing, or tugging tasks. They should always anticipate and be prepared for these situations and any others that could put them at risk for injuries.

1. Performing Work in Patients' Homes
 - a) LVNs, Nurse's Aides, and Home Sitters should wear body belts and harnesses as they deem necessary to safely perform their duties in patients' homes.
 - b) The belt and harness should be worn loosely until the worker performs a task that requires their use.
 - c) Although RNs are not required to wear body belts and harnesses all the time they are in the home, they are not to perform any lifting or patient handling without wearing a body belt and harness.
 - d) Body belts and harnesses must be properly fitted and tightened before the workers do any pulling, pushing, or lifting.
 - e) Examples of tasks requiring body belts and harnesses include:

- 1) Helping a patient getting in or out of bed.
 - 2) Helping a patient ambulate.
 - 3) Helping a patient getting in or out of a chair.
 - 4) Helping a patient getting in or out of a bathtub.
 - f) Refer to the Patient Handling Policy and Procedure in our Safety Training courses for complete details on lifting and handling patients.
2. Performing Work in the Office and Other Areas Outside Clients' Homes
- a) An office worker who needs any job done involving lifting, pulling, or pushing should determine if there is any risk involved or if there may be an alternate method of doing the job. For example, if material needs to be moved, it may be possible to divide the material into smaller portions before moving it.
 - b) Staff members should understand how to protect themselves and consult with their supervisors before performing any tasks that may put them at risk for injury.
 - c) If a supervisor decides a risk is involved in a task, the office worker must put on a body belt and a harness and perform the job using prescribed safe methods.
 - d) When possible, tasks that involve handling heavy materials, such as delivering boxes of computer paper or moving furniture, should be left to inventory control or maintenance personnel.
 - e) Inventory control clerks and maintenance workers are required to wear a body belt and harness only when doing any lifting. The body belt and harness must be properly fastened when a lifting task is performed.

G. Concealed Weapons

The Agency does not permit any employee, agent, or representative of the Agency to carry a concealed weapon on company premises during working hours. This includes any portion of the building, as well as any driveway, street, sidewalk, parking lot, parking garage, or any other area used by the Agency. Carrying a concealed weapon while performing services, attending functions, or conducting business on the Agency's behalf is also prohibited. This includes carrying a concealed weapon in any vehicle owned by the Agency or brought upon Agency premises. This is a term and condition of continued employment.

If there is reasonable suspicion that a concealed weapon has been brought onto company premises, a reasonable search may be conducted of the person or property suspected of possessing or containing the weapon.

H. Personal Electronic Equipment

Personal cell phones, personal pagers and personal computers or other personal electronic equipment are not to be used while conducting business for the Agency. Personal cell phones and pagers are to be turned off to prevent distractions while performing work for the company.

The use of personal computers for business purposes is prohibited unless prior approval is provided by the Information Systems Department.

VIII. INFECTION CONTROL

A. Infection Control - Employee

The Agency provides employees with basic infection control guidelines for providing care to patients. Universal precautions designated by the Center for Disease Control are:

