



Hancock County Library System
Personnel Policies
Manual

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Table of Contents

1	INTRODUCTION.....	5
1.1	ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM.....	6
2	LIBRARY MISSION, VISION, & SERVICE PHILOSOPHY	7
2.1	MISSION	7
2.2	VISION	7
2.3	SERVICE PHILOSOPHY	7
3	GOVERNANCE	8
3.1	BYLAWS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES	8
3.2	TRUSTEE EMERITUS	10
3.3	PUBLIC COMMENT	11
3.4	BOARD TRAVEL AND FOOD FOR BOARD AND STAFF EVENTS	12
4	EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	13
5	FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT	14
5.1	GRANTS	14
5.2	PROCUREMENT	15
5.3	CREDIT CARDS	15
5.4	CASH MANAGEMENT	17
5.5	CHECKS.....	17
6	PERSONNEL POLICIES.....	18
6.1	EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY	18
6.2	IMMIGRATION REFORM AND CONTROL ACT (IRCA)	18
6.3	MISSISSIPPI EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION ACT	18
6.4	PROHIBITIONS AGAINST HARASSMENT	18
6.5	COMPLAINT PROCEDURES/INVESTIGATION OF COMPLAINTS	20
6.6	AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) - ACCOMMODATION REQUIREMENTS.....	20
6.7	AGE DISCRIMINATION EMPLOYMENT ACT (ADEA).....	21
6.8	RELIGION - ACCOMMODATION REQUIREMENTS	21
6.9	PROHIBITIONS AGAINST RETALIATION	22
6.10	WHISTLEBLOWER ACT PROTECTION.....	22
6.11	DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE POLICY	22
6.12	VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE	23
6.13	DISTRACTED DRIVER POLICY	23

7	FAIR LABOR STANDARDS ACT	25
8	PAYROLL	26
8.1	SALARY PAYMENT	26
8.2	DEDUCTIONS	26
9	BENEFITS	27
9.1	HEALTH INSURANCE.....	27
9.2	LIFE INSURANCE	28
9.3	CONSOLIDATED OMNIBUS BUDGET RECONCILIATION ACT (COBRA).....	28
10	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION	29
11	SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES.....	30
12	PERFORMANCE EVALUATION AND REVIEW PROCESS.....	31
12.1	PROBATIONARY PERIODS.....	31
12.2	JOB DESCRIPTIONS	31
12.3	PERFORMANCE EVALUATION	31
13	VALUES AND BEHAVIORS	33
13.1	AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION (ALA) CODE OF ETHICS	33
13.2	DISCLOSURE OF PATRON RECORDS	34
13.3	CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND INTEGRITY	34
13.4	NEPOTISM	35
13.5	SOLICITATION.....	35
13.6	GIFTS	36
14	PUBLIC RECORDS.....	37
15	DISCIPLINARY PROCESS.....	38
15.1	DISCIPLINARY ACTION	38
15.2	REMOVAL OF STAFF	40
15.3	NOTICE TO EMPLOYEE/OPPORTUNITY FOR HEARING.....	41
16	WORK SCHEDULES & BENEFITS.....	42
17	HOLIDAYS	44
18	LEAVE POLICIES	45
18.1	VACATION/PERSONAL LEAVE.....	45
18.2	SICK/MAJOR MEDICAL LEAVE	46
18.3	BEREAVEMENT LEAVE.....	46
18.4	WORKERS' COMPENSATION	47

18.5	MILITARY LEAVE	47
18.6	FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT	48
18.7	TARDINESS	50
18.8	COMPENSATORY TIME.....	51
18.9	MATERNITY LEAVE	51
18.10	LEAVE OF ABSENCE	53
18.11	DONATED LEAVE	53
18.12	TIME SHEETS / TIMEKEEPING RECORDS	54
19	RETIREMENT/SEPARATION OF EMPLOYMENT	55
19.1	RETIREMENT	55
19.2	SEPARATION – VOLUNTARY	55
19.3	SEPARATION – INVOLUNTARY	55
19.4	PERSONNEL FILES.....	56
19.5	PROCEDURE FOR TERMINATION	56
19.6	JOB RECORDS, ETC.	56
20	COMPUTER AND INTERNET USE POLICY.....	58
20.1	USE OF THE INTERNET.....	58
20.2	COMPUTER SOFTWARE.....	58
21	EMPLOYEE DRESS AND SPEECH	60
21.1	EMPLOYEE DRESS.....	60
21.2	STATEMENTS TO THE MEDIA	60
21.3	PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA.....	60
22	LIBRARY PROPERTY	62
22.1	FURNISHINGS AND EQUIPMENT	62
22.2	LIBRARY-OWNED VEHICLES.....	62
22.3	LIBRARY TELEPHONES & CELLULAR PHONES	62
22.4	HOUSEKEEPING	62
23	EMERGENCIES	64
23.1	EMERGENCY RESPONSE	64
23.2	SEVERE WEATHER	64
23.3	PUBLIC HEALTH	65
23.4	LIBRARY	65

1 INTRODUCTION

This Personnel Policy Manual outlines employment policies for the Hancock County Library System, hereinafter referred to as the Library.

It is impossible to anticipate every situation that may occur or every policy question that may arise. The Library reserves the right in its sole and absolute discretion to revise, supplement, interpret, or rescind any portion of the Personnel Policy Manual as deemed appropriate.

Employees should familiarize themselves with the contents of the Personnel Policy Manual and forward any questions regarding content to the Personnel Officer. Each employee is expected to comply with the Personnel Policy Manual.

Mississippi public libraries are authorized to operate by statute as established by the Mississippi Legislature in the *Mississippi Code 1972 Annotated* Title 39, Chapter 3. A link to the *Mississippi Code 1972 Annotated* is available on the website of the Mississippi Secretary of State's Office at http://www.sos.state.ms.us/ed_pubs/mscode/.

1.1 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

By signing this form, I am acknowledging that I have received a copy of the Library's Personnel Policy & Procedure Manual. I understand that it is my responsibility to comply with all policies adopted by the Library's Board of Trustees and with all revisions adopted by the Board of Trustees.

I acknowledge that the Library's Personnel Policy & Procedure Manual is not a contract of employment.

Employee Signature

Date

Personnel Officer Signature

2 LIBRARY MISSION, VISION, & SERVICE PHILOSOPHY

2.1 MISSION

To inspire lifelong learning and enrich the quality of life of our communities by providing cultural, technological, and informational resources and indispensable services that are accessible to all.

2.2 VISION

A thriving, diverse community connected by an innovative library system as the accessible hub with responsive resources and caring service.

2.3 SERVICE PHILOSOPHY

Hancock County Library System strives to embody Excellence, Discovery, Collaboration, Diversity, and Integrity in serving the residents of Hancock County.

We strive for EXCELLENCE, taking pride in what we do, by providing valuable and helpful service to patrons, working toward positive outcomes through efficient use of available resources.

We learn through DISCOVERY, being innovative and growing all the time by developing as professionals, seeking and being open to feedback from the community we serve.

We engage in COLLABORATION, achieving success together through relationships with community partners and effective communication with our patrons.

We embrace our DIVERSITY, fostering belonging in an inclusive community through thoughtfulness and openness to perspectives and experiences of our community.

We act with INTEGRITY, building safety and trust by honoring professional ethics and being open, transparent, and honest with the community we serve.

*Adopted by the Board of Trustees, October 1993
Last Revised November 2022*

3 GOVERNANCE

The Board of Trustees consists of five members, appointed by the funding authorities of the Hancock County Library System. See *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated, § 39-3-17*.

3.1 BYLAWS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

ARTICLE I - ORGANIZATION

SECTION 1. The Hancock County Library System shall be organized according to the authority and provisions of the *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated § 39-3-1, et. seq.*

SECTION 2. The management and control of the library system shall be in the hands of a Board of Trustees as set forth in the *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated § 39-3-15*. After initial appointments, each trustee shall serve for terms of five years on a staggered basis.

SECTION 3. The specific powers, duties, and responsibilities of the Board of Trustees are set forth in the *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated § 39-3-17*.

SECTION 4. The Board of Trustees shall employ a system Executive Director and delegate active management of the library system, including personnel administration, to such Executive Director. The Executive Director shall possess minimum educational qualifications of not less than a master's degree in Librarianship from a college or university accredited by the American Library Association. The Executive Director shall be required to submit to the Board of Trustees a monthly activity report and a monthly financial summary.

SECTION 5. The fiscal year of the library system shall coincide with the fiscal year of the county, October 1 through September 30.

ARTICLE II - SERVICES

SECTION 1. The purpose of the library system is to provide library services consistent with its Mission Statement for the people of Hancock County and its communities.

SECTION 2. It shall not be the purpose of the library system to take the place or substitute for school library services, but rather to supplement and augment the materials and services offered to the students of Hancock County by the schools.

ARTICLE III - MEETINGS

SECTION 1. Regular meetings of the Board of Trustees shall be held monthly at a time fixed by the Board of Trustees either in the Board Room of the headquarters at the Bay St. Louis-Hancock County Library or at other places after proper advertisement.

SECTION 2. A quorum at any meetings shall consist of three-fifths (3/5ths) of the board members. No official action shall be taken by the Board unless a quorum of the Board is present. The Board members may appear by any method authorized under Mississippi law.

SECTION 3. Special meetings may be held at any time at the call of the Chairman or at the call of any two members for the transaction of business stated in the call for such a meeting.

SECTION 4. The Board may enter into executive session under the provisions of the *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated § 25-41-7* for the transaction of public business; provided, all meetings of the Board shall commence as an open meeting, and an affirmative vote of three-fifths (3/5ths) of all members present shall be required to enter into executive session.

ARTICLE IV - OFFICERS

SECTION 1. The officers of the Board of Trustees shall be a Chairman, Vice-Chairman and a Secretary. Terms of the office shall be for five years coinciding with the fiscal year or until a successor is elected. The Executive Director shall attend the meetings and may, at the discretion of the Board, serve as Secretary.

SECTION 2. In the absence of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman shall act in their place. Assignment of special duties for the promotion of the library system shall be made by the Chairman with the approval of the Board.

SECTION 3. When a vacancy occurs on the Board, the present Board will act as a committee to recommend replacement of the Board member to the Appointing Body.

SECTION 4. Records shall be kept by the Secretary of the Board of Trustees of the dates and appointments and expiration of terms of office.

SECTION 5. Any Board member missing four consecutive regularly scheduled meetings shall be automatically removed.

SECTION 6. It should be understood that Board members should be free of any conflict of interest that would be detrimental to the library or violate the Mississippi Ethics Commission Rules.

SECTION 7. The order of business at all regular Board meetings shall be the rules contained in Robert's Rules of Order on Parliamentary Procedure, as amended, so far as applicable and when not inconsistent with these bylaws, the *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated § 39-3-1, et. seq.* or any resolution of the Board of Trustees.

ARTICLE V - DUTIES OF OFFICERS

SECTION 1. The Chairman shall be the principal officer of the library system and shall preside at all meetings of the Board. The Chairman may sign, along with the Vice-Chairman, or any other officer of the library system authorized by the Board, any instrument which the Board has authorized to be executed unless otherwise delegated or required.

SECTION 2. In the absence of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman shall perform the duties of the Chairman. The Vice-Chairman shall also perform such other duties as from time to time may be assigned by the Chairman.

ARTICLE VI - TRUSTEES EMERITI

SECTION 1. There shall be a category of former and current Board of Trustees members known as Trustees Emeriti who are nominated and elected by the Board of Trustees. Emeritus members have served the Board with distinction and excellence. The guidelines for the election of Trustees Emeriti are established in the Trustee Emeritus Policy. The status of Emeritus is a rare honor.

SECTION 2. A Trustee Emeritus shall be entitled to receive all written notices and information which are provided to the Board of Trustees, to attend all Board of Trustees meetings, to participate in meetings, to serve on committees, and are encouraged to attend all other events conducted by the Hancock County Library System. A Trustee Emeritus shall not be subject to any attendance policy, counted in determining a quorum, entitled to hold office, entitled to vote or participate in any executive session.

