



**Georgia Department  
of Human Services**

# **DHS Employee Handbook**

*STRONGER FAMILIES FOR A STRONGER GEORGIA*

**Revised: March 2026**

# Contents

WELCOME TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES .....	1
OUR MISSION & VISION .....	1
MISSION .....	1
VISION .....	1
CORE VALUES.....	1
INTRODUCTION .....	1
POLICIES .....	2
EMPLOYMENT IN STATE GOVERNMENT.....	2
HARASSMENT & AWARENESS PREVENTION .....	2
HARASSMENT .....	2
OTHER FORMS OF HARASSMENT .....	2
CLASSIFIED & UNCLASSIFIED EMPLOYEES .....	2
CLASSIFIED .....	2
UNCLASSIFIED .....	2
LICENSE & CERTIFICATION .....	3
SELECTIVE SERVICE REGISTRATION .....	3
EMPLOYMENT ELIGIBILITY VERIFICATION .....	3
RECRUITMENT & SELECTION.....	3
MEDICAL & PHYSICAL EXAMINATION PROGRAM .....	3
CRIMINAL HISTORY RECORDS CHECK .....	3
OPPORTUNITIES.....	4
ORIENTATION.....	4
PROMOTION .....	4
TRANSFER.....	4
EMPLOYMENT OF RELATIVES.....	4
BENEFITS .....	5
COMPENSATION .....	5
PAY PERIOD .....	5
PAYROLL DEDUCTION.....	5
DIRECT PAYROLL DEPOSIT .....	5
HOLIDAYS .....	5
ANNUAL AND SICK LEAVE .....	6
PERSONAL LEAVE .....	6
LEAVE OF ABSENCE .....	7
LEAVE OF ABSENCE WITHOUT PAY .....	7

FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT (FML)	7
EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES	8
EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITIES	8
USE OF LEAVE	8
PAID PARENTAL LEAVE	8
ELIGIBILITY	8
USAGE OF PAID PARENTAL LEAVE	9
LEAVE DONATIONS	10
COURT LEAVE	10
MILITARY LEAVE	10
OTHER FORMS OF LEAVE	10
RETIREMENT	11
FLEXIBLE BENEFITS	12
PEACH STATE RESERVES	13
CONSOLIDATED OMNIBUS BUDGET RECONCILIATION ACT (COBRA)	13
GEORGIA WORK AWAY PROGRAM	13
CONDUCT STANDARDS AND ETHICS IN GOVERNMENT	13
DRESS AND APPEARANCE	14
GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONAL WORK ATTIRE	14
TYPES OF ATTIRE	14
USE OF STATE PROPERTY	15
PROHIBITED USAGE	15
EMPLOYEE'S RESPONSIBILITIES	16
OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES AND RELATIONSHIPS	16
ACTIVITIES & CONDUCT DURING WORK HOURS	17
ARRESTS & CONVICTIONS	17
PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PROCESS	17
PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PLANS	18
INTERIM REVIEWS	18
PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT EVALUATION	18
HOURS OF WORK & CLOSURE	19
FAIR LABOR STANDARDS ACT (FLSA)	19
OVERTIME	19
OFFICIAL WORK HOURS & WORK SCHEDULES	20
OFFICE CLOSURES	20
SAFETY & WORK-RELATED INJURY, ILLNESS OR EXPOSURE TO OCCUPATIONAL	

DISEASE .....	22
OBSERVING SAFETY REGULATIONS.....	22
WORKER'S COMPENSATION .....	23
SPECIAL INJURY .....	24
OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES.....	24
SECONDARY EMPLOYMENT.....	24
POLITICAL ACTIVITIES.....	24
DRUG-FREE ZONE .....	25
DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE .....	25
ALCOHOL-FREE WORKPLACE.....	25
CONFLICT RESOLUTION .....	25
THIRD-PARTY INVOLVEMENT IN EMPLOYMENT MATTERS .....	25
COMPLAINT PROCEDURE .....	26
MEDIATION PROCEDURE.....	26
REVIEW OF WRITTEN REPRIMAND.....	26
DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS.....	27
ENDING EMPLOYMENT .....	27
GENERAL INFORMATION .....	28
IDENTIFICATION BADGES .....	28
SMOKING POLICY .....	28
INFECTIOUS DISEASE IN THE WORKPLACE.....	28
TRAVEL .....	28
EMPLOYEES' SUGGESTION & AWARDS PROGRAM .....	29
STATE CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS PROGRAM .....	29
EMPLOYEE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM.....	30

# WELCOME TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Department of Human Services (DHS) employees perform a variety of services for Georgians. Regardless of the position, each employee's unique skills and talents are essential to accomplishing the mission of DHS. By working together, we can provide vital services to those in need.

If you are a new employee, welcome to DHS! If you are a career DHS employee, thank you for your dedication and service.

## OUR MISSION & VISION

### MISSION

Strengthen Georgia by providing individuals and families access to services that promote self-sufficiency, independence, and protect Georgia's vulnerable children and adults.

### VISION

- Stronger Families for a Stronger Georgia.

### CORE VALUES

- Provide access to resources that offer support and empower Georgians and their families.
- Ensure clients are treated with dignity and respect.
- Promote accountability, transparency, and quality in all services and programs provided.
- Help employees gain the skills they need and to successfully meet their career goals.

## INTRODUCTION

This Employee Handbook has been prepared to provide general guidance to you about some of the privileges you have as an employee and the duties and responsibilities that we all share.

**This handbook is not intended to be, nor is it to be considered, a contract of employment.**

The information provided is current as of **March 2026**. Changes in federal laws, state laws, rules, or policies will take precedence over information provided in the handbook. DHS has the right to change information in this handbook at any time and for any reason, without prior notice.

Due to changes in federal and state requirements and laws, you are required to read this handbook yearly and keep it for easy reference. Questions should be directed to your supervisor or the Office of Human Resources (OHR) Helpline at [hrhelpline@dhs.ga.gov](mailto:hrhelpline@dhs.ga.gov).

These policies are also available via the Policy and Manual Management System (PAMMS) under the OHR tab at [pamms.dhs.ga.gov/](http://pamms.dhs.ga.gov/).

## **POLICIES**

### **EMPLOYMENT IN STATE GOVERNMENT**

DHS is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate based on race, color, creed, national origin, ancestry, citizenship, religion, political opinions or affiliations, age, disability, genetic information, gender, pregnancy, childbirth or related conditions, military or veteran status, or other status protected by federal or state law or regulation. DHS' goal is to ensure that all individuals are treated in a fair and non-discriminatory manner throughout the employment process.

DHS prohibits any discrimination against an employee or employees with family members who have disabilities. Reasonable accommodations can be made for such employees.

## **HARASSMENT & AWARENESS PREVENTION**

### **HARASSMENT**

Forms of harassment are physical, verbal, visual, and/or electronic and can be physical and/or psychological. Anyone, no matter their age, gender, or job title, can be subject to sexual harassment, and any form of these actions are completely prohibited by DHS. Employees should contact their supervisor or designated Human Resources Representative with concerns regarding sexual harassment.

### **OTHER FORMS OF HARASSMENT**

- Threats, epithets, derogatory comments, or slurs
- Derogatory posters, photographs, cartoons, drawings, or gestures
- Assault, unwanted touching, or blocking someone's movement

**NOTE: Completion of annual sexual harassment prevention training is required for all employees and supervisors. Proof of completion is required.**

## **CLASSIFIED & UNCLASSIFIED EMPLOYEES**

### **CLASSIFIED**

Employees hired in classified positions before July 1, 1996, will continue in the classified service unless they accept unclassified positions. Employees in the classified service are subject to the Rules of the State Personnel Board and may appeal some employment actions to the State Personnel Board.