1. Hands must be washed before and after each patient contact. Hands must be washed thoroughly and immediately if they accidentally become contaminated with body fluids.
2. Gloves must be worn when handling blood specimens; blood soiled items; body fluids; tissues; excretions and secretions; as well as surfaces, materials, and objects exposed to them.
3. Gowns must be worn when clothing may be soiled with body fluids, blood, or excretions.
4. Masks and/or eye coverings will be used when performing procedures involving extensive contact with blood or other potentially infected body fluids.
5. Sharp items, such as needles, must be considered infective and handled with extra care to prevent infection.
6. Disposable syringes and needles or any other sharp items should be placed in rigid puncture resistant containers. Needles will not be recapped, broken, bent, or removed from syringes; they must be placed directly in a puncture resistant container.
7. Whenever possible, disposable equipment is used and discarded after one use.
8. Any broken skin area on the caregiver is properly covered to prevent contact with infected materials.
9. When possible, blood and body fluids should be carefully flushed down the toilet.
10. Items contaminated by body fluids that cannot be flushed down the toilet are double bagged for disposal.
11. Spills of blood or other body fluids should be cleaned up with a freshly prepared 1:10 solution of sodium hypochlorite (household bleach).
12. Blood samples sent to a laboratory must be clearly labeled "blood precautions". The outside of the container will be wiped with a disinfectant, and the container will be placed in a leak-proof second container.
13. Non-disposable equipment must be disinfected before being used by/or for another patient. Use another disinfectant if bleach could be harmful to equipment.
14. Normal laundering is adequate for linen. Contaminated linen leaving the patient area, however, is double-bagged and clearly labeled.
15. Employees are not to transport any filled rigid puncture proof containers, double-bagged infectious waste materials, or other potentially infectious materials away from the patient's home.
16. Employees are responsible for checking the puncture proof container and providing another container when the container is $\frac{1}{2}$ full.
17. The caregivers are instructed to dispose of the rigid puncture resistant container when it becomes $\frac{3}{4}$ full in doubled plastic bags and placed in the household trash collection container for disposal.
18. If a patient resides in a long-term facility or assisted living home, an Agency employee will review the facility's infection control policy. Infectious wastes will be disposed of according to that policy if it conforms to the current guidelines established by the Center for Disease Control. The employee will document this review in the patient's clinical record.
19. If the employee determines the facility's policy does not conform to guidelines of the Center for Disease Control, the administrator is advised that the Agency will follow its own procedures for the proper pickup and disposal of the infectious wastes.

20. The Agency will contract a licensed and certified infectious waste disposal company to remove the infectious waste.
21. All employees will receive instruction on Universal Precautions and infection control during their orientation and at a minimum of once annually.
22. The Agency furnishes testing for HIV and other communicable diseases when staff has been accidentally exposed to blood or other body fluids. (See HIV and Other Communicable Diseases Testing Agreement Form, which must be completed and signed by the employee.)
23. The Agency administers Hepatitis B vaccines to staff members who wish to receive one (see Hepatitis B Vaccine Consent Form or Hepatitis B Vaccine Declination Form).

B. Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus*

Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus* (MRSA) has become a prevalent nosocomial pathogen in the United States. In hospitals, the most important reservoirs of MRSA are infected or colonized patients. Although hospital personnel can serve as reservoirs for MRSA and may harbor the organism for many months, they have been more commonly identified as a link for transmission between colonized or infected patients. The main mode of transmission of MRSA is via hands (especially health care workers' hands). They may become contaminated by contact with colonized or infected patients, personnel, or contaminated devices, items, and environmental surfaces. Standard Precautions, as described in the "Guideline for Isolation Precautions in Hospitals" (Infection Control Hospital epidemiol 1996; 17:53-80), should control the spread of MRSA in most instances.

1. Standard Precautions

- a) Wash hands after touching blood, body fluids, secretions, excretions, and contaminated items, whether or not gloves are worn. Wash hands immediately after gloves are removed, between patient contacts, and when otherwise indicated, to avoid transfer microorganisms to other patients or environments. It may be necessary to wash hands between tasks and procedures on the same patient to prevent cross-contamination of different body sites.
- b) Wear gloves (clean non-sterile gloves are adequate) when entering the room. During the course of providing care for a patient, change gloves after having contact with infective material that may contain high concentrations of microorganisms (e.g., fecal material and wound drainage). Remove gloves before leaving the patient's room and wash hands immediately with an anti-microbial agent. After glove removal and hand washing, ensure that hands do not touch potentially contaminated environment surfaces or items in the patient's room to avoid transfer of microorganisms to other patients and environments.
- c) Wear a gown when entering the room if clothing may have substantial contact with the patient or with surfaces or items in the patient's room. Wear a gown if the patient is incontinent or has diarrhea, an ileostomy, a colostomy, or wound drainage not contained by a dressing. Remove the gown before leaving the patient's room. After gown removal, ensure that clothing does not contact potentially contaminated environmental surfaces to avoid transfer of microorganisms to other patients and environments.
- d) Limit the movement and transport of patients from their rooms to essential purposes only. If a patient is transported out of a room, ensure that precautions are maintained to minimize the risk of transmission of microorganisms to other patients and contamination of environmental surfaces or equipment.
- e) Ensure that patient-care items, bedside equipment, and frequently touched surfaces receive daily cleaning.
- f) When possible, dedicate the use of non-critical patient care equipment and items such as stethoscopes, sphygmomanometers, bedside commodes, or electronic rectal thermometers to a single patient (or cohort of patients infected or colonized with MRSA) to avoid sharing between patients. If use of common equipment or items is unavoidable, then adequately clean and disinfect them before use on another patient.