3.2 TRUSTEE EMERITUS

In keeping with the historical traditions of the Library, there shall be a category of Board member known as Trustee Emeritus who is nominated and elected by the Board of Trustees. Emeritus members have previously served on the Board of Trustees with distinction and excellence. The status of Emeritus is a rare honor.

ELIGIBILITY:

In order to be considered for designation as a Trustee Emeritus, a person must be a current or former member of the Board of Trustees who:

1. Served the Board of Trustees with distinction and excellence.
2. Served appointed terms and was actively involved in the work of the Board.
3. Held an important leadership role and made or continues to make significant contributions.
4. Participated in one or more Board activities (e.g. events, fund-raising, government relations, networking, team building, etc.)
5. Engaged in substantial volunteer and/or advocacy activities in service to the Board.

NOMINATION:

Current Trustee members may nominate a candidate for Emeritus status at any time. Trustees should consider these questions when nominating a person for Emeritus status:

1. Has this person created a legacy that will last for years?
2. Are this person's contribution so significant others will aspire to meet the standard created?
3. Is this person respected within the community served?

The Board of Trustees may consider a potential candidate and may nominate one or more individuals for a Trustee Emeritus position. Whoever nominates a person shall present a supporting document along with the nomination.

ELECTION:

A simple majority vote of Trustees present at a meeting at which a quorum is present is sufficient to approve an appointment.

DUTIES:

A Trustee Emeritus shall have no decision-making authority but may advise the Board of Trustees on any matter and may offer suggestions. A Trustee Emeritus is a nonvoting position and shall have no official duties other than to continue to support the Board of Trustees and the Hancock County Library System.

3.3 PUBLIC COMMENT

Although the meetings of the HCLS Board of Trustees are public, they are not meetings of the public. Comments to the Board during meetings are permitted if the content is directly applicable to the operations of the Board and the Library.

Because the Board desires to conduct meetings in a businesslike and efficient manner, public comments are governed by the following policy:

1. Comments and suggestions from the public will be taken by the Board after regular meetings business, time permitting.
2. Requests to be placed on the Board agenda should be made no later than 5 PM on Thursday preceding the Board's regular monthly meeting (generally held at 3 PM on the third Tuesday of the month; dates posted on the library website). The requesting party should provide their name, phone number at which they can be reached, and the topic on which they wish to speak.
3. Comments and suggestions must be directly applicable to library operations. If not germane to library business, the comment may be ruled out of order by the Chair.
4. Pertinent questions, suggestions, and comments shall be referred to the appropriate administrator or legal counsel for a response, if applicable.
5. Each individual wishing to address the Board shall be allotted a maximum of five minutes unless extended by the majority agreement of the Board. Time allotments may not be transferred from one individual to another. The secretary of the Board shall keep time and notify the Chair when the allotted time limit has been reached.
6. The minutes of the meeting shall reflect the individual's name, address, and a summary of their remarks. In addition, the individual may request that a written statement be spread upon the minutes of the meeting.

3.4 BOARD TRAVEL AND FOOD FOR BOARD AND STAFF EVENTS

Per state code §39-3-15, members of the Board of Trustees of the Hancock County Library System may be reimbursed for travel to board meetings.

Library funds may be used for the purchase of food and beverages for library training, staff meetings, meetings of the Board of Trustees, and related events when such activities are held during hours customary for meals and when library business is conducted during those times.

*Adopted by Board of Trustees August 20, 2018;
Last Reviewed & Approved January 25, 2024*

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Executive Director is an appointee and employee of the Board of Trustees. Duties and compensation for the Executive Director are established by the Board of Trustees and the Executive Director may be removed by the Board for cause. The Executive Director shall administer and establish procedures according to policies established by the Board of Trustees. The Executive Director's duties include: (a) employment of staff with the approval of the Board of Trustees; (b) prescription of staff duties; (c) removal of employees for cause; (d) preparation of the Library budget; (e) financial and statistical management; (f) periodic reporting to the Board of Trustees; and (g) other acts necessary for the orderly and efficient administration of the Library. See *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated, § 39-3-17*.

5 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The Hancock County Library System is committed to sound financial management to ensure fiscal stability and integrity. The Executive Director will establish and maintain practices for the administration of the annual budget. The preparation and amendment of an annual budget will be submitted to and approved by the Board of Trustees. The Executive Director shall oversee staff assigned to financial management duties. The Business Department is responsible for accounting, financial reporting and record keeping, coordinating audits and internal controls, procurement, coordinating grants, and coordinating the handling of money by branch staff. The Executive Director or the Business Office may issue checks for the Library. Written checks must have two signatures from any of the Executive Director, Business Office, Board Chair or Vice Chair.

5.1 GRANTS

The Hancock County Library System is committed to the efficient, fair, and professional administration of grant funds in compliance with applicable federal and state standards, regulations, and laws. The Executive Director is responsible for reviewing and approving all grant proposals prior to submission, accepting all awarded grants, and meeting all requirements, including follow-up reporting. All staff, designated agents, and partners of the Hancock County Library System will be aware of policies and guidelines regarding grant activities.

No staff member, agent, or partner of the Library will participate in the selection, award, or administration of a contract supported by any federal funds if a conflict of interest, real or apparent, would be involved. A conflict of interest would arise when the employee, agent, partner, any member of their immediate family, or organization which employs or is about to employ them, has a financial or other interest in the firm selected for award.

No employee, agent, or partner of the Library will solicit or accept any gratuity, favor, or anything of monetary value from any contractor, potential contractor, or provider of any goods or services to the Library.

No employee, agent, or partner of the Library or their immediate family or business associate will obtain any direct or indirect interest in the contract, subcontract, or agreement with the Library for a period of one (1) year after leaving any position with the Library.

All prohibitions and provisions set forth will apply to any expenditure of funds received under any program financed in whole or in part by any federal or state funds. To the extent permitted by federal, state, or local laws or regulations, violation of these standards may cause penalties, sanctions, or other disciplinary actions including loss of employment against the Library's officers, employees, or agents and/or the contractors, potential contractors, subcontractors, or their agents.

5.2 PROCUREMENT

The Hancock County Library system maintains a variety of vendor accounts and service contracts to enable the procurement of goods and services for library operations. The Executive Director and Business Office are responsible for establishing and overseeing procurement procedures, including the management of financial instruments, records management, requisitions, quotes and bids. The Hancock County Library System will maintain tax-exempt status. All purchases for the Library will be tax-exempt.

All purchases must be approved in advance by the Executive Director or the Business Office. Routine supplies and periodic needs may be requested and approved through requisition forms submitted and approved by the Business Office. Materials purchased for library collections to be circulated to the public require a purchase order be obtained and applied to the invoice. Purchases made with grant funds or gifts/endowments will be monitored so that they can be included in reporting.

The Board of Trustees or the Executive Director with approval from the Library Board of Trustees are authorized to enter contracts on behalf of the Hancock County Library System. Purchases or contracts of more than Five Thousand Dollars (\$5,000.00) but not more than Seventy-five Thousand Dollars (\$75,000.00), exclusive of freight and shipping charges, require at least two written quotes be obtained and the best and/or lowest quote should be accepted and must be approved by the Board. Purchases or contracts over Seventy-five Thousand Dollars (\$75,000.00) must undergo formal public bidding procedures established by the State of Mississippi Office of the State Auditor and the Department of Finance and Administration. Procurements made through the bid process must be reported to the Mississippi Procurement Technical Assistance Center.

5.3 CREDIT CARDS

The Hancock County Library System maintains credit cards to enable employees to purchase library-related items and pay travel expenses for library-related business functions. The allowed uses and rules for credit card accounts are established by the Executive Director and managed by the Business Office, based on established guidelines set forth by the Department of Finance and Administration.

Access to credit cards will be authorized by the Executive Director and managed by the Business Office. The Business Office will directly receive billing documents for all credit card accounts each month. Statements will be reconciled by the Business Office. Credit card accounts will be paid in full every month and no balance shall be carried forward unless there is a dispute about the items purchased or the amount charged. The Business Office will maintain all records as required by the Department of Finance and Administration.

Use of credit cards by anyone other than an authorized user is strictly prohibited and may result in disciplinary action including the termination of employment. No personal expenses of any kind are to be charged to HCLS credit cards. Any person using the card for non-library-related

business shall be removed from the account(s) and placed under disciplinary review. Such behavior may result in termination of employment.

Authorized users should take care in managing business credit cards and are required to report lost or stolen cards immediately. Authorized users are required to review and sign a cardholder agreement form, be familiar with financial policies, and provide receipts and other documentation of items purchased to the Business Office in a timely manner. The Business Office will provide necessary training to ensure authorized users follow policy and procedures.

All branch managers have a procurement card to expend Foundation funds, the cards have a monthly limit of \$1,000.00, and the single transaction limit shall be \$500.00 (unless specifically authorized by the Board of Trustees). The Business Office has an operating card with a limit of \$25,000.00 per month and a Library Foundation card with a monthly limit of \$10,000.00 and a single transaction limit of \$5,000.00. The Executive Director's monthly credit limit shall be \$10,000.00, and the single transaction limit shall be \$5,000.00. HCLS has two PayPal accounts to receive credit card payments and to charge items that can't be purchased on a procurement card. The Library also has a regular credit card (that is not regulated by MDFA) to be used for library-related travel expenses only.

The procurement card may be used to purchase food for business meetings. State contract items may be purchased with the procurement card. The business name, address and phone number must be specified on the receipt, invoice, or on a separate accompanying document.

The following items and uses are prohibited for the procurement cards:

- Travel-related expenses, such as hotels, meals, or gasoline charges
- Purchases of equipment or inventory items (costing \$1,000.00 or more, or that are classified by DFA as equipment regardless of cost, including computer equipment over \$250.00)
- Recurring monthly charges
- Cash advances
- Alcoholic beverages
- The following types of expenses are allowed on the PayPal (or VISA Travel) card:
 - Airfare
 - Registration fees
 - Lodging (room only, no incidental expenses)
 - Rental vehicles and fuel for rental vehicles
 - Shuttles and taxis
 - Tolls and parking fees
 - Business related internet service
- The following purchases are prohibited on the PayPal card:
 - Expenses for any non-employee, including spouses
 - Fuel for personal or fleet vehicles
 - Baggage charges or travel upgrades (such as first class or business seating)
 - Food and beverages, meals, or room service

5.4 CASH MANAGEMENT

The Executive Director and Business Office will establish procedures to ensure the careful, safe, and efficient handling of cash. The handling of payments by branches will be overseen by Branch Managers, under the guidance and oversight of the Business Office. All transactions and deposits will be verified and documented. Regular submission of payments and documentation will be transferred from branches to the Business Office using secure processes. Cash and other payment documentation will be verified and deposited to the bank on a regular basis. All necessary documentation will be retained as part of relevant records management policies and state laws.

5.5 CHECKS

Staff may accept checks as payment for library-related fines, fees, or services. Staff will request a valid, state-issued form of photo identification (photo ID) and verify the patron's contact information in the integrated library system (address and current phone number). Staff will write the patron's driver's license or identification number, current phone number, and address on the check (if not printed). Staff should not accept third-party checks.

In the event of a bank notice for insufficient funds, the Business Office will contact and notify the patron that a \$30 fee will be assessed with the request to clear their account within ten days by providing cash, cashier's check, money order, or credit card. This will also be communicated in a letter informing the patron of the fee and means of payment. The Business Office will keep a file with the check copy, bank notice, record of the phone contact, and copy of the letter, with postmark.

The original charge will be re-applied to the patron account, along with the fee. Staff will add a note to the patron account to accept only cash or credit card payments. Once the charge has been paid, the payment restriction note may be removed.