### **UNCLASSIFIED**

Employees hired on or after July 1, 1996, will be in the unclassified service. Employees hired into the unclassified service before that date remain unclassified. Georgia is an "employment-at-will" state and employees in the unclassified service serve at the discretion of DHS. Unclassified employees are not covered by the Rules of the State Personnel Board and cannot appeal employment actions to the State Personnel Board.

## **LICENSE & CERTIFICATION**

To promote a safe work environment and reduce the number of motor vehicle accidents and traffic violations that occur on the job, DHS has established a Motor Vehicle Use Policy. This policy applies to all DHS employees. A valid driver's license is required for a position that requires driving of any frequency.

For more information, refer to [DHS Policy #115: Motor Vehicle Use](#).

## **SELECTIVE SERVICE REGISTRATION**

The Military Selective Service Act requires all selected male applicants between the ages of 18 and 25 to present proof of having registered with the Selective Service System or to present proof of being exempt from registration. If proof is not provided within 15 calendar days, the offer of employment will be withdrawn from candidates or employees will be separated. Candidates may call the Selective Service System at 1-847-688-6888 if a replacement acknowledgment card is needed to present as proof.

For more information, refer to [DHS Policy #401: Recruitment and Selection](#).

## **EMPLOYMENT ELIGIBILITY VERIFICATION**

DHS participates in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's E-Verify Program. E-Verify is an internet-based system that compares information from an employee's Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification, to data from U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and Social Security Administration records to confirm employment eligibility.

For more information, refer to [DHS Policy #503: Verifying Identity and Employment Eligibility](#).

## **RECRUITMENT & SELECTION**

### **MEDICAL & PHYSICAL EXAMINATION PROGRAM**

Some job categories may require medical and physical clearance after receiving an employment offer. For example, a DHS interpreter is considered a Category 4: Health-related positions involving direct contact with or exposure to airborne or blood-borne pathogens. The offer of employment is contingent upon satisfactory completion of the certification.

For more information, refer to [DHS Policy #403: Medical and Physical Examination Program](#) and [DHS Policy #403 Attachment 1: Medical and Physical Examination Job List](#).

### **CRIMINAL HISTORY RECORDS CHECK**

It is DHS's full responsibility to provide a safe workplace environment. To do so, OHR may require a review of criminal history records based on responsibilities and duties. Applicants and employees must be completely honest about their background and failure to disclose accurate information on all applications and loyalty oaths could lead to the employment offer being withdrawn and/or the current employee being terminated from DHS.

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

### **ORIENTATION**

Employee orientation is intended to introduce new employees to DHS, provide a systematic approach for sharing general information, philosophies, policies, and procedures to enable a smooth integration into the workforce, and communicate standards and expectations of employment to new employees.

### **PROMOTION**

It is the policy of DHS to provide promotional opportunities for current employees. Promotion is defined as the reclassification of a filled position from a job on a lower pay grade to a job on a higher pay grade. Employees must meet the required entry qualifications established for the position to be eligible for a promotion.

For additional information, contact your designated Human Resources Representative, or refer to [DHS Policy #1101: Classification and Compensation](#). Employees are encouraged to visit the [DHS Jobs website](#) for a current listing of job opportunities.

### **TRANSFER**

A transfer is when an employee or position has moved from one unit or division to another; inter- or intra-agency. A vacant position may be filled at any time by the transfer of an employee from another position in the same job or from a position in another job on the same pay grade. The employee must meet the entry qualifications for the job and any approved special qualifications for the position.

For additional information, please contact your designated Human Resources Representative.

### **EMPLOYMENT OF RELATIVES**

DHS prohibits family members from working directly with each other. Relatives will not be employed or placed in positions or situations in which a superior-subordinate relationship will exist between the relatives in circumstances including, but not limited to, the following:

- No DHS employee may supervise or be supervised by a relative, either directly or indirectly. DHS prohibits appointing relatives or household members to roles where a supervisory relationship could exist or a conflict of interest might arise.
- Employees are not permitted to influence or participate in decisions – formal or informal – related to a relative's or household member's employment, including hiring, promotions, evaluations, or disciplinary actions.
- Supervisors and managers are prohibited from engaging in consensual close personal relationships with any employee who reports to them directly or indirectly.

For more information on the employment of relatives, including the definition of "relatives", refer to [DHS Policy #1204: Employment Status of Relatives](#).

## **BENEFITS**

### **COMPENSATION**

DHS has a variety of tangible and intangible employee benefits that form part of a total compensation package. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Health insurance
- Retirement benefits
- Leave and holidays
- Learning opportunities
- Possible flexible schedules
- Opportunity for growth within DHS

### **PAY PERIOD**

Salary payments are disbursed semi-monthly. The first payment is disbursed on the 15th and the second payment is disbursed on the last business day of the month.

### **PAYROLL DEDUCTION**

Several payroll deductions apply to most employees, such as federal and state income taxes, Social Security and Medicare taxes, and retirement. Voluntary deductions, such as health insurance, other insurance options, credit unions, and charitable contributions, may also be authorized.

For more information on benefits, refer to [DHS Policy #901: Employee Benefits](#).

### **DIRECT PAYROLL DEPOSIT**

DHS requires employees to use direct payroll deposit.

For additional information, please contact the Office of Financial Services – Payroll.

### **HOLIDAYS**

Georgia law provides for 13 holidays each year as declared by the Governor. Employees who leave state government after the actual dates of these holidays, but before the dates they are observed, are not eligible to be paid for the holidays.

Employees required to work on a holiday will be allowed equivalent time off (8 hours for full-time employees and pro-rata time for part-time employees). Employees unable to take equivalent time off within 365 days will be paid for the holiday per DHS policy. To be eligible for the holiday, an employee must be in active pay status for the full scheduled work shift on the scheduled workday before or after the holiday.

The following holidays are observed:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday
- George Washington's Birthday
- State Holiday
- Memorial Day

- Juneteenth
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Columbus Day
- Veterans' Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- State Holiday
- Christmas Day

For more information, refer to Rules of the State Personnel Board [478-1-.16 Absence from Work.pdf \(ga.gov\)](#) and [DHS Policy #1006: Absence from Work](#).

## **ANNUAL & SICK LEAVE**

Eligible employees accrue annual leave at the end of each pay period provided they are in pay status for the required amount of time.

Accrued annual leave will be available for use at the beginning of the pay period after it is earned. Full-time employees must be in pay status for at least 40 hours during a pay period to accrue leave.

This minimum period is pro-rated for part-time employees by the percentage of time worked:

- 5 hours per pay period 0 – 60 months (semi-monthly).
- 6 hours per pay period 60+ to 120 months (semi-monthly).
- 7 hours per pay period 120+ months and greater (semi-monthly).

Accrual at the appropriate higher rate begins on the first day of the pay period after the employee completes the required months of continuous service.

Eligible part-time employees accrue annual leave at these rates prorated by the percentage of time worked.

Employees may accumulate up to 360 hours of annual leave. Any annual leave in excess of 360 hours is placed in a forfeited status but may be restored in cases of illness or disability. Leave accrued beyond 360 hours is forfeited at the close of business on the last day of the month. In some cases, forfeited annual leave may be counted toward retirement.