2. Culturing Of Personnel And Management Of Personnel Carriers Of MRSA

Unless the Agency's objective is eradicating all MRSA carriage and treating all personnel who are carriers whether or not they disseminate MRSA, culturing only personnel who are implicated in MRSA transmission based on epidemiological data may be reasonable. MRSA-carrier personnel who are epidemiologically linked to transmission should be removed from direct patient care until successfully treated. If the Agency decides to culture all personnel to identify MRSA carriers, surveillance cultures need to be done frequently. It is likely that culturing personnel colonized by MRSA who are not linked to transmission or removed from patient contact is unnecessary. Before routinely culturing personnel, the Agency should weigh the advantages and against the adverse

effects, such as the high cost of repeated surveillance cultures and the potential of repeated culturing resulting in serious consequences to health care workers.

3. Control Of MRSA Outbreaks

When an outbreak of MRSA infection occurs, an epidemiological assessment should be made to identify risk factors for MRSA acquisition in the institution. Clinical isolates of MRSA should be saved and submitted for strain typing. Colonized or infected patients should be identified as quickly as possible, appropriate barriers precautions should be instituted, and hand washing by medical personnel before and after all patient contacts should be strictly adhered to.

All personnel should be re-instructed on appropriate precautions for patients colonized or infected with multi-resistant microorganisms and on the importance of hand washing and barrier precautions in preventing contact transmission.

If additional help is needed by the Agency, a consultant with the local or state health department or CDC may be necessary.

C. HIV/Hepatitis B Curriculum

The Agency provides each of its staff members information about HIV/Hepatitis B. This information includes modes of transmission, methods of prevention, precautions related to substance abuse, occupational precautions, current laws and regulations concerning the rights of infected individuals, and behaviors associated with transmission that are in violation of Texas Law. The following information is issued during the orientation period, and each staff member signs a statement of his/her knowledge of this curriculum. This statement is placed in his/her personnel file to document that the staff member has seen this policy.

1. Modes of Transmission

- a) Sexual contact (anal, vaginal, oral) and contact with semen and vaginal fluids;
- b) By sharing needles and syringes, particularly all paraphernalia involved in the use of intravenous drugs;
- c) From an infected woman to her baby from or during birth, or possibly through breast-feeding;
- d) Through contaminated blood due to spills, sticks, splashes, or other means.

2. Methods of Prevention

- a) Sexual Behaviors
 - 1) Practice sexual abstinence;
 - 2) Maintain a long-term relationship with one uninfected sex partner;
 - 3) Practice safer sex techniques (use a condom and spermicide);
 - 4) Avoid promiscuous sex;
 - 5) Avoid sexual contact with people who have sex for money or drugs;
 - 6) Avoid sexual contact with partners of people who participate in promiscuous sex, use illegal IV drugs, or frequent male or female prostitutes.
- b) Precautions Related To Substance Abuse
 - 1) Abstain from using substances such as intravenous illegal drugs, alcohol, cocaine, and marijuana. These substances diminish the brain's ability to function normally and impair judgment, and can result in the high-risk behaviors listed above;
 - 2) Seek help to overcome substance addictions;
 - 3) Avoid sharing needles and syringes;
 - 4) Use proper techniques to clean needles and syringes that may be shared.