*Adopted by the Board of Trustees December 10, 2010
Last Revised November 11, 2023*

6 PERSONNEL POLICIES

6.1 EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

It is the Library's policy to provide equal opportunity in employment for all individuals regardless of race, color, creed, sex (including pregnancy and related conditions, sexual orientation, and gender identity), religion, national origin, age, disability, or political affiliation.

6.2 IMMIGRATION REFORM AND CONTROL ACT (IRCA)

The Library only hires persons who are legally authorized to work in the United States. IRCA requires employers to verify the employment eligibility of all new employees.

Employees must complete an I-9 form within three (3) days of starting to work. This form is used to verify identity and authorization to work.

6.3 MISSISSIPPI EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION ACT

Pursuant to the *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated, § 71-11-3*, the Library participates in E-Verify, the federal government's voluntary employment verification program. The Library is registered for and utilizes the Department of Homeland Security's E-Verify System by submitting social security numbers of new hires to verify their immigration status and employment eligibility. The E-Verify program is used to verify new hires only after an I-9 form has been completed. The program does not pre-screen applicants or re-verify the employment eligibility of current employees.

6.4 PROHIBITIONS AGAINST HARASSMENT

The Library is committed to a professional workplace, free from adverse working conditions and all forms of harassment. *Harassment* is defined as unwelcome conduct based on race, color, sex (including pregnancy and related conditions, sexual orientation, and gender identity), religion, national origin, disability, and/or age, and is strictly prohibited.

Harassment includes unwelcome conduct by supervisors or coworkers that is severe or pervasive enough to create a work environment that a reasonable person would consider intimidating, hostile, or abusive. Enduring offensive conduct is never a condition of continued employment.

The Library also strictly prohibits harassment of individuals in retaliation for filing a discrimination charge, testifying, or participating in any way in an investigation, proceeding, or lawsuit concerning a discrimination claim. Retaliation is prohibited against employees who oppose employment practices that they reasonably believe to be illegal discrimination. The Library's prohibition against harassment includes, but is not limited to, remarks, slurs, epithets, gestures, physical contact, threats, display or circulation of written or electronic materials,

pictures, or objects derogatory to any person based on the characteristics listed above. The Library strictly forbids this type of behavior. Such will not be tolerated at any level of the organization.

All employees are encouraged to report unwelcome, harassing conduct by any Library employee. Even if the conduct is not directed at the employee, anyone affected by the offensive conduct is encouraged to report the behavior. The Library expressly prohibits any unwelcome harassing conduct and will take appropriate steps to prevent and promptly correct such conduct.

The Library specifically acknowledges that sexual harassment is a form of discriminatory harassment that is illegal under Title VII of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964* and is strictly prohibited. Sexual harassment will not be tolerated. Immediate and appropriate action will be taken to address violations of this policy. Sexual harassment does not have to be sexual in nature—it can look like teasing, intimidating or offensive comments based on stereotypes, or bullying someone or a group of people based on their sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

The victim of the alleged sexual harassment may be a man or a woman and can be of the same sex as the harasser. Further, anyone affected by the offensive conduct may be considered a victim, not only the person directly subject to the offensive conduct. No employee of the Library should imply, suggest, or threaten that an applicant's or employee's decision to participate in sexual conduct will have any impact on the individual's employment status, including but not limited to, assignment, compensation, promotion or other condition of employment.

Sometimes an employee has willingly participated in conduct of a sexual nature but later wishes the conduct to stop. To claim a hostile work environment, the employee must clearly notify the alleged harasser that the conduct is no longer welcome. The sexual conduct is unwelcome if the employee does not solicit or incite the behavior and regards it as undesirable or offensive. If the sexual conduct continues, the employee should immediately report it. The Library will take immediate and appropriate steps to stop any unlawful harassment.

Sometimes sexual harassment may be found even when sexual activity or language is not at issue. If negative conduct is gender-based and pervasive and directed at an employee because of their sex, it may also be considered sexual harassment and is prohibited.

Inappropriate conduct by members of the public. The Library uses filters to block material that is legally proscribed: child pornography, obscenity, and sexually oriented materials defined by the *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated, § 97-5-29*. Employees may, however, sometimes encounter such material despite the best efforts of the Library. In such cases, Library employees should follow procedures established by the Board of Trustees.

Free speech v. conduct. The Library recognizes and encourages public rights to free speech, including the right to receive information in a public library. Employees may encounter materials purchased by the Library or summoned on screen by Library patrons that make the employees uncomfortable and upset. Handling and encountering such materials without judgment is part of the work requirement in public libraries. Harassing conduct, on the other hand, is not tolerated. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a

sexual nature constitute sexual harassment. The test is whether this conduct explicitly or implicitly affects an individual's employment, unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

6.5 COMPLAINT PROCEDURES/INVESTIGATION OF COMPLAINTS

Employees are encouraged to communicate directly with one another in order to assure prompt discontinuation of any behavior found to be offensive. The Library supports the rights of each employee to communicate directly with other employees in requesting that offensive conduct be discontinued. However, informal redress of complaints is not required and the complaining employee may proceed to file a formal complaint in any situation in which informal redress is not feasible or desirable.

No employee or applicant is required to endure workplace harassment. An employee who is unable to resolve the problem or who does not wish to discuss the issue with the offending party should report unwelcome harassing conduct immediately to their immediate supervisor or the Executive Director. If the immediate supervisor is the alleged source of the harassment, the employee should skip that level of management and report the conduct to the next level supervisor or to the Executive Director. The complaint will be immediately investigated and appropriate corrective action will be taken.

If an employee claims the Executive Director is the source of the harassment, the employee should report the conduct to their immediate supervisor or to the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees. The Chair will take immediate steps to investigate the complaint, independent from the Executive Director, and prompt appropriate corrective action will be taken.

During the investigation, the complainant will be requested to submit a written statement describing in detail the alleged harassment and the identity of any individuals that may have relevant information concerning the complaint. A prompt investigation, however, is not contingent on the employee submitting the written statement. In determining whether the conduct is sufficiently severe or pervasive to create a hostile work environment, the Library will evaluate the behavior from the objective standpoint of a "reasonable person." The Library will consider the context in which the alleged harassment took place and examine the behavior using the perspective of a reasonable person's reaction to a similar environment under similar or like circumstances. Corrective action will reflect the severity of the conduct. In all circumstances, the Complainant will be informed of the results of any investigation and the action taken.

6.6 AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) - ACCOMMODATION REQUIREMENTS

The Library will not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities in job application procedures, hiring, firing, advancement, compensation, job training, and other terms, conditions, and privileges of employment. A qualified employee or applicant with a disability is an individual who, with or without reasonable accommodation, can perform the essential functions of the job in question.

An individual with a disability is a person who:

- has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities;
- has a record of such an impairment; or
- is regarded as having such an impairment.

The Library will make a reasonable accommodation for the known disability of a qualified applicant or employee if it does not impose an undue hardship on the legitimate administration of the Library.

Applicants will not be asked about the existence, nature, or severity of a disability. Applicants will be asked about their ability to perform specific job functions. All requests for accommodations and steps to evaluate such requests will be documented by the Executive Director.

The Library strictly prohibits retaliation against any employee or applicant exercising rights granted by the ADA. Also, any coercion, intimidation, threats, harassment, or interference in the exercise of any employee or applicant's rights granted under the ADA, or of the encouragement of someone else's exercise of rights granted by the ADA, is strictly prohibited.

6.7 AGE DISCRIMINATION EMPLOYMENT ACT (ADEA)

The Library does not discriminate on the basis of age and protects applicants and employees forty (40) years of age and older from discrimination on the basis of age in hiring, promotion, discharge, compensation, or terms, conditions, or privileges of employment. The ADEA is enforced by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

6.8 RELIGION - ACCOMMODATION REQUIREMENTS

The Library does not discriminate on the basis of religion when hiring, terminating, or setting conditions of employment. The Library treats employees and job applicants equally, without regard to religious beliefs and practices, except to the extent a religious accommodation is warranted. For example, the Library will allow employees to wear clothing and ornaments that hold religious meaning for an individual.

The Library will reasonably accommodate an employee's sincerely held religious practices unless doing so would impose an undue hardship on the legitimate administration of the Library. A reasonable religious accommodation is any adjustment to the work environment that will allow the employee to practice their religion. An undue hardship is defined as requiring more than ordinary administrative costs, diminishing efficiency in other jobs, infringing on other employees' job rights or benefits, impairing workplace safety, or causing co-workers to carry an undue share of potentially hazardous or burdensome work. Legally, the Library may not provide an

accommodation if such conflicts with another law or regulation. Religious expression in the workplace is permitted, unless such imposes or would impose an undue hardship on the Library.

Religious harassment of any employee is prohibited and should be immediately reported to the immediate supervisor or the Executive Director. If the immediate supervisor is the alleged source of the harassment, the employee should skip that level of management and report the conduct to the next level supervisor or the Executive Director. The complaint will be immediately investigated and appropriate corrective action will be taken. If the Executive Director is the alleged source of the harassment, then the employee will report the alleged harassment to the Chair of the Board of Trustees (or to their immediate supervisor who will then be responsible for reporting the behavior to the Chair). The Chair will take immediate steps to investigate the complaint, independent from the Executive Director and prompt appropriate corrective action will be taken. Consistent with other policies prohibiting retaliation, no employee will be retaliated against for making a claim of religious discrimination, requesting a religious accommodation, or reporting religious harassment. Retaliation against an employee for participating in any way in an investigation, proceeding, or litigation under Title VII is also prohibited.

6.9 PROHIBITIONS AGAINST RETALIATION

The Library will not dismiss, demote, harass, or otherwise retaliate against an individual for filing a charge of discrimination, participating in a discrimination proceeding, or otherwise opposing discrimination. The same laws that prohibit discrimination based on race, color, sex (including pregnancy and related conditions, sexual orientation, and gender identity), religion, national origin, age, and disability, as well as wage differences between men and women performing substantially equal work, also prohibit retaliation against individuals who oppose unlawful discrimination or participate in an employment discrimination proceeding.

In addition to the protections against retaliation that are included in all the laws enforced by EEOC, the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA) also protects individuals from coercion, intimidation, threat, harassment, or interference in their exercise of their own rights or their encouragement of someone else's exercise of rights granted by the ADA.

6.10 WHISTLEBLOWER ACT PROTECTION

A Library employee who reports or provides information to a state investigative body about what they believe, in good faith, is an improper act by the Library, is entitled to Whistleblower Protection as described in *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated, § 25-9-171 et seq.* Employees are protected from reprisal or retaliatory action such as unwarranted letters of reprimand, demotion, reduction in pay, denial of promotion, suspension, or dismissal and denial of employment if such actions were the result of the employee's whistleblowing activities.

6.11 DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE POLICY

The Library is committed to providing a drug free workplace. The Library encourages employees and volunteers to voluntarily seek help with drug and alcohol problems. It is a violation of the

Library's drug-free workplace policy to use, possess, or be impaired by unlawful controlled substances while performing an official job function or assignment. It is a violation to report to work impaired by alcohol or other substances.

6.12 VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

This organization does not tolerate workplace violence. We define workplace violence as actions or words that endanger or harm another employee or result in other employees having a reasonable belief that they are in danger. Such actions include:

- Verbal or physical harassment
- Verbal or physical threats
- Assaults or other violence
- Any other behavior that causes others to feel unsafe (e.g. bullying, sexual harassment)

Library policy requires an immediate response to all reports of violence. All threatening incidents will be investigated and documented by the employee relations department. If appropriate, the company may provide counseling services or referrals for employees.

The following disciplinary actions may also be taken:

- Oral reprimand
- Written reprimand
- Suspension
- Termination

It's the responsibility of all employees to report all threatening behavior to management immediately. The goal of this policy is to promote the safety and well-being of all people in our workplace.

6.13 DISTRACTED DRIVER POLICY

Driving while texting or talking on the phone (even on a hands-free set) has been proven to drastically impact drivers' attentiveness and performance. In order to avoid accident or injury:

All employees are expected to follow applicable state or federal laws or regulations regarding the use of cell phones or PDAs at all times. Employees are also expected to obey all traffic regulations, signs, and signals.