Upon receiving approval, an employee may use accrued sick leave for the following:

- Absence for exposure to contagious disease when attendance on duty would endanger the health of others.
- Absence for dental or medical care.
- Absence due to dental or medical care, illness, accident, or death in the immediate family which requires the employee's presence. "Immediate family" means the employee's spouse, child, parent, grandparent, grandchild, brother, and sister, including active step and in-law relationships. Immediate family also includes any other person who resides in the employee's

- household and is recognized by law as a dependent of the employee.
- Absence due to personal illness or disability.

## **PERSONAL LEAVE**

Employees eligible for leave benefits who have accumulated more than 120 hours of sick leave as of November 30 of any year may convert up to 24 hours of the accumulation over 120 hours to personal leave. This conversion must be made no later than December 31 of that year for use in the following year.

For detailed information on personal leave, refer to [DHS Policy #1006: Absence from Work](#).

## **LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

### **LEAVE OF ABSENCE WITHOUT PAY**

Authorized officials may grant leaves of absence without pay (LWOP) when deemed appropriate. LWOPs are generally approved only for medical reasons when employees are reasonably expected to be able to return to work. LWOPs should be approved only for short periods unless there are extraordinary circumstances that support an extended period.

For more information, please contact your designated Human Resources Representative or refer to [DHS Policy #1006: Absence from Work](#).

### **FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT (FML)**

To be eligible for FML, employees must meet the following criteria as of the date the FML is to start:

- Employee has been employed by the State of Georgia for a total of at least twelve (12) months, whether consecutive or non-consecutive, within the past seven (7) years.
- Employee has worked at least 1,250 hours for the State of Georgia in the twelve (12) months immediately preceding the start date of FML. Holidays and time spent on paid or unpaid leave or suspension do not count toward the 1,250 hours worked. An exception exists for military leave.
- Employee has a qualifying reason for the absence.
- Employee has not already exhausted the available FML entitlement for the twelve (12) months.

An eligible employee is entitled to take up to twelve (12) work weeks of FML during a rolling twelve (12) month period, measured backward from the date an employee uses any FML. For Military Caregiver FML, an eligible employee is entitled to take up to twenty-six (26) work weeks leave during a single twelve (12) month period to care for a covered service member undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, therapy, or outpatient services, or who is otherwise on the temporary disability retired list for a serious injury or illness received or aggravated in the line of active military duty. The service member may be either a member of the Armed Forces (including the National Guard and Reserves) or a veteran.

Employees are required to review the FML section of this handbook and [DHS Policy #1005: Family and Medical Leave](#) on an annual basis.

For additional clarification, refer to [DHS Policy #1005: Family and Medical Leave](#).

## **EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES**

Employees must provide a 30-calendar-day advance notice of the need to take FML leave when foreseeable. When a 30-calendar-day notice is not possible, employees must give supervisors or authorized officials notice as soon as they become aware that FML is necessary.

Employees must provide sufficient documentation to determine if the leave may qualify for FML protection and the anticipated timing and duration of the leave. Sufficient documentation may include that the employee is unable to perform job functions, the family member is unable to perform daily activities, the need for hospitalization or continuing treatment by a health care provider, or circumstances supporting the need for military family leave.

Employees also must inform DHS if the requested leave is for a reason for which FML leave was previously taken or certified. Employees also may be required to provide a certification and periodic recertification supporting the need for leave.

## **EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITIES**

DHS must inform employees requesting leave whether they are eligible under FML. If they are, the notice must specify any additional documentation required as well as the employees' rights and responsibilities. If they are not eligible, DHS must provide a reason for the ineligibility.

DHS must inform employees if leave will be designated as FML-protected and the amount of leave counted against the employee's leave entitlement. If it is determined that the leave is not FML-protected, DHS must notify the employee via written correspondence in accordance with the policy.

## **USE OF LEAVE**

Employees may choose to use accrued leave to continue to receive a paycheck during a period of FML, take leave without pay, or use a combination of both to cover the absence from work with supervisory approval. Any period of FML not covered by accrued leave will be without pay.

For detailed information, please contact your designated Human Resources Representative or refer to [DHS Policy #1005: Family and Medical Leave](#).

## **PAID PARENTAL LEAVE**

To enhance work-life balance for employees, the State provides full-time employees, as well as hourly employees who meet the criteria noted in the Eligibility section below, with up to 240 hours of paid parental leave (PPL) in a twelve (12) month period. PPL is not charged against an employee's accrued leave.

## **ELIGIBILITY**

Eligibility for PPL is based on one of the following qualifying life events:

- birth of the employee's child;
- placement of a minor child for adoption with the employee; or
- placement of a minor child for foster care with the employee.

To be eligible to use PPL for a qualifying life event, an employee must meet one of the two following criteria:

- If salaried, the employee must have six (6) continuous months of employment with an employing entity (as defined in O.C.G.A. § 45-20-17(a)(2)(A)); or,
- If hourly, the employee must have worked 700 hours for an employing entity (as defined in O.C.G.A. § 45-20-17(a)(2)(A)) in the six (6) months immediately preceding the first requested PPL date;
- Rehired retirees of the Employees' Retirement System of Georgia, whether salaried or hourly, are not eligible for PPL while receiving retirement annuity payments during the first 1,040 hours of work performed in the calendar year.

## **USAGE OF PAID PARENTAL LEAVE**

- An eligible employee may take a maximum of 240 hours of PPL in a rolling twelve (12) month period. The rolling period will be measured backward from the first date of leave taken. The amount of leave in a rolling twelve (12) month period cannot exceed 240 hours, regardless of the number of qualifying events that occur during that period and regardless of transfers between employing entities (as defined in O.C.G.A. § 45-20-17(a)(2)(A)). DHS is responsible for conducting due diligence to ensure an employee has not exhausted the 240-hour allotment prior to approval of PPL.
- Leave may be taken as needed and in increments of less than eight (8) hours, using the same minimum period DHS has established for other forms of paid leave.
- If an employee eligible for PPL is also eligible for FML, DHS requires the two leave benefits must run concurrently.
- DHS requires employees to submit appropriate supporting documentation for the use of PPL.
- Any PPL remaining twelve (12) months after the initial qualifying event shall not carry over for future use.
- Unused PPL shall have no cash value and shall not be paid out at the time of the employee's separation from employment.
- Employees cannot be paid for short-term disability and PPL at the same time.

## **LEAVE DONATIONS**

Eligible DHS employees (recipients) may under certain circumstances request leave donations from other DHS employees (donors). Donors may donate accrued annual, sick, or personal leave to recipients. All donated leave is credited to the recipient's sick leave balance.

Leave donations can only be used for sick leave-related reasons as described in [DHS Policy #1006: Absence from Work](#). Recipients may be eligible to receive donated leave after using all accrued and forfeited leave, all available compensatory time, and after being on

authorized leave without pay for at least 40 consecutive hours.

For more information and restrictions, contact your designated Human Resources Representative or refer to [DHS Policy #1010: Leave Donation](#).

## **COURT LEAVE**

Court leave may be used by employees for any days they are summoned for jury duty, subpoenaed, or otherwise ordered to attend a judicial proceeding. Employees are required to provide a copy of the summons, subpoena, or other judicial order to their supervisor as soon as possible. Court leave for a DHS-related matter is with pay and includes the time required by the judicial proceeding and any reasonable time needed to prepare for or recuperate from the ordered duty. Employees are expected to report for work whenever the judicial proceeding schedule permits.