3. Occupational Precautions

- a) Provide scientifically accurate information about blood-born pathogens, particularly HIV and Hepatitis B.
- b) Review current literature: information issued by the centers for disease control, professional medical publications, state health department directives, and other valid sources of information.
- c) Address issues of perceived contiguousness and appropriate infection control techniques.
- d) Adhere to universal precautions and infection control protocols, especially when dealing with blood spills and handling sharp needles, razors, and other invasive equipment.
- e) Training involving correct use of equipment such as latex gloves, goggles, mask, hoods, disposable ventilation devices, and cleaning equipment, if appropriate.
- f) Demonstrate techniques for the management and documentation of exposure.
- g) Discuss of the opportunity for confidential testing and counseling of state employees (*at the state's expense*), and follow-up care should occupational exposure occur.

4. Legal Rights of Infected Individuals
 - a) The right to confidential medical and personnel files;
 - b) The right to privacy: Information regarding health or lifestyle must not be divulged without a person's knowledge and consent, except as provided by law (*Communicable Disease Prevention and Control Act, Section 9.03, amended in SB959*)
 - c) Nondiscrimination: Provide all privileges and opportunities to any staff member/client with a communicable disease, unless denial is based on accurate scientific information.
5. Behaviors Associated With Transmission That Are in Violation of Texas Law
 - a) Participation in the use of illegal IV drugs. (Chapters 481 and 483, Health and Safety Code, The Communicable Disease Prevention and Control Act, establish a criminal offense for the delivery or use of controlled substances and dangerous drugs, including injectable drugs, without proper medical authorization.)
 - b) Participation in sexual activity for money or drugs. (Penal Code 43.02, A person commits a criminal offense if the person "offers to engage, agrees to engage, or engages in sexual conduct for a fee")

By this policy, this Agency is informing all staff that the confidentiality of HIV/Hepatitis B status, medical, and staff information, will be protected to the fullest extent of the law. If a staff member does not adhere to this confidentiality policy of HIV/Hepatitis B medical and staff information, he/she will be immediately terminated.

D. AIDS

It is the Agency's objective to ensure a medically safe environment for employees, patients, and visitors. This includes preventing the transmission of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) by protecting employees and patients from exposure to the virus.

Health care workers (HCWs) who are aware that they have been diagnosed as having AIDS, AIDS-related complex (ARC), or HIV are to report to the Administrator of the Agency. Such communication with the Administrator is kept in strictest confidence.

The Administrator and/or an Agency medical staff member will meet with the affected employee and his/her physician to appraise the employee's current health status. At this time, the duties of the employee in relation to the risk of infecting health care workers, patients, and other co-workers will be assessed. The employee's personal physician will counsel him/her concerning applicable precautions for the employee's work area.

Depending on the facts of a particular situation, additional precautions, restrictions, or modifications of duties may be required for an individual with an HIV-related condition. The employee's work duties in relation to his/her health status will be evaluated periodically. Guidelines for employees working with HIV/AIDS patients or co-workers include the following:

1. Pregnant employees will not be involved in the direct care of HIV/AIDS patients who the Agency knows are infected, due to the risk of the employee acquiring cytomegalovirus.
2. Employees who refuse to perform their assigned work duties involving the care of HIV/AIDS patients or patients who are suspected of having HIV/AIDS will be suspended without pay and terminated unless investigation reveals good cause for the refusal.
3. Employees who refuse to work with another employee known or suspected to be HIV positive will be suspended without pay and terminated unless investigation reveals good cause for the refusal.
4. Guidelines for direct patient care are found in the OSHA/SAFETY Administrative Manual.

