

**SOUTH CAROLINA PUBLIC EMPLOYEE BENEFIT AUTHORITY
ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICY**

THE LANGUAGE USED IN THIS DOCUMENT DOES NOT CREATE AN EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT BETWEEN THE EMPLOYEE AND THE AGENCY. THIS DOCUMENT DOES NOT CREATE ANY CONTRACTUAL RIGHTS OR ENTITLEMENTS. THE AGENCY RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REVISE THE CONTENT OF THIS DOCUMENT, IN WHOLE OR IN PART. NO PROMISES OR ASSURANCES, WHETHER WRITTEN OR ORAL, WHICH ARE CONTRARY TO OR INCONSISTENT WITH THE TERMS OF THIS PARAGRAPH CREATE ANY CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT.

I. Policy

It is the Public Employee Benefit Authority's policy to provide a work environment free of harassment based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age, disability, genetic information or any other protected category under federal, state or local law.

II. Definition

Harassment is unwelcome conduct that is based on a protected category and may become unlawful when:

- enduring the offensive conduct becomes a condition of continued employment; or
- it results in an adverse employment decision; or
- the conduct is severe or pervasive enough to create a work environment that a reasonable person would consider intimidating, hostile, abusive or offensive.

Offensive conduct may include, but is not limited to, offensive jokes, slurs, epithets or name calling, physical assaults or threats, intimidation, ridicule, insults, offensive objects or pictures, or interference with work performance. It may also include unwelcomed sexual advances, innuendoes, requests for sexual favors, physical contact, unwelcomed and repeated propositions, or unwelcomed and repeated flirtation.

Offensive conduct may be communicated verbally, in writing, or electronically. The conduct may be between co-workers, employee to supervisor, supervisor to employee, employees/supervisors in other areas, employee to non-employee, or non-employee to employee.

III. Prevention

Prevention is the best tool to eliminate harassment in the workplace. Employees who feel they have been subjected to offensive behavior should take the initiative in stopping the contact. Inform the harasser directly that the conduct is unwelcome and must stop. Should the harassment continue, employees are encouraged to report it to their supervisor, another member of management, or Human Resources.

IV. Complaint Process

Employees needing to make a complaint should do so in writing to the Human Resources Director. Supervisors having knowledge of complaints or allegations of harassment are required to contact the Human Resources Director immediately. Complaints will be investigated promptly and thoroughly and as discreetly as possible. In cases where it is determined that harassment did occur, disciplinary action up to and including dismissal may be issued.

Any employee who knowingly makes false accusations or false statements during an investigation may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Retaliation against individuals who file complaints or participate in complaint investigations is prohibited. Retaliation offenses should be reported to the Human Resources Director immediately.

**SOUTH CAROLINA PUBLIC EMPLOYEE BENEFIT AUTHORITY
DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE POLICY**

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I. Purpose

The SC Public Employee Benefit Authority is committed to protecting the safety, health and wellbeing of all employees. The Agency is committed to maintaining a safe and secure work environment that is alcohol and drug-free.

II. Covered Workers

Any individual that conducts business for the Agency, is applying for a position or conducting business on Agency property is covered by our drug-free workplace policy. Our policy includes, but is not limited to full-time employees, part-time employees, volunteers, interns and applicants. This drug-free workplace policy is intended to apply whenever anyone is representing or conducting business for the Agency. This policy applies during all working hours, whenever conducting business or representing the Agency, while on Agency property and at Agency-sponsored events.

III. Prohibited Behavior

The Agency prohibits the manufacture, distribution, dispensation, sale, possession or use of illegal drugs, narcotics or controlled substances (unless use is prescribed by a licensed medical provider).

Employees shall notify their supervisor when required to use prescription medication which they have been informed has the potential to impair job performance. The employee shall advise the supervisor of the known side effects of such medication and the prescribed period of use. Employees are under no obligation to disclose prescription medication whose effects or side effects do not impair job performance.

Employees are prohibited from conducting Agency business under the influence of alcohol. Under the influence means having any detectable concentration of alcohol in the body. The use of alcohol on Agency premises or while conducting Agency business is prohibited, except at approved Agency sponsored social events. Alcohol consumption at an Agency sponsored event is completely voluntary and should be in moderation.

IV. Guidelines

Any employee who is convicted of a criminal drug violation occurring on or off Agency premises must notify the Agency within five calendar days of the conviction. Law enforcement agencies will be notified whenever illegal drugs are found in the workplace (or contained within State property).

Employees involved in a motor vehicle accident while driving a State-owned vehicle, may be required to submit for drug and/or alcohol testing.