Court leave is not available to employees when they are litigants, defendants, or other principal parties, or have any other personal or familial interest in the proceedings. Employees may request to use accrued leave to cover these absences from work.

For more information, contact your designated Human Resources Representative or refer to [DHS Policy #1006: Absence from Work](#).

## **MILITARY LEAVE**

Military leave is a leave of absence from work while engaged in the performance of ordered military duty and while going to and returning from such duty. Military leave may also be used by members of the U.S. Armed Forces, any reserve force or reserve component of the U.S. Armed Forces, or any force of the organized militia to attend service schools, for active duty, active duty for training, inactive duty training, and examination purposes. DHS employees who are not employed temporarily are eligible for military leave, either with or without pay.

For more information, contact your designated Human Resources Representative or refer to [DHS Policy #1009: Military Leave](#).

## **OTHER FORMS OF LEAVE**

### **Disaster Volunteer Leave**

Employees who are certified disaster service volunteers of the American Red Cross may be eligible for paid disaster volunteer leave to participate in specialized disaster relief under certain conditions. For more information, contact your designated Human Resources Representative, refer to Rules of the State Personnel Board [478-1-.16 Absence from Work.pdf \(ga.gov\)](#) or [DHS Policy #1006: Absence from Work](#).

### **Organ Donation Leave**

Employees who donate an organ for transplant will be granted thirty (30) calendar days of paid leave. For more information, refer to Rules of the State Personnel Board [478-1-.16 Absence from Work.pdf \(ga.gov\)](#) or [DHS Policy #1006: Absence from Work](#).

### **Bone Marrow Donation Leave**

Employees who donate bone marrow for transplant will be granted seven (7) calendar days of paid leave. For more information, refer to Rules of the State Personnel Board [478-1-.16 Absence from Work.pdf \(ga.gov\)](#).

### **Blood Donation**

Employees may be granted paid leave during work hours to donate blood, blood platelets, or granulocytes. For specific information, refer Rules of the State Personnel Board [478-1-.16 Absence from Work.pdf \(ga.gov\)](#).

### **Voting Time**

Employees may be granted paid leave for up to two (2) hours for voting only if the polls are not open two (2) hours before or two (2) hours after the employee's scheduled work hours.

**However, no employee may be granted more than two (2) hours of paid voting leave per Election Day.**

Employees who do not qualify for voting time with pay may be permitted to take annual or personal leave, compensatory time, or leave without pay for voting purposes.

For further information, refer Rules of the State Personnel Board [478-1-.16 Absence from Work.pdf \(ga.gov\)](#).

## **RETIREMENT**

The Employees' Retirement System (ERS) administers retirement benefits for State of Georgia employees, as provided by laws enacted through the General Assembly. ERS is a defined benefit plan and is qualified under the Internal Revenue Code Section 401(a). Laws governing ERS provide service retirements, death and disability benefits, group term life insurance, and permit a refund of contributions and interest to members who leave state government.

Generally, employees who are scheduled to work at least thirty-five 35 hours per week in positions with duties that are expected to continue for at least nine (9) months are required to be members of ERS. Employee and employer contributions are paid into the retirement fund for the welfare of members and their beneficiaries. All benefits are paid from the fund.

Employees become vested in ERS for service retirement after ten (10) years of creditable service.

- Employees hired on or after January 1, 2009, must be enrolled in the Georgia State Employees' Pension and Savings Plan (GSEPS). Your state employer will match your contribution dollar per dollar, up to 5% of pay. Members saving 5% or more receive a full 5% match.
- GSEPS members with at least six (6) years of service, and who are contributing at least 5%, will get an additional half percent Employer match for every full year of service in excess of five (5) years, up to a maximum match of 9%.
- Employer matching funds are subject to the 401(k) vesting schedule, which is 20% vesting per year until fully vested at five (5) years of continuous GSEPS service.

The following chart shows the employer contribution for employees saving at least 5%:

Years of Service	Employer Contribution
Less than 6 years	5.0%
6 years	5.5%
7 years	6.0%
8 years	6.5%
9 years	7.0%
10 years	7.5%
11 years	8.0%
12 years	8.5%
13+ years	9.0%

For more information, refer to [DHS Policy #1902: Retirement](#) or contact the [Employees' Retirement System](#).

## **FLEXIBLE BENEFITS**

The Flexible Benefits Program provides a variety of benefits options. Many benefits can be purchased with pre-tax dollars. Since the cost of many of the flexible benefits is deducted before determining taxable pay, income taxes may be reduced.

Once enrolled in the Flexible Benefits Program, employees are allowed to change coverage or change options during the open enrollment period each year. Changes that are made during this time are effective January 1 of the next year. Employees may be eligible to make changes to coverage at times other than open enrollment for “qualifying events” such as marriage, childbirth, or divorce.

Open Enrollment dates are set by the Department of Administrative Services' (DOAS) Human Resources Administration and the Department of Community Health. The following options are offered through the State Health Benefit Plan and the Flexible Benefits Program:

- Health insurance
- Dental insurance
- Vision plan
- Employee and dependent life insurance
- Accidental death and dismemberment insurance
- Short-term and Long-term disability insurance
- Legal insurance
- Long-term care insurance
- Spending accounts
- Specified illness
- For more information contact OHR's Benefits Specialist or refer to [DHS Policy #901: Employee Benefits](#).

## **PEACH STATE RESERVES**

Peach State Reserves (PSR) is a plan offered by the State of Georgia to its employees that provide an opportunity to save for retirement while reducing current taxable income and accumulating tax-deferred savings. PSR offers employees a 401(k) plan and a 457 plan. If you are interested in participating in the PSR Program, please contact the GA Breeze

Benefits Center at 1-877-342-7339 or visit [gabreeze.ga.gov](http://gabreeze.ga.gov).

### **CONSOLIDATED OMNIBUS BUDGET RECONCILIATION ACT (COBRA)**

The Federal Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) requires that the plan offer employees and their qualified dependents healthcare coverage if plan coverage is lost due to a qualifying event:

- Resignation
- Leave of Absence Without Pay
- Reduction in work hours

The length of time coverage may be continued and is based on the qualifying event. Under COBRA, employees or dependents must pay the full cost of coverage at the state's group rate. An administrative fee must also be paid. For more detailed information, please contact the OHR's Benefits Specialist or refer to your [State Health Benefit Plan](#) material.

### **GEORGIA WORK AWAY PROGRAM**

DHS participates in the Georgia Work Away Program, which offers alternatives to balance the demands of work and home including teleworking, alternative and flexible work schedules, and compressed work weeks. For more information on this program, please contact your designated Human Resources Representative or refer to [DHS Policy #111: Telework](#) and [DHS Policy #1002: Office Hours and Work Schedules](#).

### **CONDUCT STANDARDS & ETHICS IN GOVERNMENT**

Employees are expected to maintain and exercise the highest moral and ethical standards in carrying out their responsibilities and functions and to perform their jobs professionally. Employees must conduct themselves in a manner that prevents all forms of impropriety, placement of self-interest above public interest, partiality, prejudice, threats, favoritism, and undue influence.

Employees must be alert in conducting business with employees and non-employees to avoid even the appearance of misconduct, personal or financial gain, or conflict of interest. While performing DHS duties, employees are required to comply with federal and state laws, the Code of Ethics, the Governor's Executive Order (dated April 1, 2021), Rules of the State Personnel Board, and DHS policies.