Employees whose job responsibilities include regular or occasional driving and who are issued a cell phone, tablet device, laptop, or PDA for business use, or who own such devices, are expected to refrain from using such devices while driving. Use of any such devices while driving is strictly prohibited by the Library administration and Board of Trustees.

Since safety must come before all communication needs, employees are required to pull into a rest area or parking lot and safely stop the vehicle before placing or accepting a call, even if the calling mechanism is a hands-free device.

Special care should be taken in situations where there is traffic, inclement weather or the employee is driving in an unfamiliar area, to make sure the driver is not distracted and has their full attention on the road.

As with any policy, management staff members are expected to serve as role models for proper compliance with the provisions above, and are encouraged to regularly remind employees of their responsibilities in complying with this policy.

Employees who are charged with traffic violations resulting from the use of their phone or other electronic devices mentioned above while driving will be solely responsible for all liabilities that result from such actions. Violations of this policy will be subject to serious discipline, including suspension without pay and termination.

Violation of this policy can result in being issued a disciplinary warning. If an employee is given two warnings and continues to drive using cell phone, video games, cameras, etc. when driving for the Library, the third warning will make them subject to the following based on the severity of the violation:

- 1) suspension from driving for the Library
- 2) suspension from their job temporarily and/or
- 3) termination

*Adopted by the Board of Trustees 2014
Last Revised March 22, 2023*

7 FAIR LABOR STANDARDS ACT

In certain circumstances, when Library operations cannot be fulfilled during regular working hours, employees may be required to work more than normal working hours. When possible, advance notification of these assignments will be provided. All overtime worked must first be authorized by the Executive Director. The Library will comply with all requirements of the *Fair Labor Standards Act* (FLSA).

The Executive Director, with the approval of the Board of Trustees, may designate certain executive, administrative and professional positions as exempt from the requirements of the *Fair Labor Standards Act*. The Executive Director applies the following standards in determining whether employees are designated as exempt or non-exempt from the requirements of the *Fair Labor Standards Act*:

- Executive employees are employees whose primary duty is management of the Library or a recognized department of the Library and who customarily and regularly direct the work of two or more other employees. These employees also can make suggestions and recommendations as to the hiring, firing, advancement, or change of status of other employees.
- Administrative employees are employees whose primary duty is the performance of office or non-manual work directly related to the management or general operations of the Library and whose primary duty includes the exercise of discretion and independent judgment with respect to matters of significance.
- Professional employees are employees whose primary duty is the performance of work requiring knowledge of an advanced type in a field of science or learning customarily acquired by a prolonged course or specialized intellectual instruction; or requiring invention, imagination, originality or talent in a recognized field of artistic or creative endeavor.
- Employees in executive, administrative, or professional categories are compensated at the minimum yearly and/or weekly salary established by the Department of Labor.

*Adopted by the Board of Trustees 2014
Last Revised March 22, 2023*

8 PAYROLL

8.1 SALARY PAYMENT

All employees are paid bi-weekly by direct deposit on Thursdays.

If a payday falls on a holiday, employees will be paid on the last day on which the Library is open.

8.2 DEDUCTIONS

Regular deductions on each payroll are made for federal taxes, social security (FICA) and for those employees working more than half-time per week, Mississippi Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) deductions.

A) Mississippi State Employees Retirement System

The Library has been a member of the retirement system since April 1967. All employees working 20 or more hours per week are required to join. With each payroll, a designated amount is withheld from the employee's check. To this is added a designated amount paid by the Library. For full information on the retirement system, employees should request a brochure from the Business Office.

B) Mississippi Deferred Compensation Plan

Permanent full-time employees are eligible to participate in the Government Employees' Deferred Compensation Plan of Mississippi, a tax deferred savings. Employees may participate in this plan through elective payroll deductions. Program and enrollment information may be obtained from the Business Office.

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9 BENEFITS

9.1 HEALTH INSURANCE

The Library participates in the State and School Employees' Health Insurance Plan group health and prescription drug coverage. Library employees who work twenty (20) or more hours per week are eligible to participate. The Library pays the entire premium for "Select" coverage for all eligible active employees' health insurance hired before January 1, 2006, as a Legacy Employee. The Library pays the entire premium for "Base" coverage for all eligible active employees' health insurance hired after the Horizon date of January 1, 2006. The basic payments for these benefits are made by the library on a year-to-year basis depending on the Library's funding ability to pay the full amount.

All changes in marital status, dependents, address, etc. must be reported to the Business Office so proper notification can be forwarded to the insurance providers. It is the responsibility of the employee verify the correct change was made.

A) Workers' Compensation & State Unemployment Insurance

All employees are covered by Workers' Compensation and State Unemployment Insurance. Workers' Compensation provides protection in case of injury or illness as the result of a service-connected accident or condition. Any accident or injury to an employee while conducting Library business must be reported immediately to administrative personnel.

B) Dental Insurance

Permanent, full-time employees with a work week of at least 20 hours are eligible for dental insurance. Dependent coverage for family members is available, payable by the employee through payroll deduction. The Library covers the cost of the premium for the employee only.

C) Vision

The Library offers group benefits for supplemental vision coverage through a payroll deduction for employees working a 20-hour work week. The employee should request information on this coverage from the Business Office.

D) Telehealth Services

The Library provides supplemental online medical services from AllyHealth, including medical and mental health telehealth services for the employee and their family. The cost for this service is provided by the Library.

E) Other Insurance

The Library offers group insurance through third-party cafeteria plans for a variety of coverage types, such as cancer, accident, intensive care, and similar supplemental policies, through a payroll deduction plan for employees working a 20-hour work week. The employee should request information on this coverage from the Business Office.

9.2 LIFE INSURANCE

Life insurance and Accidental Death and Dismemberment (AD&D) insurance is available to employees who work twenty (20) or more hours per week. An employee's group term life insurance amount is equal to two times their annual salary, then rounded up to the next highest thousand. The minimum amount of life insurance is \$30,000 and the maximum amount is \$100,000. The Library pays for the premium on behalf of the employee.

9.3 CONSOLIDATED OMNIBUS BUDGET RECONCILIATION ACT (COBRA)

Information concerning the federal *Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act* (COBRA) is given to all new employees. COBRA is available to employees, spouses, and dependent children who participate in the Library's health insurance plan. It provides the right to the temporary continuation of health coverage at the Library's group rates. Under COBRA, the employee or beneficiary pays the full cost of coverage at the plan's group rates. Upon separation of employment, the necessary forms are provided to the employee with COBRA election forms describing said rights.

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10 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

The Library is committed to supporting organizational, professional, and individual excellence through ongoing professional development. Every employee is expected to participate in professional development and training provided periodically by the Library or identified by staff and approved by their supervisor and Executive Director. Employees will apply what they have learned for the growth of the organization.

The Executive Director is expected to participate in any local, state, regional, or national meetings/training sessions to represent the Library and obtain information and training that would benefit library service. The time spent at such functions will be considered part of the Executive Director's work week.

Employees are encouraged to join and contribute to professional organizations. The Library covers membership dues in library professional and local leadership organizations for approved staff with an identified need.

Employees are encouraged to attend job-related meetings, workshops, and library events appropriate to their job duties such as the Children's Book Fest, the Mississippi Library Association Annual Conference, or the Society of Mississippi Archivists Annual Conference. The Library will pay for approved registration fees and supplies that are part of the scheduled meeting.

Participation in professional events and training must have prior approval from the employee's supervisor and the Executive Director. Employees are in work status while attending such meetings and will be reimbursed for travel expenses. Employees attending meetings should arrange the use of the library car. If this is not possible, the employee will be reimbursed based on the current federal rate per mile for use of their personal automobile. Travel expenses are based on federal rates for mileage and per diem meal reimbursement.

Where possible, expenses may be determined and paid in advance. Employees must submit documentation of all reimbursable expenses and fill out an employee travel reimbursement form. Employees should consult with their immediate supervisor to obtain the necessary forms and instructions for travel expenditure reimbursement.

*Adopted by the Board of Trustees 2014;
Last Revised January 17, 2023*

11 SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the policy of the Library that the work of all employees shall be assigned, directed, and reviewed by supervisory personnel. Each employee will ordinarily have only one supervisor to whom they are directly responsible, with ultimate responsibility to the Executive Director.

- A) The supervisor is the link between management and non-management employees. Supervisors communicate to the employees under their supervision the goals and policies of Library administrators, and they communicate to Library administrators the attitudes, suggestions, and complaints of employees.
- B) It is the responsibility of each supervisor to ensure that personal and organizational goals, the policies established by Library administrators, and the values and behaviors outlined in the performance review process and the Strategic Plan are maintained.

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Last revised January 17, 2023*

12 PERFORMANCE EVALUATION AND REVIEW PROCESS

12.1 PROBATIONARY PERIODS

It is the policy of the Library that the first six (6) months of employment are a probationary period. The employee's immediate supervisor will conduct a job performance evaluation on or about six months from the date of hire. During this period either party, whether employee or employer, reserves the right to terminate the working relationship without prejudice. The probationary period may be extended at the discretion of the employee's immediate supervisor and the Executive Director.

12.2 JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Each Library position has a written job description that focuses on the essential functions of the job. The job description includes (1) position title and classification, (2) reports to and/or staff supervised (3) essential job duties or functions, (4) physical requirements, and (5) minimum qualifications. Job descriptions should be reviewed regularly and updated to reflect the organization's needs and staff duties.

12.3 PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

The purpose of the performance evaluation is to improve the quality and outcomes of services, develop professional skills, motivate innovation and growth, cultivate positive collaborative relationships, and build a culture of accountability. All employees are accountable for working toward and accomplishing their job responsibilities and organizational goals, committing to a professional development plan, and aligning with established values and behaviors.

The performance review cycle begins at the end of the six-month probationary period for every employee in the first year of employment and recurs yearly thereafter. Performance evaluations are administered fairly and consistently with the employee's job performance for the entire performance review cycle considered. The yearly review cycle will progress as follows:

- 1) Staff will create a self-review of the goals created during the previous cycle for the performance year and submit self-reviews to their supervisor.
- 2) Supervisors will complete a performance evaluation and rating and submit it to the Executive Director.
- 3) The Executive Director reviews all performance evaluations and meets with supervisors to discuss, if necessary.
- 4) Supervisors meet and discuss evaluations with direct-report staff. Staff will create two goals that are specific, measurable, actionable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) for the following year, plus a professional development goal. Goals should align with the Strategic Plan and the staff's job description. Evaluation forms are signed and become part of the staff personnel file.

Informal evaluation of employees takes place throughout the year and will be referenced in the formal performance evaluation. The performance evaluation may be used to identify employees for salary increases, promotion, training, and retention or separation based on performance and/or conduct. Timing of the formal evaluation will occur before the annual budget process for the upcoming fiscal year.

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13 VALUES AND BEHAVIORS

Hancock County Library System is committed to Excellence, Discovery, Collaboration, Diversity, and Integrity as the driving principles for personnel conduct and service.

We strive for **Excellence**, by taking ownership of tasks and responsibility for outcomes. We identify solutions to problems. We hold ourselves accountable to our word. We produce quality work that brings value to our patrons. We are efficient and responsible in our use of resources.

We learn through **Discovery**, being innovative, and growing all the time. We are committed to developing our professional skills and open to learning, always seeking new ideas. We are constantly improving how things get done and are open to feedback.

We engage in **Collaboration**, achieving success together. We recognize the need to work at building relationships and maintaining a positive work environment. We keep others informed and involved. We value teamwork and recognize the strengths and contributions of others. We help others develop with thoughtful and constructive feedback.

We embrace our **Diversity**, fostering belonging in an inclusive community. We engage respectfully with everyone and use thoughtful, mindful language. We are open to other perspectives and experiences and work to recognize and adjust our biases, striving to do better. We stand up for others and work to disrupt barriers to accessibility in our services. We promote opportunities for growth for all patrons.