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. Each case will be reviewed and necessary action will be taken. The Agency reserves the right to test employees it reasonably suspects to be using drugs or alcohol in violation of this policy.

V. Job Retention Services

Employees in need of assistance in relation to drug or alcohol use are encouraged to contact Job Retention Services with the SC Vocational Rehabilitation Department, 1410 Boston Avenue, West Columbia, SC 29171 or 896-6500.

**SOUTH CAROLINA PUBLIC EMPLOYEE BENEFIT AUTHORITY
FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE POLICY**

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I. Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the SC Public Employee Benefit Authority complies with the Family Medical Leave Act. SC State Government is considered a single employer as it pertains to the provisions of this policy.

II. Eligibility

In order to be eligible for FMLA leave, an employee must have worked for the State at least 12 months and at least 1250 hours during the 12 months prior to requesting the leave. The required total of 12 months of employment need not be consecutive; however, employment periods prior to a break in service of seven or more years need not be counted unless the break in service was due to fulfillment of National Guard or Reserve military obligation, or a written agreement concerning the State's intention to rehire the employee after a break in service.

III. Family Medical Leave Usage

An eligible employee shall be granted up to a total of 12 workweeks (60 workdays or 450 hours) of FMLA leave in each calendar year on a continuous or intermittent basis, for any of the following reasons:

- Birth of a child and to care for the newborn child within one year of birth
- Placement of a child for adoption or foster care with employee within one year of placement
- Serious health condition of a spouse, child or parent
- Serious health condition of the employee
- Qualified exigencies arising out of the fact that the employee's spouse, child, or parent is on (or has been notified of an impending call to) "covered active duty". Exigencies may include short notice deployment, military events and related activities, childcare and school activities, financial and legal arrangements, counseling, rest and recuperation, post-deployment activities, and additional activities not encompassed in other categories but agreed by the agency and the employee. This applies to the families of members of both the active duty and reserve components of the Armed Forces. *"Covered active duty" for members of a regular component of the Armed Forces means duty during deployment to a foreign country. "Covered active duty" for members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces (US National Guard and*

Reserves) means duty during deployment to a foreign country under a call or order to active duty in a contingency operation as defined in section 101(a)(13)(B) of title 10, US Code.

An eligible employee may be entitled to a total of 26 workweeks during a 12 month period to care for a spouse, child, parent or next of kin who is a service member undergoing medical treatment, recuperation or therapy, is otherwise in outpatient status, or is otherwise on the temporary disability retired list, for a serious injury or illness incurred or aggravated in the line of duty on active duty. This applies to the families of members of both the active duty and reserve components of the Armed Forces. This also applies to a veteran if they were a member of the Armed Forces at any time during the period of five years preceding the date on which the veteran undergoes the medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy.

A serious health condition means an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves either:

- Inpatient care in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical-care facility, including any period of incapacity or subsequent treatment in connection with such inpatient care; or
- Continuing treatment by a health care provider, which includes:
 - A period of incapacity lasting more than three consecutive, full calendar days, and any subsequent treatment or period of incapacity relating to the same condition that also includes:
 - Treatment two or more times by or under the supervision of a health care provider; or
 - One treatment by a health care provider with a continuing regimen of treatment; or
 - Any period of incapacity related to pregnancy or for prenatal care. A visit to a health care provider is not necessary for each absence; or
 - Any period of incapacity or treatment for a chronic serious health condition which continues over an extended period of time, requires periodic visits (at least twice a year) to a health care provider, and may involve occasional episodes of incapacity. A visit to a health care provider is not necessary for each absence; or
 - A period of incapacity that is permanent or long-term due to a condition for which treatment may not be effective. Only supervision by a health care provider is required, rather than active treatment; or
 - Any absences to receive multiple treatments for restorative surgery or for a condition that would likely result in a period of incapacity of more than three days if not treated.

The 12-month FMLA period is a calendar year with the exception of leave for the birth of a child and for the placement of a child for adoption or foster care. In these exceptions, the 12-month period will begin at the time of birth or placement.

IV. Scheduling FMLA Leave

An employee requesting FMLA leave must, when foreseeable, give 30 days advance notice to the Agency of the need to take FMLA leave. When 30 days is not possible, the employee

must provide notice as soon as practicable and must comply with the Agency's normal call-in procedures.

V. Certification of FMLA Leave

Employees requesting FMLA leave will be required to provide a health care certification form to support the need for leave due to a serious health condition affecting the employee or the employee's spouse, child or parent. Certification of qualifying exigency for military family leave or for serious injury and/or illness of the covered service member will be required. When necessary, the Agency may request the employee to provide reasonable documentation or statement of family relationship. Failure to comply with the health care certification process may result in a delay or denial of FMLA leave. Periodic recertification of a serious health condition may also be required.