The Agency complies with all applicable federal, state, and local health and safety regulations and to provide a work environment as free from recognized hazards as possible. Staff members are expected to comply with all safety and health requirements whether established by management or by federal, state, or local law.

IX. SAFETY HANDBOOK

A. Safety Policy

To provide a safe and healthful work environment for employees, patients, and visitors, the Agency has established a workplace safety program. This program is top priority for the Agency. The Administrator is responsible for implementing, administering, monitoring, and evaluating the safety program, but its success depends on the alertness and personal commitment of all.

The Agency provides information to employees about workplace safety and health issues through regular internal communication channels such as supervisor-employee meetings, bulletin board postings, memos, or other written communications.

Some of the best safety-improvement ideas come from employees. Those with ideas, concerns, or suggestions for improved safety in the workplace are encouraged to discuss them with their supervisors or with a member of OSHA/Safety Officer Committee. Reports about workplace safety issues and concerns may be made anonymously if the employee wishes. A suggestion box is placed in the employee break room.

Staff members are provided a Safety Handbook as part of their Employee Handbook.

B. Staff Member Safety

1. The Safety Program

- a) Monitors compliance with Agency safety rules and regulations, the applicable safety and health standards established by the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, and any applicable federal, state, and local safety laws and regulations;
- b) Investigates, corrects, and eliminates recognized unsafe working conditions or potential hazards;
- c) Conducts periodic informal safety inspections of all work areas;
- d) Represents the Agency during investigations conducted by insurance carrier personnel, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), or by any federal, state, or local government agency;
- e) Organizes the training and retraining of staff members as required by law;
- f) Monitors compliance with all record keeping and record retention requirements established by law or by the organization's insurance carrier;
- g) Posts notices and keeps records as required by law or by the organization's insurance carrier;
- h) Establishes fire prevention and fire fighting programs, conducts fire drills, tests fire fighting equipment, and enforces no smoking policies where appropriate.
- i) Develops contingency disaster preparedness plans, and
- j) Investigates all accidents, hazardous incidents, and fires involving the Agency staff members or occurring on Agency premises and prepares the required reports.

2. Supervisors' Safety Responsibilities

- a) Familiarizes themselves with all safety and health procedures relevant to the operations under their supervision;
- b) Inspects their work areas frequently;
- c) Trains staff members in safety matters in accordance with operational policies on Waste Disposal, Infection Control, protective clothing, and safety belts or arranging for such training where appropriate;
- d) Identifies conditions that are recognized in the Agency's industry as being unsafe;

- e) Reports accidents and injuries to the Safety Officer and documents them in detail;
 - f) Fills out Incident Reports immediately and forwards through the chain of command;
Conducts safety and information meetings.
3. Staff Members Shall
- a) Comply with all safety policies, regulations, directives, training, rules, and instructions provided by the Agency.
 - b) Attend departmental safety and information meetings.
 - c) Strive to keep themselves free from mishaps.
 - d) Be certain instructions are completely understood and all safety and health requirements are met before starting to work. Make safety the first consideration.
 - e) Immediately report all accidents and injuries, regardless of how minor they appear, to supervisors.
 - f) Keep work areas clean and orderly at all times.
 - g) Follow prescribed procedures during emergency situations.
 - h) Know how and where to obtain medical help. Be familiar with where medical emergency numbers are posted.
 - i) Learn and practice lifting and handling materials properly. (Nursing staff should also refer to principles of Patient Handling.)
 - 1) Properly evaluate the material-handling task.
 - 2) Do not hesitate to ask fellow staff members and/or supervisor for assistance.
 - 3) Utilize appropriate equipment for lifting and carrying material.
 - 4) Never lift with your back.
 - 5) Follow proper lifting techniques by using these five steps:
 - (i) Lift properly-bend your knees, keep your back nearly straight. Lift with the load close to your body, and lift with your leg muscles. Check the load and get help if necessary.
 - (ii) Lift gradually. Minimize the effort of rising with a load by slow and smooth movements. Do not jerk the load.
 - (iii) Lift without twisting. Turn the feet, not the hips or back.
 - (iv) Start with a high lift at waist height; change your grip; bend at the knees, then push up with the legs.
 - (v) Keep your hands, feet, and body clear of obstructions when carrying a load. If the object is heavy or the carry long, ask someone for help.
 - j) Never engage in horseplay or disruptive activity.
 - k) Review all safety education material posted on the bulletin boards and actively participate in all safety promotion activities.
 - l) Report any substandard conditions and unsafe acts or practices to their immediate supervisors promptly.
 - m) Wear appropriate clothing and personal protective equipment for the job, as determined by the policies or the supervisor.
 - n) Use only equipment that is in good, safe working condition.