Employees are required to report all suspected violations of federal or state law involving DHS employees, or anyone contracted to provide services, to the DHS Office of Inspector General (OIG) immediately upon the employee becoming aware of the suspected violation.

### **DRESS & APPEARANCE**

DHS maintains the policy of providing a business appropriate and professional image to agency clients while allowing employees to be comfortable in the workplace. The DHS dress code shall be implemented or enforced in a manner that does not discriminate against an individual on the basis of race, color, sex, age, religion, national origin, disability or other protected class. Employees should familiarize themselves with this policy and ask their immediate supervisor or their designated Human Resources Representative for additional guidance.

DHS recognizes the following workplace dress categories: **Business Professional**, **Business Casual**, **Casual Attire**, and **Court Attire**. These are the standards of dress required Monday through Friday.

It is expected that all staff will comply with these guidelines per [DHS Policy #1201: Standards of Conduct](#).

## GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONAL WORK ATTIRE

Employees are expected to always be clean and neat during work hours. As representatives of the state, employees should present a professional image. Employees working in certain positions and/or while performing specific functions may be required to meet alternate dress standards or wear a uniform. Policies may be developed by DHS organizational units as necessary or appropriate to accommodate alternate dress standards. Business professional attire is the official standard of dress that is expected of employees working in an office setting, attending meetings, or conducting business for DHS. Appropriate clothing includes:

- Men: Suits or sports coats, ties, dress shirts, and slacks.
- Women: Suits, dresses, skirts, blouses, and slacks.

## TYPES OF ATTIRE

<b>Business Professional</b>	Standard of dress expected of all employees, specifically those in an office setting. Business suits, slacks, blouses, etc.
<b>Business Casual</b>	Less formal version of business professional but should always be neat, clean, and suitable for the workplace. If your position requires you to work within the community, then you should dress the part but still be professional.
<b>Casual Attire</b>	More relaxed form of business casual, while still remaining professional. Designated based on the agency's needs.
<b>Court Attire</b>	Must be worn for any court appearance whether as a participant in a case, a witness, or an observer.

**NOTE: Attire, which is obscene, vulgar, offensive, or inflammatory is prohibited.**

## USE OF STATE PROPERTY

State-issued property is designated solely for work-related activities. Employees of DHS must not misuse or allow others to misuse such property. State property includes, but is not limited to computers/tablets, DHS/State of Georgia software applications, office/mobile phones, office equipment, vehicles, furniture and all telework equipment.

DHS reserves the right to conduct reasonable searches on any type of state property including, but not limited to, desks, lockers, work areas, state vehicles, etc. Permission to search must be authorized by the DHS commissioner or designee before any search is conducted.

Use of computers, which includes email, the internet, and other computer searches and communications, should be professional and for work-related purposes only.

For more information, refer to [DHS Policy #1205: Use of State Property](#).

## **PROHIBITED USAGE**

- Display or transmission of sexually explicit images, messages, or cartoon.
- Ethnic slurs, racial comments, off-color jokes, or anything that may be considered harassment or showing disrespect for others.
- The usage of computers for playing games, conducting inappropriate searches, conducting personal business, or otherwise performing other employment activities.
- Employees are prohibited from making or charging long-distance telephone calls to DHS unless work-related.
- Use of the internet for non-work-related reasons is permitted on a basis like that applied to local telephone calls on state telephones (i.e., the use is infrequent, of short duration, and does not interfere with work). This privilege may be withdrawn if abused.

## **EMPLOYEE'S RESPONSIBILITIES**

Employees are required to review and adhere to [DHS Policy #1205: Use of State Property](#) which addresses the use of state property, including, but not limited to, email and internet usage.

Employees are responsible for reporting misuse of state property to their supervisors, designated Human Resources Representatives, or other appropriate officials.

**NOTE: These privileges may be withdrawn if abused. Custom outgoing voicemail messages and email tag lines should be professional and communicate accurate information. This privilege may also be withdrawn if abused. Employees may be required to remove items determined to be inappropriate from work areas at any time. Misuse of state property may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.**

## **OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES AND RELATIONSHIPS**

Employees must be alert in conducting business with non-employees to avoid even the appearance of misconduct, personal or financial gain, or conflict of interest.

Employees must report ownership or partial ownership of a company if the company in which the employee is the owner or part owner is doing business or seeks a business relationship with DHS.

Employees are prohibited from membership on the Board of Directors of any organization with which DHS contracts.

Employees are prohibited from accepting personal favors or benefits under circumstances that may influence or give the appearance of influencing their official activities. Such favors and benefits may not be accepted by employees on behalf of other individuals.

Employees are prohibited from involvement in official activities in which a client or customer is a relative or in-law. Employees are prohibited from involvement in official activities in which a client or customer is a personal acquaintance when the relationship creates a conflict or perception of conflict of interest.

Misconduct or abuse involving clients or customers in any form is a matter of serious concern and will not be tolerated.

## **ACTIVITIES & CONDUCT DURING WORK HOURS**

Employees are expected to maintain a professional relationship with fellow employees. DHS will not tolerate acts or threatened acts of violence in the workplace. Reports of threats or acts of violence will be thoroughly reviewed, and appropriate action will be taken.

DHS employees are required to cooperate fully and truthfully and aid with any type of investigation regarding alleged criminal or administrative misconduct or other personnel issues.

Employees are not to engage in activities other than official business during working hours.

Employees are not authorized to record conversations at work unless work-related and specifically approved by the organizational unit supervisor. Supervisors should consult with the Office of Human Resources (OHR) prior to recording or authorizing the recording of conversations.

Employees are prohibited from falsifying records (e.g., timecards, sign-in/out sheets, case management, and/or client or customer records) or any other documents prepared during business hours.

Employees are not authorized to carry weapons (e.g., knives, firearms, or explosive devices) while at work. This does not apply to employees authorized to carry weapons as part of their employment.

Possession or consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs; and/or reporting to work or being on duty with the presence of drugs or alcohol is prohibited.

In order to minimize interference with normal operations and to avoid potential hazards and liability for DHS visitors (e.g. children, other relatives, friends, or acquaintances of employees) in the workplace during work hours are discouraged. Babysitting of children and/or caregiving by employees while on duty is prohibited. Work units may establish specific prohibitions in accordance with work-related needs.

## **ARRESTS & CONVICTIONS**

Arrests, convictions, and/or pending charges are to be disclosed on the criminal history check form and state security questionnaire loyalty oath form. Employees are also required to notify their supervisor, designated Human Resources Representative, or other authorized officials of any arrests and/or convictions within five (5) calendar days of the date of arrest or conviction using the [Self Reporting Portal](#). A determination of appropriate action will be made on a case-by-case basis.

For detailed information regarding standards of conduct and ethics, please contact your designated Human Resources Representative or refer to [DHS Policy #504: Criminal History Record Checks](#).

## **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PROCESS**

DHS's performance management program provides supervisors and employees with the opportunity to align work with DHS's goals and plans, discuss performance expectations, identify and correct areas for improvement, encourage and recognize strengths, and discuss positive, purposeful approaches for meeting goals. Performance discussions should occur throughout the year in conjunction with the following: performance planning, mid-year, or another interim review, and end- of-year performance evaluation.

## **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PLANS**

The performance management program requires that supervisors develop a performance plan for each employee upon hire into a new job and then annually thereafter. The performance plan identifies performance standards and expectations on which the employee will be evaluated. Supervisors are to present performance plans to their employees within 45 calendar days of an employee being placed in a new job.