We act with **Integrity**, building safety and trust. We strive for ethical action and seek guidance when necessary. We are transparent, open, and honest, holding ourselves and others accountable for unethical behavior. We honor the policies and procedures that guide our work. We do whatever is necessary to create a safe environment for all and work to realize the intentions of our initiatives.

13.1 AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION (ALA) CODE OF ETHICS

The Library endorses the [Code of Ethics of the American Library Association](#) as a framework for the principles that guide the work of all staff and Trustees at the Hancock County Library System.

- 1) We provide the highest level of service to all library users through appropriate and usefully organized resources; equitable service policies; equitable access; and accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests.
- 2) We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources.
- 3) We protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or transmitted.
- 4) We respect intellectual property rights and advocate balance between the interests of information users and rights holders.

- 5) We treat co-workers and other colleagues with respect, fairness, and good faith, and advocate conditions of employment that safeguard the rights and welfare of all employees of our institutions.
- 6) We do not advance private interests at the expense of library users, colleagues, or our employing institutions.
- 7) We distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation of the aims of our institutions or the provision of access to their information resources.
- 8) We strive for excellence in the profession by maintaining and enhancing our own knowledge and skills, by encouraging the professional development of co-workers, and by fostering the aspirations of potential members of the profession.
- 9) We affirm the inherent dignity and rights of every person. We work to recognize and dismantle systemic and individual biases; to confront inequity and oppression; to enhance diversity and inclusion; and to advance racial and social justice in our libraries, communities, profession, and associations through awareness, advocacy, education, collaboration, services, and allocation of resources and spaces.

13.2 DISCLOSURE OF PATRON RECORDS

Section 39-3-365 et seq. of the *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated* forbids divulging patron records to anyone, including law enforcement, unless the Library has the express written permission of the respective Library patron or a court order has been issued specifying the release of the records. Patron records are defined as records that contain personal identifiers or circulation and usage history. The law does not prohibit disclosure to collect overdue items that belong to the Library. Aggregate statistics shown from registration and circulation records, with all personal identification removed, may be released or used by the Library for research, planning, and reporting purposes.

If law enforcement requests patron records, employees must direct the requests to the Executive Director or designated staff. The Library may only disclose patron records by a court order signed by a judge. The Executive Director will consult an attorney before responding to subpoenas and will contact an attorney in the event of a search warrant, if possible. During the execution of a search warrant, the Executive Director will verify the identity of a law enforcement officer and the validity of a search warrant and provide only the specified records. An incident report will be completed for any legal action involving the Library.

13.3 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND INTEGRITY

Employees are expected and required to:

- Maintain the highest standards of honesty, integrity, impartiality, and conduct;
- Avoid any misconduct and/or conflicts of interest;
- Be impartial in all decision-making and not give unjustified preferences to other employees or patrons; and

- Avoid using, or appearing to use, their position for personal gain (other than the remuneration received pursuant to employment) or for family members' personal gain.

No act shall be committed by an employee that could result in the questioning of the Library's integrity. Employees are required to comply with all state ethics laws regarding conflicts of interest, *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated, § 25-4-101 et seq.*

Associations, dealings, relationships, or interests that could affect, or reasonably appear to affect, an employee's objectivity in performing their job or in making decisions required of their position must be avoided. Any potential conflict of interest or situation that could be reasonably viewed as a conflict of interest must be immediately reported to the immediate supervisor or Executive Director.

An employee cannot serve in elected or appointed positions that have decision-making authority over the Library. A current employee must immediately resign if they accept an elected or appointed position that has decision-making authority over the Library.

The Library recognizes the potential conflicts of interest associated with the employment of relatives, friends, or co-workers in a dating relationship. Potential claims of favoritism, partiality, and conflict of interest are detrimental to the efficient operation of the Library and a violation of Library policy. The Executive Director will take prompt action to address any actual, potential, or reasonably perceived conflicts of interest that arise involving employees.

Employees are not to engage in any activity in either a private or official capacity where a conflict of interest may reasonably exist. Violations of this policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. In addition to complying with all state laws governing conflicts of interest, employees are also required to comply with all state laws regarding nepotism.

13.4 NEPOTISM

Nepotism is prohibited by Mississippi state law, *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated, § 251-53*. It is unlawful for any public official or trustee to appoint or employ any person who is paid with public funds if that person is related to the public official or trustee by blood or marriage within the third degree as computed by civil law. In Mississippi, the *Guide to Civil Law Degrees of Kinship* defines *First Degree* as parents, spouse, and children; *Second Degree* as siblings, grandparents, and grandchildren; and *Third Degree* as aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces, and great-grandparents. Nepotism does not apply to any employee who has been with the Library before the time their kinsman, within the third degree, becomes director of the Library or a member of either an Administrative Board of Trustees or an Advisory Board of Trustees.

13.5 SOLICITATION

Vendors, solicitors, and persons circulating petitions should be told to see employees outside the Library unless business matters are involved. Proselytizing, selling merchandise, tickets, or

chances of any kind in public service areas, office or workroom areas, whether by employees or others is prohibited.

13.6 GIFTS

The Library is a public institution, and its services are available to all. Employees may not accept personal gifts or money from the public or companies doing business with the Library. Employees are permitted to accept gifts of food from the public to be shared by all employees.

*Adopted by the Board of Trustees 2014;
Last Revised January 17, 2023*

14 PUBLIC RECORDS

Employees should be aware that Mississippi law provides for public records to be available for inspection by any person, subject to certain exceptions. Employees routinely create records, such as incident reports, emails, voicemails that may be subject to inspection according to the *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated, § 25-61-1 et seq.*

The Board of Trustees has adopted the following procedure regarding the request for public information:

- A) Requests for public documents must be made in writing to the Chairman of the Board and reviewed by the Board Attorney. The request must be signed by the requested party and include a current mailing address and phone number. Requests should be addressed to:

Chairman of the Board
Hancock County Library System 312 Hwy 90
Bay St. Louis, MS 39520-3595

- B) The Board Attorney will review the request to determine if the item(s) requested are public property.
- C) Fees for costs incident to providing the records are:
- \$10 per hour for staff time to search, review and provide items requested;
 - \$.25 per copy to photocopy items requested which includes staff time to copy; and
 - Actual cost to mail copies if applicable

The requesting party will be given an approximate cost of the request, and such fees shall be collected by the public body in advance of complying with the request.

- D) The original documents must be copied by authorized personnel. No original documents will be removed from the library administration facilities without the written permission of the Board of Trustees or court order.
- E) Once the requesting party authorized the production of the documents by payment of the fees, the documents will be forwarded to the requesting party within fourteen (14) working days.
- F) Denial of any or all of the requests shall be in writing and shall state the specific reason for the denial. All denials will be preserved for three years from the date denials are made.

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15 DISCIPLINARY PROCESS

15.1 DISCIPLINARY ACTION

The Library is committed to ensuring fair treatment of all employees. Disciplinary action shall be applied in steps of increasing severity whenever practical in order to stimulate a change in conduct or performance. The Library adheres to fair and objective procedures and criteria for disciplinary action and is committed to progressive disciplinary action before an employee is dismissed, whenever practical.

Examples of possible progressive disciplinary action prior to dismissal of an employee include a suspension without pay and/or a demotion to a position with less responsibility and/or salary. The Library distinguishes between less serious and more serious actions of misconduct and institutes disciplinary action accordingly. The primary purpose of any disciplinary action is to correct and prevent problems in a timely manner and prepare the offending employee for satisfactory service in the future.

Corrective Action Meetings to address unacceptable conduct are conducted by the Personnel Officer in a timely manner. The Personnel Officer discusses the specific issues with the employee and direction is given by the Personnel Officer to the employee concerning the unacceptable conduct.

The Personnel Officer also informs the employee of the potential consequences of any future unacceptable conduct. The issues discussed in the Corrective Action Meeting are documented by the Personnel Officer and the employee is required to sign the memorandum acknowledging that the meeting took place and the issues were discussed.

A disciplinary procedure shall be initiated by any employee action or inaction deemed by the supervisor to be offensive and/or in violation of Library policies and procedures. Evidence of the progressive discipline action shall be in writing and becomes an official part of the employee's personnel file. Various actions can be taken by the supervisor in the Progressive Discipline Procedure, up to and including termination for cause.

The Progressive Discipline Procedure will apply to all employees of the Library regardless of tenure. Each employee shall enjoy benefits of the State and Federal constitutions and laws and applicable rules and regulations.

1. First Stage—Conference
 - a. Defined as any verbal discussion between employee and supervisor, including informal counseling.
 - b. Action Taken: After the verbal conference with the employee, the supervisor will note the date, incident, and/or problem, any corrective action to be taken, and file the notation in the employee's file.

2. Second Stage—Disciplinary Alert

- a. Defined as a written warning by supervisor
- b. Executive Director is advised of the action and may elect to advise the Board of Trustees of the problems with specific employee(s)
- c. Action Taken:
 - 1) After the counseling session with the employee, both supervisor and employee will sign the documentation, with one copy given to the employee and one placed in the employee's file.
 - 2) If the employee refuses to sign the form, it shall be noted by the supervisor on the form.
 - 3) If the employee refuses to receive their copy of the document, it will be noted by the supervisor on the form. A copy will be given to the employee and a copy mailed to employee's home address. This shall have the same legal effect as if the employee had signed the document.

3. Third Stage—Disciplinary Action

- a. Defined as a written warning and subsequent action by supervisor of an employee's continuing problem, offense, etc.
- b. Process is initiated at the discretion of the supervisor, with the approval of the Executive Director. In the Executive Director's absence, the supervisor in charge may impose action on the employee.
- c. Disciplinary action may include one or more of the following levels:
 - 1) Probation for any appropriate period approved by the Executive Director
 - 2) Suspension without pay for any appropriate period approved by the Executive Director
 - 3) Demotion, including loss of salary, loss of salary supplement, delayed salary supplement, reassignment
- d. Action Taken:
 - 1) After the counseling session with the employee, both supervisor and employee will sign the documentation, with one copy given to the employee and one placed in the employee's file.

- 2) If the employee refuses to sign the form, it shall be noted by the supervisor on the form. A copy will be given to the employee and a copy mailed to the employee's home address. This shall have the same legal effect as if the employee had signed the document.

4. Fourth Stage—Termination for Cause

Defined as the complete separation of employment caused by the employee's actions.

- a. May include voluntary resignation, if offered by management.
- b. Either termination or voluntary resignation would result in loss of all benefits except return of the amount actually paid by the employee into the state retirement system fund, in accordance with state law.
- c. Termination for cause may occur in either of the following two cases:
 - 1) After the employee's actions have initiated each stage of the Progressive Disciplinary Procedure
 - 2) Immediate termination, based on the severity of the employee's actions at the discretion of the Executive Director or designee.

15.2 REMOVAL OF STAFF

The Executive Director is responsible for the orderly and efficient administration of the Library and may employ staff with the approval of the Board of Trustees as described in § 39-3-17 (3) of the *Mississippi Code 1972, Annotated*. The Executive Director also has the authority to remove staff for cause. Unacceptable conduct, poor performance, reorganization plans and/or budget restrictions may be considered as cause to terminate the employment of an employee.

In the event a determination is made by the Executive Director to remove an employee for cause, written notice of such decision will be given to the employee. When practical, the notice will be hand delivered to the employee, and reviewed verbally by management in a conference with the employee.

A copy of the termination letter, along with separation papers and forms, will be mailed to the employee's home address following the conference. If the notice is unable to be hand delivered, it will be sent by certified mail to the employee's address on file.

The employee will be allowed to remove any personal items, and will be immediately escorted from the premises.

15.3 NOTICE TO EMPLOYEE/OPPORTUNITY FOR HEARING

An employee is entitled to a written notice of the reason(s) for the termination and a summary of the factual basis for the decision. In accordance with § 39-3-17 (3) of the *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated*, the notice will also inform the terminated employee that he/she may request a hearing before the Board of Trustees to present matters relevant to the reasons given for the termination decision, including any reasons alleged by the employee to be the reason for the action.