- o) Remain on the job assigned. Do not distract others.
- p) Be familiar with the Material Safety Data Sheets (*MSDS*) in their operations.
- q) Report to their supervisors and the Safety Officer all safety and health violations, potentially unsafe conditions, and any accidents resulting in injuries to staff members or customers.

4. Safety Training

- a) The Agency trains new and existing staff members in the correct procedures to follow on new jobs, the use of required personal safety equipment, and where to get assistance when needed.
- b) Employees and supervisors receive periodic workplace safety training that covers potential safety and health hazards and safe work practices and procedures to eliminate or minimize hazards. The Agency provides special clothing or equipment when required by regulation or by Agency policy. Staff members are responsible for the proper use, maintenance, and/or disposal of such clothing and equipment and will be subject to discipline for failure to exercise this obligation.
- c) Training shall be provided to all persons in operating supervisory positions in:
 - 1) Conducting Safety Meetings
 - 2) Conducting Inspections
 - 3) Accident Investigation
 - 4) Job Planning
 - 5) Employee Training Methods
 - 6) Leadership Skills

5. Office Safety

- a) Hazards of Office Machines
 - 1) Office machines must be equipped with a three-wire grounded circuit. Care must be exercised that the ground wires are properly connected before machines are operated.
 - 2) Office machines must be properly placed so there is no danger of falling.
 - 3) Electrical machines and connections must not be touched with wet hands or operated on damp floors.
 - 4) Office machines must not be adjusted, lubricated, or cleaned while they are running. Make sure the machine is stopped by pulling the plug out of the outlet.
- b) Hazards of Desk, Tables, Etc.
 - 1) Instead of glass tops, only shatterproof glass with beveled edges should be used.
 - 2) Drawers should never be left open.
 - 3) Desks and tables must have rubber feet on them to prevent creeping. Poorly aligned desks and tables can cause strains and injuries to fingers and hands.
 - 4) Desks and tables must be checked for splinters, dangerous cracks, and loose veneer.
 - 5) Employees should never sit on a table or arm of a chair.
- c) Hazards of Swivel Chairs
 - 1) Employees should not tilt back in swivel chairs.
 - 2) Seats on swivel chairs must not be raised so high that they cause overbalancing.
 - 3) Spring tension bolts must be checked regularly. Weak bolts on swivel chairs can break and cause a person to be thrown.
- d) Hazards of Waste Baskets

- 1) Metal waste cans may have sharp points or fragmented edges that could cut users.
 - 2) Broken glass and other similar material must be thoroughly wrapped before disposal into waste cans.
- e) Hazards of File Cabinets
- 1) File drawers must not be left open. Always use the handle to close them.
 - 2) Heavy materials must be put in the bottom drawers and lighter materials in top drawers.
 - 3) Pull only one drawer out at a time.
 - 4) File cabinets must be checked periodically for burrs and sharp edges. In addition, the condition of working tracks should be checked.