Performance Management Plans include:

- Statewide core competencies
- Individual goals/competencies
- Job responsibilities
- Individual Development Plan

Supervisors have the authority to add individual goals/competencies, assign job responsibilities, take from, add to, eliminate entirely or otherwise change the duties and responsibilities of employees, and to direct and control their work. Based on the needs of DHS, the assignment of duties and responsibilities may be temporary or permanent. When significant changes are made during a review period, Performance Management Plans must be modified accordingly.

## **INTERIM REVIEWS**

Evaluating supervisors must meet with employees at least once during the performance review period to conduct an interim review of the employee's work performance and compliance with the terms and conditions of employment. Notes of such meetings should be placed in the supervisory file. A Management Review Form may be used to record the meeting but is not required.

Classified employees on a working test due to promotion or interdepartmental transfer are to be provided a Management Review Form within ten calendar days of completing half of the working test period or as near to such date as is practicable. The Management Review Form should include an evaluation of the employee's progress and recommendations, if any, for corrective action.

## **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT EVALUATION**

Performance Management Evaluations are completed by evaluating supervisors to rate performance and adherence to terms and conditions of employment. Completed performance evaluations are maintained in the Human Capital Management System or as otherwise designated by DHS per the state's official retention schedule.

For more information concerning the Performance Management Process, please contact your supervisor, your designated Human Resources Representatives, or refer to [Rules of the State Personnel Board 478-1-.14 – Performance Management](#).

## **HOURS OF WORK & CLOSURE**

### **FAIR LABOR STANDARDS ACT (FLSA)**

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) applies to all employees of DHS unless employees are specifically exempted. Employees who are subject to the FLSA are considered "non-exempt".

The provisions of FLSA include guidance for establishing work periods, payment of minimum wages and hours of work, overtime compensation, and required record keeping.

### **OVERTIME**

Generally, the overtime provisions of the act for governmental employees and this policy maintain that:

- Non-exempt employees are covered by the Wage and Hour provisions of FLSA. If a non-exempt employee works more than 40 hours in a work period, the employee will receive FLSA compensatory time at a rate of time and a half for overtime. Division/office leaders should manage non-exempt employees' work time to avoid the accumulation of compensatory time.
- Overtime compensation may be provided to employees either in the form of compensatory time or via DHS payroll. If FLSA compensatory time is provided, one-and-one half hours off must be granted for each hour of overtime worked. If payments are provided, the overtime pay must be computed at one-and-one half times the regular hourly rate.

- Overtime payment is calculated on the rate in effect when the overtime was earned. With few exceptions, all hours actually worked by employees must be included in overtime calculations.
- Time off for state holidays, paid leave, and compensatory time off is not counted as hours worked in calculating overtime payments.
- Overtime earnings, including FLSA compensatory time, must be calculated for each workweek. Hours cannot be averaged over two (2) or more workweeks, except as noted above.
- Although the joint authority of the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) and DOAS extends only to executive branch employees, most State employers including authorities, corporations, the University System, and the Judicial Branch are covered by the FLSA. They are, therefore, subject to enforcement activities by appropriate federal agencies and liable for any violations through actions in federal court.

If you have questions about FLSA, please contact your supervisor, your designated Human Resources Representative, or refer to [DHS Policy #1001: Fair Labor Standards Act](#).

## **OFFICIAL WORK HOURS & WORK SCHEDULES**

The official work hours of DHS are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday (except for 24-hour facilities). During this time, all offices and facilities should be open for business, unless it is not possible due to administrative or programmatic needs. All offices and facilities should be adequately staffed to conduct business during those hours necessary and appropriate for their service and administrative functions.

Work schedules may vary depending on the type of job and work location. In other operations, work hours may vary by unit, section, office, or division.

Supervisors have the authority to assign hours of work and arrange the work schedules of employees as necessary to meet the needs of DHS.

Provisions for adequate supervision of employees working modified hours must be made, and written records of such employees' work hours must be maintained.

Supervisors may adjust employees' work schedules to accommodate alternative commute options.

For more information, refer to [DHS Policy #1002: Official Hours and Work Schedules](#).

## **OFFICE CLOSURES**

When the Governor or DHS commissioner or designee closes an office due to weather conditions or other emergency circumstances, affected employees are excused from duty without loss of pay as provided in this policy section. Employees who are not directly affected by an emergency office closure will not be excused from work.

Employees directly affected by a closure:

- Employees who are scheduled to work in an affected area during an emergency office closure.
- Non-temporary salaried employees affected by the closure are paid for the scheduled work time they do not work because of the closure. This paid time off is not charged against their accrued leave.
- The following employees are not eligible for compensation for absences due to emergency closure:
  - Unaffected employees
  - All temporary employees
  - All hourly employees
  - Active, salaried, non-temporary employees who are rehired retirees of ERS while receiving retirement annuity payments during the first 1,040 hours of work performed in the calendar year

Employees unaffected by a closure:

- Employees who were not scheduled to work in an affected area during an emergency office closure.
- Employees scheduled to use leave or compensatory time (as applicable) during an emergency office closure will be charged for that pre-approved leave or compensatory time, as they are considered unaffected by the closure.

Essential Staff:

- DHS may determine that it is essential to continue certain functions during an emergency office closure. Employees whose functions are deemed essential may be required to work rather than being excused from duty.
- Although non-essential staff will be on an authorized paid absence, essential employees will not have any right to additional absence or compensation for their time and will only be compensated as usual for time worked during their normal work schedule.
- Essential employees who are required to work additional time due to an office or facility closing will be compensated in accordance with the provisions of the Office of Planning and Budget Policy #7 — Rules, Regulations and Procedures Governing Working Hours, the Payment of Overtime and the Granting of Compensatory Time.
- Essential employees who fail to report to work may be subject to disciplinary action under DHS Policy #1201: Conduct Standards and Ethics in Government, and their absence will be charged to leave, as appropriate.

If an employee is absent from duty because of severe weather conditions or other emergencies that do not cause their office or facility to close, the absence will be addressed as follows:

- Make up time lost from work, if permitted by supervisor. In order to comply FLSA, a non-exempt employee must make up time during the same workweek as the time lost.
- Charge the period of absence to accrued compensatory time.
- Charge the period of absence to accrued annual leave;
- Charge the period of absence to personal leave;

- Charge Telework (if determined appropriate by DHS and/or employee's leadership team); or
- If none of the above options are available, place the employee on leave without pay for the period of absence.

For more information, refer to [DHS Policy #108: Emergency Closures](#).

## **SAFETY & WORK-RELATED INJURY, ILLNESS OR EXPOSURE TO OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE**

### **OBSERVING SAFETY REGULATIONS**

- When constituent offices are informed of a potential contagious illness, each office should provide a separate waiting area for individuals with an infectious disease, until called for services. Be advised that clients may decline placement in a separate area.
- Each constituent office will provide hand sanitizer to clients and employees.
- Each constituent office will provide signage about decreasing the risk of disease transmission by following proper hygiene and offering alternative options of services to those who exhibit communicable disease symptoms, such as completing an application online or by phone.
- Each constituent office will routinely clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
- The employee will notify their supervisor/manager if there is reasonable suspicion of a client having an infectious disease. The employee, manager, or supervisor should report this to their respective County Public Health Department or to the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) 24/7 reporting hotline at 1-866-782-4584. DPH will assess the risk and determine any further response, including future actions.
- A member from the DHS Emergency Management Team will be designated as the point of contact with DPH to receive reports of cases and receive official communication to share with DHS staff. Disease reporting enables public health follow-up for patients and helps identify outbreaks.
- For safety information, refer to [DHS Policy #113: Infectious Disease](#), [DHS Policy #115: Motor Vehicle Use](#) and [Georgia Department of Public Health OCGA 31-12-2](#).