The terminated employee has at least five (5) working days from delivery of the termination notice to request a hearing via written notification to the Executive Director. The Executive Director will inform the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the request. The Board of Trustees will send a notice of hearing to the terminated employee informing him/her of the date, time and location of the hearing.

Prior to the requested hearing, all relevant documentation concerning the termination decision will be provided to the Board of Trustees. The Executive Director will meet with the Board in executive session to review the documentation and answer questions.

The requested hearing will be held at least five (5) working days after written notice of hearing date. The hearing will be fair and impartial and the terminated employee may be represented by counsel at their own expense. The Executive Director and attorney for the Board shall also be present at the hearing. The hearing shall be informal and administrative in nature. Attorneys will not be permitted to cross examine witnesses and their participation may be limited by the Chairman, in harmony with the informal and administrative nature of the hearing.

The terminated employee and/or the employee's attorney will be permitted to present matters relevant to the reasons given for the termination decision, including any reasons alleged by the employee to be the reason for the action. The Board shall take the matter under advisement at the end of the meeting and will notify all parties in writing of the decision within ten (10) working days. The decision of the Board of Trustees is final.

If the terminated employee does not request a hearing before the Board of Trustees, the decision of the Executive Director is final.

*Adopted by the Board of Trustees 2014;
Last Revised January 17, 2023*

16 WORK SCHEDULES & BENEFITS

A. Exempt Employees

1. Definition: Exempt Employees are paid a fixed salary rather than an hourly wage, and perform executive, supervisory, management, or administrative duties. Please see the full definition according to the Fair Labor Standards Act (<http://www.flsa.com/coverage.html>).
2. Schedule: Exempt Employees shall not have a rigid schedule of hours, but shall be expected to fulfill a forty-hour work week of Library oriented business. This would include meetings and any other time spent off the Library premises in pursuit of Library business.
3. Benefits: Exempt Employees are considered benefitted employees and are eligible for benefits through the Library System. Benefits include: Health Insurance (including dental and optional vision coverage), Telehealth Services, Cafeteria Insurance, COBRA, Life Insurance, Holiday Pay, Sick Leave, Vacation Leave, and Administrative Leave.

B. Non-Exempt Employees Benefitted

1. Definition: Any employee earning an hourly wage, generally not performing executive, supervisory, management, and administrative duties, who regularly works between twenty to forty hours per week on the premises of the Library, or the minimum hours required for eligibility for membership in the Public Employees' Retirement System of Mississippi (PERS).
2. Schedule: The employee's scheduled hours are to be scheduled by the Executive Director or the employee's immediate supervisor to best meet the needs of the Library.
3. Benefits: Employees who regularly work 20 hours or more per week are considered benefitted employees and are eligible for benefits through the Library System. Benefits include: Health Insurance (including dental and optional vision coverage), Telehealth Services, Cafeteria Insurance, COBRA, Life Insurance, Holiday Pay, Sick Leave, Vacation Leave, and Administrative Leave.

C. Non-Exempt Employees - Non-Benefitted

1. Definition: Any employee earning an hourly wage, generally not performing executive, supervisory, management, and administrative duties, who regularly works less than twenty hours per week on the premises of the Library, or fewer than the minimum hours required for eligibility for membership in the Public Employees' Retirement System of Mississippi (PERS).

2. Schedule: The employee's scheduled hours are to be scheduled by the Executive Director or the employee's immediate supervisor to best meet the needs of the Library.

3. Benefits: Part-Time employees are considered non-benefitted employees and are not eligible for benefits through the Library System. Non-benefitted employees may occasionally receive holiday pay as described in Section 17 and Administrative leave in place of normally scheduled hours, upon approval by the Executive Director.

*Adopted by the Board of Trustees 2014;
Last Revised March 22, 2023*

17 HOLIDAYS

The Library observes the ten (10) legal holidays set forth in § 3-3-7 of the *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated* and any additional holidays proclaimed by the Governor, with one modification: In lieu of Confederate Memorial Day, the last Monday of April, the Library will observe Mardi Gras Day.

The following have been designated as official state holidays in Mississippi:

January 1	New Year's Day
Third Monday of January	Robert E. Lee/Martine Luther King Jr. Birthdays
Third Monday of February	Washington's Birthday
Last Monday of April	Confederate Memorial Day
Last Monday of May	National Memorial Day/Jefferson Davis's Birthday
July 4	Independence Day
First Monday of September	Labor Day
November 11	Armistice Day (Veteran's Day)
Fourth Thursday in November	Thanksgiving
December 25	Christmas Day

Employees will be paid for holidays at their regular pay rate based upon their regularly scheduled hours if the holiday falls on a regularly scheduled workday for that employee.

*Adopted by the Board of Trustees 2014;
Last Revised March 22, 2023*

18 LEAVE POLICIES

18.1 VACATION/PERSONAL LEAVE

Personal leave with pay is available for employees to provide opportunities for relaxation, vacations, and personal business. Employees are encouraged to use personal leave for these pursuits. All requests for personal leave must be approved by the immediate supervisor at least one week in advance by submitting a leave request. Paid leave can only be requested after it has been earned. All requests for personal leave are approved at the discretion of the immediate supervisor, based on the operational needs and staffing requirements of the Library.

Vacation/Personal leave is earned by employees in the following manner:

A. Benefitted Employees

1. Upon hire, the Executive Director receives four weeks of vacation. Thereafter, the Executive Director receives the equivalent of four weeks of vacation/personal leave per year to be credited on the anniversary of hire.
2. All other benefitted employees receive annual accrual of vacation/personal leave based on the length of continuous service beginning on the first working day of each month. Vacation/personal leave is available for the employee's use on the first day of the month after the leave is earned, following a six-month probationary period.
3. Benefitted employees earn vacation/personal leave as follows:

CONTINUOUS SERVICE	ACCRUAL RATE (Monthly)	ACCRUAL RATE (Annually)
1 month to 3 years	12 hours	18 days
37 months to 8 years	14 hours	21 days
97 months to 15 years	16 hours	24 days
Over 15 years	18 hours	27 days

B. Non-Benefitted Employees

1. Part-time employees working regularly scheduled hours less than 20 hours per week are not eligible to accrue vacation or personal leave. An HCLS employee working less than 20 hours per week may submit a leave request for up to 1 week. Such leave will be unpaid. All requests for unpaid personal leave must be approved by the employee's immediate supervisor at least one week in advance by submitting a leave request. All requests for personal leave are granted or denied at the discretion of the employee's immediate supervisor, based on the operational needs and staffing requirements of the library.

18.2 SICK/MAJOR MEDICAL LEAVE

Sick/major medical leave with pay is available for employees who are regularly scheduled to work 20 or more hours per week. Sick/Major Medical Leave with pay is to be used for the illness or injury of the employee or a member of the employee's immediate family. Immediate family is defined by the *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated, § 25-3-95* as spouse, parent, stepparent, sibling, child, step-child, grandchild, grandparent, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law or sister-in-law. Child means a biological, adopted, or foster child, or a child for whom the individual stands or stood in loco parentis.

Employees who are regularly scheduled to work 20 hours or more per week accrue medical leave based on their length of continuous service. Benefitted employees earn sick/major medical leave as follows:

CONTINUOUS SERVICE	ACCRUAL RATE (Monthly)	ACCRUAL RATE (Annually)
1 month to 3 years	8 hours	12 days
37 months to 8 years	7 hours	10.5 days
97 months to 15 years	6 hours	9 days
Over 15 years	5 hours	7.5 days

Employees are reminded that sick/major medical leave should be used judiciously since illness can strike an employee or immediate family member at any time.

All HCLS Employees absent from work due to illness for more than three (3) consecutively scheduled workdays, exclusive of holidays, off days, and weekends must submit a medical certificate to their supervisor. Anyone with a pattern of repeated use of single days or parts of days must provide a medical certificate upon request from their immediate supervisor or the Executive Director.

If an illness or injury causes an employee to exhaust all accumulated medical leave, the employee may use accumulated personal leave. Medical leave is separate and apart from employees' rights granted under the Family and Medical Leave Act as described in Section 18.6.

Upon termination of employment or retirement, Mississippi leave law provides that accumulated unused sick/major medical leave and/or vacation/personal leave can be certified to the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) for creditable service. However, said accumulated unused personal or major medical leave (or their equivalent) certified to PERS may not exceed that which could have been accrued and certified under the State's leave law, as provided under *Mississippi Code, Annotated, §25-3-93* and *§25-3-95*. Said leave must be certified by the Business Manager or Executive Director and reported on PERS form 18. Final certification is made by PERS.

18.3 BEREAVEMENT LEAVE

Bereavement leave will be granted with pay to any full-time or part-time benefitted employee, regardless of time worked at the library and upon approval from the Executive Director, for a

death in the family of a staff member, to include: Parents, grandparents, spouses, domestic partner, siblings, children, grandchildren and legal wards/guardians. Paid leave shall be limited to three (3) days. Staff that are on probation are also eligible for Bereavement leave.

Upon approval from the Executive Director, an employee may also use up to seven (7) days of any available leave for each occurrence of death in the immediate family requiring the employee's absence from work.

Bereavement leave of up to one (1) day may be granted at the discretion of the Executive Director for a staff member to attend the funeral of a person not specified or set forth above.

18.4 WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Employees are covered by the Mississippi Workers' Compensation Law, *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated § 71-3-1 et seq.* which provides certain benefits in the event an employee suffers a work-related injury or illness. In case of a work-related fatality, the law guarantees payment of benefits to the spouse and dependents of the deceased.

Workers' Compensation benefits are provided at no cost to the employee or dependents. For injury/illness, benefits may include payment of all reasonable and necessary medical expenses, as well as partial compensation for wages lost due to the injury or illness. In certain cases, vocational rehabilitation may also be available.

Wage-loss benefits for injury/illness are not paid for the first five (5) days of disability unless the disability extends fourteen (14) or more days. These benefits are payable at the rate of two-thirds of the employee's average weekly wage. These benefits may also be subject to a weekly maximum set by law.

Workers' Compensation claims are time sensitive. Employees must report claims within thirty (30) days after the occurrence, subject to statutory exceptions as outlined in the *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated § 71-3-35*. Any injury/illness that happens on the job should be reported immediately to the employee's immediate supervisor to ensure appropriate medical treatment is provided and any wage loss benefits due the employee are paid without unnecessary delay.

18.5 MILITARY LEAVE

The *Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Act of 1994* (USERRA, 38 U.S.C. Sec. 4301-4335), grants re-employment rights, within certain time limits, to soldiers who leave employment to perform military duty and who satisfactorily perform that duty. The right to re-employment is not contingent on whether the orders were voluntary or involuntary.

Re-employment rights will be granted to employees who:

- Provide the Library with advance written or verbal notice of the military service;

- Do not have more than five (5) years of cumulative service in the uniformed services while employed by the Library;
- Return to work or apply for reemployment in a timely manner after conclusion of service; and
- Have not been separated from service with a disqualifying discharge or under other than honorable conditions.

A leave of absence for periods of armed service will be granted. Thirty days with pay per year not chargeable to other leave credits for members of the National Guard or armed forces reserve units for ordered military duty will be granted.

18.6 FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT

Employees who have worked for the Library for at least one (1) year and for one thousand two hundred and fifty (1,250) hours over the previous twelve (12) months are covered by the *Family and Medical Leave Act* (FMLA).

In compliance with FMLA, eligible employees are entitled to up to twelve (12) weeks of unpaid, job-protected-leave for any of the following reasons:

- A. Incapacity due to pregnancy, prenatal medical care or childbirth
- B. To care for the employee's child after birth, or placement for adoption or foster care
- C. To care for the employee's spouse, son or daughter, or parent, who has a serious health condition
- D. Serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the employee's job. A "serious health condition" is an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves either an overnight stay in a medical care facility, or continuing treatment by a health care provider for a condition that either prevents the employee from performing the functions of the employee's job, or prevents the qualified family member from participating in school or other daily activities.