- f) Prevention of Slips and Falls
 - 1) Wear supportive, closed-toed shoes.
 - 2) Clean up spills and trash.
 - 3) Observe WET FLOOR signs.
 - 4) Stay off of wet floors until they are dry.
 - 5) Walk. Do not run or slide across floors.
 - 6) Keep wastebaskets, stools, and other equipment out of aisles and walkways.
- g) Prevention of Bruises, Lacerations, and Skin Tears
 - 1) Keep all desk and file drawers closed when not in use.
 - 2) Open only one file drawer at a time.
 - 3) Knock before entering a room
 - 4) Look before exiting a room.
 - 5) Check furniture regularly for rough or sharp edges, splinters, and loose casters.
 - 6) Never bump into file drawers to close them. Always close them by hand using the handle.
- h) Prevention of Burns and Skin Reactions
 - 1) Handle chemicals cautiously.
 - 2) Avoid skin contact with all chemicals and contaminants.
 - 3) Never spray chemicals toward the face of another person.
 - 4) Use proper mixing ratios with chemicals and cleaning solutions.
 - 5) Use cleaning compounds that cause fumes in only well-ventilated areas.
 - 6) To avoid dangerous chemical combinations, only mix chemicals together as specified in written instructions.
 - 7) Promptly wash any skin area that comes in contact with a chemical.
- i) Procedures for Severe Weather and Earthquakes
 - 1) Have emergency equipment and medical supplies readily available.
 - 2) Close all drapes.
 - 3) Stay away from windows.
 - 4) Close exit doors.
 - 5) Go to a room with no windows, if possible.
 - 6) Do not enter damaged portions of the building unless instructed.
 - 7) Monitor weather bulletins and radio announcements.
 - 8) Do not leave the building until instructed.
 - 9) Remain calm. Do not panic.
- j) Procedures for Floods

- 1) Precautions Taken When an Alert or Warning is Issued
 - (i) Make sure emergency equipment and supplies are readily available.
 - (ii) Store drinking water.
 - (iii) Turn off all unnecessary equipment.
 - (iv) Do not touch electrical equipment unless it is dry.
- 2) Precautions Taken When an Evacuation is Ordered
 - (i) Travel only routes designated.
 - (ii) Do not try to cross any water unless you are sure it is safe.
 - (iii) Monitor local radio broadcasts.
 - (iv) Watch for fallen trees, live wires, etc.
 - (v) Watch for washed-out roads, earth slides, broken water lines, etc.
 - (vi) Watch for areas where rivers, lakes, or streams may flood suddenly.
- 3) Flash Floods
 - (i) Be aware that flash floods can happen without warning.
 - (ii) When a flash flood warning is issued, take action immediately.
 - (iii) Follow all instructions issued.
- 4) After a Flood
 - (i) Do not enter the building until instructed.
 - (ii) Do not use any open-flame devices until the building has been inspected for possible gas leaks.
 - (iii) Do not turn on any electrical equipment that may have gotten wet.
 - (iv) Shovel out any mud while it is still moist.

C. Vehicle Safety

All staff members who drive vehicles, personally- or Agency-owned, on Agency business are responsible for the safe and legal operation of those vehicles. All employees driving records are checked for insurability through the auto insurance carrier. Any employee found to not be insurable may be terminated.

1. Reporting Accidents

- a) All vehicle operators on Agency business, whether the vehicle is privately or Agency-owned, must have a Driver's Accident Information Kit. The instructions in the kit are to be followed if a privately owned vehicle is involved in an accident while the staff member is on Agency business, or if an Agency vehicle is involved in an accident at any time.