### **WORKER'S COMPENSATION**

- If you are injured on the job, you have certain rights, benefits, and responsibilities. DHS also has obligations and responsibilities regarding all employees. The focus of DHS is to assist job-related injured workers in receiving immediate and quality medical care, to administer Workers' Compensation claims from the initial injury until the closing of the claim, and to safely return lost time employees to productive employment.
- DHS is committed to maintaining a healthy, safety-conscious, and productive work environment for employees.

- Employees incurring work-related injuries, illnesses, or exposures to occupational disease may be eligible for Workers' Compensation benefits. Employees pay no premium for this coverage.
- All work-related injuries, illnesses, and exposures to occupational disease should be immediately reported to the supervisor. If an incident is not reported within 30 calendar days, Workers' Compensation coverage may be jeopardized.
- Supervisors are required to immediately report all work-related injuries, illnesses, and exposures to occupational disease that require medical treatment or result in time lost from work per the provisions of [DHS Policy #1701: Workers' Compensation and Special Injury Return-to- Work Program](#).
- In emergencies, medical treatment should be sought from the nearest health care facility. In all other situations, employees must contact their direct supervisor, who will make the necessary medical referral. Employees who do not seek non-emergency treatment based on the medical review officer referral may jeopardize Workers' Compensation benefits.
- If a claim is approved by DOAS' Workers' Compensation Unit, medical expenses for the work- related injury, illness, or exposure to occupational disease are covered. These include hospital bills, prescribed drugs, ambulance, physicians, and other medical expenses.
- If a work-related injury, illness, or exposure to occupational disease causes lost work time, employees have the option of using accrued leave or receiving Workers' Compensation benefits for the loss of wages. Workers' Compensation wage loss benefits begin after seven (7) calendar days of disability. Employees cannot receive Workers' Compensation wage loss benefits at the same time as receiving salary by using accrued leave.
- Employees must complete [DHS Policy #1702 A1: Leave Election Form](#) to choose either use of accrued leave or placement on leave without pay to receive Workers' Compensation wage loss benefits during the period of disability.
- When work-related injuries, illnesses, or exposures to occupational disease occur, employees will be returned to work, whenever feasible, as quickly and safely as possible in accordance with the DHS Return-to-Work Program.

## **SPECIAL INJURY**

- Eligible employees who are disabled because of a physical injury that occurred in the line of duty and was caused by a willful act of violence committed by someone other than a fellow employee are entitled to a leave of absence with regular salary for the period that they are physically unable to perform their job duties. Special injury benefits are provided for up to 180 workdays for injuries resulting from a single incident.
- For detailed information, refer to [DHS Policy #1701: Workers' Compensation and Special Injury Return-to-Work Program](#) and [DHS Policy #1702: Leave and Payment for Workers' Compensation and Special Injury Claims](#) or contact your supervisor or your designated Human Resources Representative.

## **OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES**

In general, DHS is not concerned as an employer with the non-work time of employees. Off-duty conduct becomes a legitimate concern, however, when it affects DHS operations or reflects negatively on state government. Publishing inappropriate or offensive material regarding clients, colleagues, supervisors, or other work-related contacts on the internet (i.e., Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.) is an example of an off-duty activity that could reflect poorly on DHS. Such off-duty conduct could result in disciplinary action, up to termination.

## **SECONDARY EMPLOYMENT**

In addition to their DHS jobs, employees may have secondary employment if it:

- Does not violate any federal or state law, Rules of the State Personnel Board, or DHS policy.
- Does not create a conflict of interest or the perception of a conflict of interest with DHS employment.
- Does not interfere or conflict with their ability to effectively perform assigned duties and responsibilities with DHS. In this regard, employees' jobs with DHS are considered primary.

**NOTE: Prior to beginning other employment, employees must receive an approved Secondary Employment Request Form.**

For specific information regarding secondary employment, please contact your supervisor, your designated Human Resources Representative, or refer to [DHS Policy #1203: Secondary Employment](#).

## **POLITICAL ACTIVITIES**

DHS employees are protected from undue political pressure, influence, or coercion by federal law, state law, and DHS policies. These laws and policies limit political activity while assuring that the right to participate in the political process is preserved.

For information on political activity that is allowed, as well as political activity that is not allowed, refer to [DHS Policy #1202: Political Activity](#).

Questions concerning political activity should be directed to your supervisor or your designated Human Resources Representative.

## **DRUG-FREE ZONE**

### **DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE**

DHS is committed to providing a drug-free workplace. Employees are prohibited from illegally engaging in the manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession, or use of illegal drugs at any time or place including the workplace.

As part of the terms and conditions of employment, employees are to be free of illegal drugs while at work or on duty. Also, employees are not to report for work while impaired by over-the-counter drugs.

Since it is against the law to take drugs prescribed for someone else, employees should not use someone else's prescription drugs. Employees may be required to submit to drug testing.

Employees arrested and/or charged, after date of hire, with DUI or any motor vehicle violations involving the implied and or actual use, purchase, possession, solicitation, or manufacturing of any illegal substances while operating any vehicle (i.e., personal, state owned, etc.) shall be automatically subject to a reasonable suspicion drug test.

All employees involved in auto accidents while on-duty are subject to automatic reasonable suspicion drug testing.

Employees who do not comply with the above are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination, and future employment by DHS may be denied.

### **ALCOHOL-FREE WORKPLACE**

As part of the terms and conditions of employment, employees are to be free of alcohol while at work or on duty. Employees may be required to submit to alcohol testing.

Employees who do not comply with the above are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination, and future employment by DHS may be denied.

For more information on alcohol and drug testing programs, refer to [DHS Policy #1301: Alcohol and Drug-Free Workplace](#) and [DHS Policy #1302: Alcohol and Drug Testing Programs](#).

### **CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

Employees are encouraged to bring work-related concerns to their supervisors for review and potential resolution. Supervisors should communicate directly with employees and address concerns immediately. Questions concerning any aspect of conflict resolution should be directed to your supervisor or your designated Human Resources Representative.

### **THIRD-PARTY INVOLVEMENT IN EMPLOYMENT MATTERS**

Employees are encouraged to communicate work-related concerns to their supervisor for possible resolution prior to filing a complaint. Supervisors are encouraged to engage in active listening, communicate clearly and directly with employees, and be open to an employee's recommendations in addressing work-related concerns.

DHS does not recognize, express or implied, any third-party involvement in any matter pertaining to employment issues or management of DHS staff. Third parties include but are not limited to, employees' relatives, friends, acquaintances, representatives of professional associations, those who are not considered in a "need to know" status, and attorneys.

Supervisors will not meet, confer, negotiate, or engage in discussions with any third-party individual, representative, or organization regarding DHS employment matters unless included in the exceptions listed in DHS policy.

For more information, refer to [DHS Policy #107: Third Party Involvement in Employment Issues](#).

## **COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

Employee Complaint Procedures are established to review allegations of unfavorable employment decisions and conditions that are not considered unlawful discrimination or sexual harassment. There are separate complaint procedures for eligible classified and unclassified employees.