According to FMLA guidelines, "Continuing treatment" is a period of incapacity of more than three (3) consecutive calendar days combined with at least two (2) visits to a health care provider. The two (2) visits to a health care provider must occur within thirty (30) days of the beginning of the period of incapacity and the first visit to the health care provider must take place within seven (7) days of the first day of incapacity.

A serious health condition includes more than three (3) consecutive full calendar days of incapacity plus a regimen of continuing treatment and the first visit to a health care provider must take place within seven (7) days of the first day of incapacity.

Incapacity may also be due to pregnancy or a chronic condition requiring periodic visits for treatment by a health care provider. A chronic condition requires at least two (2) visits to a health care provider per year.

During all FMLA leave, the employee's group health coverage will be maintained. Upon return from FMLA leave, the employee will return to the original or equivalent position with equivalent pay, benefits and other employment terms. Use of FMLA will not result in the loss of any employment benefit that accrued prior to the start of an employee's leave. Time spent performing assigned "light duty" work does not count against an employee's FMLA leave entitlement.

Employees must provide thirty (30) days advance notice of the need to take FMLA leave when the need is foreseeable. When thirty (30) days' notice is not possible, the employee must provide notice as soon as practicable. The notice must be consistent with the usual and customary Library procedures for reporting an absence unless there are unusual circumstances.

Employees are required to provide sufficient information for an FMLA eligibility determination to be made. This information will also be used to determine the anticipated timing and duration of the leave. Employees must complete and return, within fifteen (15) days of the first day of leave, one of the following U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) certification forms:

- A. Serious health condition – USDOL Form WH-380-E
- B. Care for a covered family member – USDOL Form WH-380-F;
- C. Qualifying exigency for military family leave – USDOL Form WH-384;
- D. Serious injury/illness of covered service member for military family leave – USDOL Form-385.

If information provided by the employee or the healthcare provider on the certification form is incomplete or insufficient, the employee will be notified, in writing, as to what information is lacking and given seven (7) calendar days to cure the deficiency. Employees may be required to provide a new medical certification each leave year for medical conditions that last longer than one year.

Recertification may also be required every six (6) months for an ongoing condition resulting in recurring absences.

Eligible employees requesting leave will be informed as to whether said condition/exigency qualifies for FMLA leave. A FMLA-qualifying employee:

- May use FMLA leave intermittently or on a reduced leave schedule when medically necessary or for qualifying exigencies.
- Using FMLA leave intermittently must make reasonable efforts to schedule leave for planned medical treatment so as not to unduly disrupt Library operations

- Must also inform their supervisor if leave being requested is for a condition/situation for which FMLA leave was previously taken or certified

The Library applies FMLA leave concurrent with accrued paid leave.

No employee may interfere with, restrain, or deny the exercise of any right provided under the *Family and Medical Leave Act*. No employee may discharge or discriminate against any person for opposing any practice made unlawful by the FMLA or for involvement in any proceeding under or relating to the FMLA.

Military Entitlement. An eligible employee is entitled to up to 12 weeks of FMLA leave because of any qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that the spouse, son, daughter, or parent of the employee is a member of any Armed Forces and/or a reserve component of the Armed Forces on covered active duty. Qualifying exigencies may include attending certain military events, arranging for alternative childcare, addressing certain financial and legal arrangements, attending certain counseling sessions, and attending post-deployment reintegration briefings.

The twenty-six-week entitlement applies to family members (i.e. next of kin) not previously covered for qualifying reasons. The entitlement is not in addition to the twelve (12) week FMLA entitlement for qualifying exigencies.

18.7 TARDINESS

Tardiness is defined as arriving after any scheduled time for arrival, breaks, or lunch. Employees are expected to be on the premises, have the building ready for opening, and begin their duties at the scheduled time. Tardiness is costly to the Library and unfair to other employees who are on duty at the scheduled time.

- A. Employees are to adjust their personal schedule to be at their assigned station at the correct time.
- B. Tardiness cannot be made up by staying later or coming in earlier than the assigned time.
- C. To ensure that the effective operation of the Library is not compromised, employees are responsible for calling their supervisor when they are going to be late. Employees are still subject to the specific provisions of the tardiness policy.
- D. Personal, sick/major medical leave, or compensatory time/leave cannot be used to compensate an employee for tardiness.
- E. Excessive tardiness can directly affect an employee's annual performance evaluation, eligibility for salary and merit increases and any additional benefits or responsibilities, i.e., attendance at special seminars.

- F. Management handles all scheduling and has the right to effectively staff the organization as needed based on managerial discretion.

Documentation and ongoing tracking of tardiness records will align with the performance evaluation cycle. Recurring tardiness will result in the disciplinary action in line with the Disciplinary Process policy, including verbal conference for the first three (3) incidents, followed by a written warning with counseling, and the appropriate disciplinary action should tardiness continue during the performance evaluation cycle. Appropriate disciplinary action may include:

- Probation for any appropriate period approved by the Executive Director.
- Suspension without pay for any appropriate period approved by the Executive Director.
- Demotion, including loss of salary, loss of salary supplement, delayed salary supplement, reassignment.
- Termination or voluntary separation would result in loss of all benefits, except return of the employee's actual amount paid into the State Retirement System fund, in accordance with State Law. (See Section 15 for more information on the Disciplinary Process and Removal of Staff).

18.8 COMPENSATORY TIME

Overtime is defined as hours worked in excess of the employee's scheduled time over a two-week period. Overtime must be authorized by the Executive Director. Employees working authorized overtime will be compensated with time off equal to the overtime worked.

18.9 MATERNITY LEAVE

Maternity leave is absence by a pregnant staff member for the birth of her child.

A. Eligibility

Staff members who have at least a year of service at Hancock County Library System AND who have worked at least 1,250 hours within the previous 12 consecutive months are eligible for The *Family and Medical Leave Act* (FMLA) to coincide with their maternity leave. FMLA provides certain staff members with up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave per year. It also requires that their group health benefits be maintained during the leave.

B. Provisions

Holding the job: Pursuant to the *Family Medical Leave Act* (FMLA), the staff member's job is held for up to 12 weeks following the birth of the child.

Pay: Eligible staff who have at least six months of continuous service with Hancock County Library System are also eligible for Extended Sick Time (EST) benefits to cover the disability period of their maternity leave. The disability period for maternity leave is typically six to eight weeks depending on the method of birth. EST pays out at 100% of the staff member's salary, after satisfying a seven consecutive day waiting period. A staff member may use any available sick time, admin days, and vacation time as paid leave before meeting the seven-day waiting period. The staff member may also use any available sick time, admin days, and vacation time to cover as paid leave following the expiration of EST benefits.

If a staff member is not eligible for EST, they may use their own sick time, admin days, and vacation time to receive pay during their leave. Once this time is exhausted, the remainder of their leave would be unpaid.

Below are some typical pay breakdowns for FMLA eligible maternity leaves:

- **Vaginal Birth**
 - Week 1: Sick Time, Admin Days, and/or Vacation Time
 - Week 2-6: Extended Sick Time
 - Week 7-12: Sick Time, Admin Days, and/or Vacation Time (and/or unpaid)

- **C-Section**
 - Week 1: Sick Time, Admin Days, and/or Vacation Time
 - Week 2-8: Extended Sick Time
 - Week 9-12: Sick Time, Admin Days, and/or Vacation Time (and/or unpaid)

Benefits: A staff member on paid maternity leave will continue to receive benefits. HCLS will continue to pay the employer contribution during this time.

An individual on unpaid maternity leave will be billed for benefits coverage. The staff member may elect to waive some or all benefits while on unpaid leave.

C. How to apply for maternity leave

Application: The staff member must contact the Executive Director and Business Manager 30 days prior to the leave to apply for FMLA and EST benefits or as soon as possible.

D. End of the leave

Return to work: At the expiration of their maternity leave, staff members are expected to return to their job, or an equivalent position for which they are qualified, if able to return to work.

Extension: If a leave of absence is required beyond the approved leave period for the staff member to return to work, the staff member must request an extension from the Executive Director prior to the expiration of the leave. In the event that the staff member fails to return to work after their approved leave and any approved extension, their employment may be subject to termination.

18.10 LEAVE OF ABSENCE

The Board has determined that ample benefits to employees for vacation and sick leave have been covered by the above policies. These policies are fair and equitable, making it unnecessary to extend the policies to any one employee. All other leave is at the discretion of the Board of Trustees on a case-by-case basis.

18.11 DONATED LEAVE

An employee may donate a portion of their earned annual and/or sick leave to another employee who is suffering from a catastrophic injury or illness, or to another employee who has a member of their immediate family who is suffering from a catastrophic injury or illness, subject to the following conditions and restrictions:

- a. For the purposes of this policy, the following words and phrases shall have the following definitions:
 - "Immediate family" means spouse, parent, stepparent, sibling, child or stepchild.
 - "Catastrophic injury or illness" shall mean a severe condition or combination of conditions affecting the mental or physical health of an employee or a member of the employee's immediate family, that requires the services of a licensed physician for an extended period of time, and that forces the employee to exhaust all sick and personal leave time earned by that employee, resulting in the loss of compensation from the Library for that employee.
- b. The employee receiving the donated leave (recipient employee) must have been employed by the Library for a total of at least twelve (12) months by the date on which the leave is donated; and must have been employed for at least 1,250 hours of service (not including any unpaid leave hours) with the Library during the previous twelve (12) month period from the date on which the leave is donated.
- c. The employee donating the leave (donor employee) shall designate the recipient employee and the amount of earned annual and/or sick leave that is to be donated by written notification to the Executive Director.
- d. The maximum amount of unused accumulated personal leave that an employee may donate to other employees within a twelve (12) month period may not exceed 50% of the earned and accrued, but unused, annual and/or sick leave of the donor employee.
- e. An employee must have exhausted all of their accumulated annual leave and sick leave and must be eligible for, and have been approved for, additional leave under the Family & Medical Leave Policy (Section 18.6 of this Manual) before he/she will be eligible to receive any leave donated by another employee.
- f. Donated leave must be counted as Family & Medical Leave and will not allow an employee to exceed the maximum amount of Family & Medical Leave that the policy allows.

- g. Before an employee may receive donated leave, he/she must provide the Executive Director with a physician's statement that states the beginning date of the catastrophic injury or illness, a description of the injury or illness, and a prognosis for recovery and the anticipated date that the recipient employee will be able to return to work.
- h. If the amount of leave that is donated to any employee is not used by the recipient employee, the donated leave shall be returned to the donor employees on a pro rata basis, based on the ratio of the number of days of leave donated by each donor employee to the total number of days of leave donated by all donor employees.
- i. Donated leave shall not be used in lieu of disability retirement.
- j. This policy is limited to those employees eligible for leave under the Leave Policies (Section 18).

Upon receiving written notification from a donor employee, the Executive Director will notify the Business Office that the donation of leave has been approved (or not). The Business Office will notify the donor employee that their donation has been approved. The Business Office will also notify the recipient employee of the amount and source of the donation. The employee's time sheet shall reflect the number of hours donated.

18.12 TIME SHEETS / TIMEKEEPING RECORDS

Each employee is required to keep a record of their hours worked (for hourly, non-salaried employees) and leave used for each two-week pay period in the Library's time and attendance timekeeping system.

The employee must approve a complete and accurate timesheet by the end of each pay period. The timesheet will then be reviewed for approval by the employee's immediate supervisor. Paychecks will not be issued without an approved timesheet.

Bi-weekly timesheets must be completed and reviewed by each employee before the end of the last scheduled working day prior to payroll submission, which is Monday by 8 a.m. Each employee is responsible for providing the following information on his/her timecard/time sheet:

- Personal leave used
- Sick/major medical leave used
- Other approved leave used
- Prior approved compensatory time used
- Documentation of unpaid leave

*Adopted by the Board of Trustees 2014;
Last Revised March 22, 2023*

19 RETIREMENT/SEPARATION OF EMPLOYMENT

19.1 RETIREMENT

Certain employees, as specified below, become a member of the Mississippi Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) as a condition of employment.