- b) In the event of an accident, the vehicle operator should do whatever is necessary to minimize or avoid further property damage or injury to self or others.
2. Liability Accident

Staff members are required to maintain liability insurance on their personal vehicle. They must keep current copies of their proof of liability insurance in their personnel files at all times.
3. Current Driver's Licenses

Each staff member must have a current driver's license. A current copy of the driver's license must be in the employees' personnel files at all times.
4. Driving While Impaired

Agency staff members shall not drive their vehicle or an Agency vehicle on Agency business while mentally or physically impaired in a way that would affect their ability to drive safely. The impairment causes include: alcohol or illegal drug use, prescription drug use, excessive fatigue, or any other physical or mental impairment that would contribute to unsafe driving.
5. Vehicle Operator Guidelines
 - a) Inspect the vehicle each day prior to use for unsafe operating conditions. This includes tire inflation, tire condition, lighting, and brakes.
 - b) During the initial operation, check for handling and any other operating abnormality that could create a hazard.
 - c) Do not operate an unsafe Agency vehicle.
 - d) If the vehicle is found to be unsafe or there is evidence of accident damage, the condition should be reported to a supervisor immediately.
 - e) Agency vehicles must not be left unattended with the engine running.
 - f) Operators must fasten seat belts and shoulder harnesses before operating an Agency vehicle and any personally owned vehicles for Agency related travel. Operators must insure that all other occupants comply with this rule.
 - g) Obey traffic laws and observe legal speed limits at all times. Traffic citations will be the operator's responsibility.
 - h) Attend defensive driving courses as required.
 - i) Insure that any vehicle assigned on an individual basis is maintained in a safe, mechanically sound, clean condition.

D. Office Fire Safety

1. What All Personnel Need to Know
 - a) The principles of fire safety,
 - b) The evacuation plan,
 - c) The location of office exit doors and the fire escape route,
 - d) The location of the fire department's phone number,
 - e) What to do when a fire alarm sounds, and
 - f) What to do when smoke or fire are discovered.
2. What To Do if a Fire is Discovered
 - a) Stay calm. Do not panic.
 - b) Evacuate anyone in immediate danger,
 - c) Close the door to the room containing the fire, if possible
 - d) Pull the fire alarm.
 - e) Evacuate the building.

- f) Notify the fire department if a telephone is accessible.
- 3. Personnel Fire Safety Responsibilities
 - a) Keep all doors closed that are posted KEEP CLOSED.
 - b) Keep all corridors and walkways free from obstructions.
 - c) Report any potential fire hazards to management.
 - d) Report any damage in the fire warning system.
 - e) Be sure items stored on shelves are at least 18” from ceilings, fire detectors, or sprinkler heads.
- 4. Buildings and Exits
 - a) Office buildings must be in compliance with fire regulations
 - b) Personnel must have access to at least two separate exits at all times, in case one exit is blocked by smoke or flames.
 - c) Exits and surrounding areas must be kept free of obstructions and readily accessible at all times.
 - d) All exits should lead directly out to a street or other open space that provides access to safety.

E. Office Electrical Safety

- 1. Employee Responsibilities
 - a) Keep electrical equipment in proper working order.
 - b) Recognize and avoid unsafe equipment conditions and utility management.
 - c) Control or eliminate potential safety problems with equipment and management of utilities.
- 2. Basic Safety Rules For All Personnel
 - a) Visually inspect power outlets, outlet covers, plugs, and cords on a regular basis.
 - b) Report any cracked wall cover plates, frayed cords, or broken cords to management.
 - c) Never attempt to plug or unplug cords with wet hands or while on a wet floor.
 - d) Do not use extension cords on a permanent basis.
 - e) Do not extend cords across hallways, walkways, or corridors.
 - f) Immediately tag and remove any electrical equipment that gives a shock, makes strange noise, or has a burnt smell.
 - g) Report equipment problems to the manufacturer immediately.
- 3. Electrical Safety Procedures
 - a) The telephone system is tested on a regular basis by periodic calls to the office at various times. Any problems are reported to the telephone company.
 - b) Any problems with utilities are reported to the appropriate company.
 - c) A file is kept of all correspondence with the utility companies.
 - d) A formal office environment inspection is conducted annually as part of the safety program.
 - (i) Formal inspections are performed by the Administrator/Designee.
 - (ii) Informal, undocumented inspections should be done daily.