There are specific deadlines by which a complaint must be filed. Attempts at informal resolution do not extend the filing deadlines.

For more information, refer to [DHS Policy #1501: Classified Employee Complaint Procedure](#) and [DHS Policy #1502: Unclassified Employees Complaint Procedure](#).

### **Unlawful Discrimination Complaint Procedure**

Complaints alleging unlawful discrimination based on race, color, creed, national origin, ancestry, citizenship, religion, political opinions or affiliations, age, disability, genetic information, gender, pregnancy, childbirth or related conditions, military or veteran status, harassment, or other status protected by federal, or state law or regulation may be filed with your designated Human Resources Representative for investigation. There are specific deadlines by which a complaint must be filed.

Filing a complaint through this procedure does not prevent otherwise eligible employees from filing charges with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission or Georgia Commission on Equal Opportunity.

Employees who believe they were subjected to sexual harassment should immediately report the incident to an appropriate supervisor or designated Human Resources Representative.

For more information, refer to [DHS Policy #102: Sexual Harassment](#) and [DHS Policy #1503: Unlawful Discrimination Complaint Procedure](#).

## **MEDIATION PROCEDURE**

The Mediation Procedure is established to provide an informal, non-adversarial process in which employees and supervisors involved in workplace disputes may meet with a mediator. The intent is to resolve disputes between employees and/or supervisors by reaching a mutually satisfactory agreement. Both classified and unclassified employees may participate in mediation.

For more information, refer to [DHS Policy #1505: Mediation Procedure](#).

## **REVIEW OF WRITTEN REPRIMAND**

Eligible classified employees who are issued written reprimands may file a written request for review with your designated Human Resources Representative. There are specific deadlines by which a request for review must be filed.

For more information, refer to [DHS Policy #1504: Reprimand Review Process](#).

## **DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS**

Disciplinary action may be appropriate due to employees' inappropriate behavior and/or unsatisfactory performance. When disciplinary action (except for termination) is taken, employees should be given sufficient information to enable them to correct inappropriate behavior and/or unsatisfactory performance.

Since only classified employees are covered by the Rules of the State Personnel Board for appeal rights, there are separate disciplinary action procedures for classified and unclassified employees.

For more information, refer to [DHS Policy #1601 A2: Classified Employee Disciplinary and Dismissal Actions](#) and [DHS Policy #1603 A3: Unclassified Employee Disciplinary and Dismissal Actions](#).

## **ENDING EMPLOYMENT**

### **Resignation**

Employees who resign should provide written notice in advance. Generally, a two-week notice is recommended. The date of resignation becomes fixed upon receiving notice and can only be changed with the approval of the supervisor.

### **Retirement**

Employees who have selected a retirement date and have received confirmation from the ERS should advise their supervisors of the retirement date as soon as possible. Supervisors should be given at least thirty (30) calendar days advance notice. Applications for retirement are not considered filed until received by ERS.

For more information, refer to [DHS Policy #1902: Retirement](#).

### **Staff Reduction**

Employees may be separated from employment through a staff reduction because of a shortage of work or funds, change in the organization, or otherwise.

If classified employees are affected by a staff reduction, specific procedures must be followed to implement a reduction in force, as outlined in the Rules of the State Personnel Board.

If unclassified employees are affected by a staff reduction, their knowledge, skills, abilities, performance, and length of service should be reviewed to determine which employees will be retained.

For specific information, please contact your designated Human Resources Representative.

### **Unemployment Compensation**

All employees who are separated from employment for any reason will receive a Separation Notice Form and may file for unemployment compensation benefits. Upon application for unemployment compensation benefits, a determination of eligibility will be made by the Georgia Department of Labor.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **IDENTIFICATION BADGES**

DHS organizations may require employees to wear identification badges issued by the DHS while at work or on duty. Employees are not to wear these identification badges while away from the workplace during off-duty hours.

### **SMOKING POLICY**

DHS is a smoke-free environment. Smoking along with smokeless products (e.g., vapes, chewing tobacco, etc.) are therefore prohibited in all facilities.

Smoking is also prohibited in State of Georgia vehicles, vehicles rented or leased, or an employee's personal vehicle during work hours when clients or customers are being transported.

Smoking along with smokeless products are permitted only in designated areas outside buildings during meals and a maximum of two (2) discretionary fifteen (15) minute break periods. Areas designated for smoking along with smokeless products should not be primary entrances or exits and should not present a negative image to the public.

For more information, refer to [DHS Policy #103: Smoking](#).

### **INFECTIOUS DISEASE IN THE WORKPLACE**

Employees are expected to care for, treat, and provide services to all clients, patients, and customers. The guidelines for health and safety standards established by DHS regarding infectious disease should be followed.

Supervisors are to ensure that employees are trained in correct procedures and provided personal protective equipment to provide services to those with infectious diseases.

Information concerning infectious disease status and testing is confidential. Employees are expected to protect employee, client, and customer confidentiality.

For more information, contact your supervisor or designated Human Resources Representative.

### **TRAVEL**

DHS employees may be required to travel to perform official duties. State law and DHS regulations allow employees to be reimbursed for reasonable and necessary expenses incurred while traveling in the performance of such duties. Please see your supervisor, designated Human Resources Representative, or DHS Financial Services Representative for a copy of the current travel regulations.

### **EMPLOYEES' SUGGESTION & AWARDS PROGRAM**

The Employees' Suggestion and Awards Program encourages employees to make suggestions that will promote efficiency and save funds. Both monetary and non-monetary awards are possible. Suggestions should be submitted in writing to the Suggestion Program Coordinator at the DOAS Human Resources Administration Division.

For more information, refer to Rules of the State Personnel Board [478-1-.22 Employee Suggestion Program](#) and [DHS Policy #1802: Employees' Suggestion Program](#).

### **STATE CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS PROGRAM**

The State Charitable Contributions Program (SCCP) is an annual statewide program that allows state employees to support eligible charitable organizations. Employees may choose to contribute through a voluntary monthly payroll deduction or may choose to make a one-time contribution.

For additional information, please contact your designated Human Resources Representative or refer to [DHS Policy #1801: Charitable Contributions Programs](#).

## **EMPLOYEE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM**

Please read and sign the acknowledgement form attached and email it to your supervisor and designated Human Resources Representative. Doing so ensures your understanding of the information and your commitment to complying with the policies and guidelines outlined within this handbook.

### **EMPLOYEE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM**

The *EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK* has important information about DHS employment. My signature below acknowledges I have received the handbook and understand it is my responsibility to read and comply with the guidelines described in it. I understand that if I have any questions not answered in the handbook, I should:

- Contact my supervisor.
- Contact my designated Human Resources Representative.
- Contact the Office of Human Resources.
- Refer to DHS Policy and Manual Management System (PAMMS).

**I UNDERSTAND THAT THIS HANDBOOK IS NOT A CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT OR A LEGAL DOCUMENT AND IS NOT TO BE INTERPRETED AS SUCH.** DHS has the right to change information in this handbook at any time and/or for any reason without prior notice.

***Please complete the below form:***

EMPLOYEE'S NAME

---

WORK ADDRESS & PHONE NUMBER

---

EMPLOYEE'S SIGNATURE & DATE

---

**This copy should be filed in the employee's personnel file.**

**Revised: March 9, 2026**



**Georgia Department  
of Human Services**

*STRONGER FAMILIES FOR A STRONGER GEORGIA*