PERS participation and coverage is provided to employees in positions that require compensated work for at least twenty (20) hours per week OR at least eighty (80) hours per month.

Participation is offered to employees whose wages are subject to payroll taxes and are reported on Form W-2.

When an individual is first employed, the Library furnishes the new employee with a member information form to establish a PERS membership account. Annually, PERS sends the employee a fiscal year contributions statement.

Additional information concerning retirement benefits is contained in the PERS Member Handbook. Information may also be obtained by calling PERS at 1-800-444-7377 or (601) 359-3589 or by visiting www.pers.state.ms.us.

19.2 SEPARATION – VOLUNTARY

- A. Employees are encouraged to provide two (2) weeks' notice of resignation or one (1) month for professional employees to facilitate a smooth transition out of the organization. If an employee provides less than requested, the Library may deem the individual ineligible for rehire.
- B. Resignations must be made in writing to the Executive Director and submitted for Board approval.

19.3 SEPARATION – INVOLUNTARY

- A. Employees guilty of:
 - a. gross negligence
 - b. disloyalty to the Library
 - c. having defects of character that bring discredit upon the Library
 - d. excessive absence or lateness
 - e. negligence in assigned work
 - f. theft
 - g. failure to follow procedures and policies will be dismissed by the Executive Director.
- B. Removal of employees for cause will follow the process set forth in Section 15-Disciplinary Process, Removal of Staff, regardless of any notice of resignation given by the employee.

- C. In the event that a reduction of staff becomes necessary, consideration will be given to the quality of each employee's past performance and the needs of the system. Seniority will be considered if performance of duty is of equal quality.

19.4 PERSONNEL FILES

Personnel files are the property of the Library. As these files contain information of a private nature, they are available for perusal only to the employee and authorized members of administration (Executive Director and Business Office). These files cannot be removed from the library. No information will be given from these files unless the employee authorizes the Business Office to do so for the purpose of a credit application or a new job. Upon receiving such requests, the Business Office will only release job titles and dates of employment.

19.5 PROCEDURE FOR TERMINATION

Upon termination either by the employee or employer, the following procedure will be followed:

- A. Upon the first pay day following the official termination date, the employee will be paid the following:
 - 1. Hours worked in the last pay period preceding termination with normal deductions of sick/major medical leave, vacation/personal leave, FICA, PERS, and withholding.
 - 2. Payment of vacation/personal leave accrued through the last day worked with normal deductions of FICA, PERS, and withholding.
 - 3. Deductions shall also be made for any fees the Library has paid for an employee for educational or other purposes that the employee promised to repay at the end of their employment.
 - 4. Employees will not be paid for sick/major medical leave accrued.

- B. The Business Office will immediately make notification of the following:
 - 1. Notification to the employee's insurance companies stating date of termination of employee.
 - 2. Notification to PERS of termination date of employee.

19.6 JOB RECORDS, ETC.

- A. Employee must turn in library keys in their possession when receiving final paycheck.

- B. All records, papers, reports, files, etc. concerning their job and those made by the employee during employment are the property of the Library. The employee may make copies of such items that he/she needs upon approval of the Executive Director and at the employee's expense.

*Adopted by the Board of Trustees 2014;
Last Revised March 22, 2023*

20 COMPUTER AND INTERNET USE POLICY

20.1 USE OF THE INTERNET

- A. It is important that each person employed by the Library, whether full-time, part-time, temporary, contractor, or subcontractor, understands and acknowledges the Computer and Internet Use policy that governs the use of all computers, computer-based communications networks, and all related equipment.
- B. The electronic communications and facilities of the Library are government property, and by using these facilities, the employee consents to abide by these policies.
- C. No communications or uses of the information technologies are to be considered private or confidential and the use of such systems may be monitored at any time. The Library prohibits the use of these technology resources in any manner which is disruptive, offensive, harmful to morale, unethical or illegal under state and/or federal laws. It is the responsibility of each employee to use these resources in a responsible, courteous manner following accepted standards of behavior and etiquette.
- D. All e-mail, instant messaging, or other communication composed, transmitted, or received via the Library's computers is part of the official records of the Library. As such, the information may be subject to disclosure to public records requests or law enforcement agencies should circumstances arise that require such action.

20.2 COMPUTER SOFTWARE

The purpose of this policy is to prevent the Library's computer equipment from being damaged by computer viruses and to protect the Library and its Board of Trustees from legal action involving computer software copyright infringement.

A. Software Loading Policy

Because of the prevalence of computer viruses in the software exchange environment, the following guidelines will be used when loading software or computer programs into the Library computer or related hardware:

- 1. Only recognized and reliable software programs will be used
- 2. The programs must come from recognized and reliable vendors
- 3. All software installations must be approved by the IT Manager and/or Executive Director

B. Software Copyright Policy

Because of the vulnerability of public libraries to charges of copyright violations, the following guidelines will be used in purchasing software:

1. Software and computer programs used by the Library must comply with all copyright laws of the United States of America
2. The IT Manager keeps copies of licenses of all software
3. All software and computer programs used by the Library must be approved by the IT Manager and/or Executive Director

*Adopted by the Board of Trustees 2014;
Last Revised January 17, 2023*

21 EMPLOYEE DRESS AND SPEECH

21.1 EMPLOYEE DRESS

The appearance of HCLS staff reflects directly on how the Library System is perceived by the public. We strive to exhibit professionalism by presenting ourselves in a business-like manner, reflecting the image we wish to present to the public. Clothing should be appropriate for the assigned tasks and adequately cover the body while bending, stooping, reaching, or sitting. The policy applies to all hours of operation and outreach events where staff are representing the library.

Staff should adhere to the following:

- Name tags must be worn
- Clothes should be clean and intact
- Staff are encouraged to wear library-branded attire to outreach programming and events when representing the library
- More casual attire may be worn as appropriate to duties and responsibilities

Example of unprofessional attire:

- Scrubs, pajamas, and athletic clothing (sweats, warm-up suits, yoga pants, shorts)
- Clothing or accessories that advertise alcohol, illegal acts or substances, make political statements or contain sexual content or innuendo
- Strong perfumes or fragrances

Branch Managers and other supervisors are responsible for enforcing the dress code. An employee not meeting the standards will be notified and receive disciplinary action as appropriate to the progressive disciplinary process.

21.2 STATEMENTS TO THE MEDIA

The following policies in no way conflict with the *Whistleblower Protection Act* regarding statements to investigatory bodies. The *Whistleblower Protection Act* does not apply to media statements.

Employees should refer all media inquiries and requests for information or an interview to the Public Relations and Marketing Coordinator. Employees are not to make statements to the media, regardless of media deadlines.

21.3 PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA

The Library does not interfere with personal expression done outside the Library setting. However, if employees comment on any aspect of the Library in their own personal blogs, they must identify themselves as Library employees and include a disclaimer that the views expressed are their own and not those of the Library.

*Adopted by the Board of Trustees 2014;
Last Revised January 17, 2023*

22 LIBRARY PROPERTY

22.1 FURNISHINGS AND EQUIPMENT

The Library provides all furnishings and equipment including technology resources, such as computer workstations and high-speed internet access, as tools for productivity and to help employees provide quality customer service to our patrons.

All furnishings, computers, peripheral equipment, software, and data on Library computers are the property of the Hancock County Library System.

22.2 LIBRARY-OWNED VEHICLES

- 1) Employees who are required to travel for their job should request and receive authorization in advance.
- 2) Employees traveling in Library-owned vehicles are required to provide copies of a valid driver's license to the Business office. Library-owned vehicles are insured by the Library.
- 3) The use of Library-owned vehicles is for conducting interlibrary branch business, transporting staff and Board members to conferences and workshops, and conducting all other official library business as determined by the Executive Director or their designee.

22.3 LIBRARY TELEPHONES & CELLULAR PHONES

Telephones at staff workstations are provided for Library business. Personal calls should be avoided, except in the case of an emergency.

Certain employees have been assigned Library-issued cellular phones. These phones are the Library business. As with all Library property, these phones must be returned when employment ends.

22.4 HOUSEKEEPING

Cleaning at the library branches is handled by the Maintenance Technician and a professional cleaning service. Employees are responsible for maintaining cleanliness in their assigned work areas. Each employee must inform their supervisor and/or the Executive Director of any areas which need attention to special cleaning, depleted toilet supplies, extreme disarrangement of furniture, and other custodial problems.

- 1) Employees should notify their supervisors of the existence of any pests, so an exterminator may be called to take care of the problem. All employees are responsible for reporting such problems.

- 2) The entire staff must help keep the Library tidy by pushing in chairs, straightening tables, picking up scrap paper, etc.

*Adopted by the Board of Trustees 2014;
Last Revised January 17, 2023*

23 EMERGENCIES

23.1 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

The Hancock County Library System will follow all closure actions by the Hancock County government and will monitor Hancock County Emergency Management communications and advisories. In the event of an emergency impacting the normal operations of the Library or the safety of Library staff and patrons, the Board of Trustees will meet to determine temporary response strategies, including the closure of one or more branches of the Library system, suspension of services, or strategies for responding to emergent conditions. The Executive Director has the authority to close a building due to outages that affect normal operations, including electrical, plumbing, or HVAC outages.

The Executive Director will notify all staff of any operational actions and supervisors will ensure direct communication to impacted direct-report staff. The Executive Director will also make necessary notifications to stakeholders and ensure the community is notified of operational changes via appropriate communication channels.

If the Library is closed in response to an emergency, staff will be paid for the time they would normally be scheduled to work; employees will not receive compensation for emergency closings if they occur outside of their scheduled hours.

23.2 SEVERE WEATHER

The Executive Director will monitor notifications from Hancock County Emergency Management and be prepared to respond to inclement weather. It is the goal of the Library to work with the community when severe weather impacts the County in order to:

- Keep library and information services available to the public for as long as safely possible.
- Reopen these services as soon as possible to serve as a focal point for the restoration of government services and to provide necessary information for local recovery efforts.
- Help ensure the safety of our employees, patrons, and their families.

A severe weather (hurricane, tornado, flood, etc.) WATCH is declared when the risk of hazardous conditions has increased but the occurrence, location, or timing is uncertain. If the County is under severe weather WATCH, employees are to secure the library buildings and property to be prepared if the libraries need to be closed. A severe weather WARNING is declared when hazardous conditions have developed and are occurring, necessitating protective action for people in the area. Library closure decisions will be made in accordance with Policy 23.1.

Unless otherwise possible, the Library will reopen the morning after the severe weather has abated and officials declare it is safe to return. If employees do not receive notification, they should attempt to contact their supervisor. Employees are responsible for reporting to work even if they do not receive notification from their supervisor if the severe weather has abated and authorities have declared it is safe to return.

23.3 PUBLIC HEALTH

During a public health emergency caused by widespread illness and/or pandemic, the Hancock County Library System will use recommendations from the CDC, Mississippi Department of Health, and state and local agencies and officials when determining prevention, preparedness, and closure decisions. Health, prevention, exposure, and closure recommendations from these authorities will be followed. Situational emergency policies are supplemental to all existing leave policies and may be modified or suspended at any time.

23.4 LIBRARY

Staff are encouraged to contact appropriate public safety authorities in response to a situation at Library facilities that threatens the safety of staff and/or patrons. In the event of a fire, dangerous substance, or other emergency requiring evacuation, staff shall make an emergency instructional announcement to patrons.

Supervisors will complete an incident report for all emergencies that occur at Library facilities or impact operations, including but not limited to:

- Medical and health emergencies
- Theft and property damage
- Workplace violence and violent crime
- Threats and suspicious packages
- Fire

Incident reports should be completed and submitted to the Executive Director as soon as possible.

*Adopted by the Board of Trustees 2014;
Last Revised January 25, 2024*