VI. Leave Procedures

Managers must notify Human Resources immediately if an employee's absence is due to one of the FMLA qualifying reasons. If there is any doubt whether the absence qualifies, Human Resources should be contacted to make a determination.

FMLA leave will run concurrently with the applicable leave type being used. All provisions of the Leave Policy remain applicable during FMLA usage (e.g. maximum of ten days of family sick leave). In the event of FMLA usage for the birth of a child, sick leave may be used for the period of time certified by the physician as medical recuperation, and the remainder of the absence should be charged as annual leave or leave without pay.

Employees utilizing FMLA for a serious health condition will be required to use accrued sick leave. If the employee's sick leave has been exhausted, they may have the option of using annual leave or leave without pay.

VII. Maintenance of Insurance Benefits

Group insurance coverage will be maintained for an employee on FMLA leave whenever such insurance was provided before the leave was taken and on the same terms as if the employee had continued to work. The employee is responsible for the employee portion of insurance premiums. Should the employee take leave without pay during the FMLA period, the employee must make arrangements with Human Resources to pay for his/her share of the insurance premiums.

VIII. Reinstatement from FMLA Leave

Employees may be required to provide a physician's release upon their return to work. Upon return, generally the employee is entitled to be returned to the same position the employee held when the FMLA leave commenced, or to an equivalent position with equivalent benefits, pay and other terms and conditions of employment. The position must involve the same or

substantially similar duties and responsibilities, which must entail equivalent skill, effort, responsibility and authority.

**SOUTH CAROLINA PUBLIC EMPLOYEE BENEFIT AUTHORITY
GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE POLICY**

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INTRODUCTION

The State Employee Grievance Procedure Act provides that each agency and department of State government shall establish an employee grievance procedure for covered employees. A copy of the Public Employee Benefit Authority's (PEBA) approved grievance procedure will be available to covered employees electronically, on the agency's website or can be obtained from the agency's HR office. Employees choosing to file a grievance or appeal may not be disciplined or otherwise prejudiced for exercising rights or testifying under the provisions of this policy.

Grievances or appeals shall include terminations, suspensions, involuntary reassignments in excess of thirty (30) miles from the prior work station, and demotions. Reclassifications, reassignments, and transfers within the same state salary range are not considered grievances or appeals. However, reclassifications are considered a grievance only if an agency, or an appeal if the State Human Resources Director, determines that there is a material issue of fact that the action is a punitive reclassification. Promotions are not adverse employment actions which may be considered grievances or appeals except in instances where the agency, or in the case of appeals, the State Human Resources Director, determines that there is a material issue of fact as to whether or not an agency has considered a qualified covered employee for a position for which the employee formally applied or would have applied if the employee had known of the promotional opportunity. However, when an agency promotes an employee one organizational level above the promoted employee's former level, that action is not a grievance or appeal for any other qualified covered employee. Failure to be selected for a promotion is not considered an adverse employment action which can be considered a grievance or an appeal.

A salary decrease based on performance as the result of an EPMS evaluation, is an adverse employment actions that may be considered as a grievances or an appeal. A reduction in force is also an adverse employment action considered as a grievance only

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HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION

24 August 2012 *[Signature]*

if the agency, or as an appeal if the State Human Resources Director, determines that there is a material issue of fact that the agency inconsistently or improperly applied its reduction in force policy or plan.

Prior to filing a formal grievance, the covered employee may first attempt to resolve the matter informally with his immediate supervisor. This matter may be presented verbally or in writing. However, this is merely an informal attempt to resolve the matter and cannot be substituted for the requirements of Step One in the following procedure.

PROCEDURE

Step One

If the matter was not resolved informally with the covered employee's immediate supervisor, the covered employee must notify the agency's Human Resources Office in writing to initiate a formal grievance. The covered employee must initiate the grievance with the agency's Human Resources Office within fourteen (14) calendar days of the effective date of the action. The agency's Human Resources Director or other designated official shall initially review the grievance to determine whether the matter involves a grievance as defined by the Act. The agency's Human Resources Director or other designated official may conduct appropriate investigations and fact findings as he may consider necessary to make this determination. If it is determined that the matter is not grievable, the covered employee shall be so advised in writing by the Agency Director or a designee, normally within five (5) calendar days of receipt of the grievance. Such determination shall be a final decision within the agency which may be appealed to the State Human Resources Director.

If it is determined that the matter is grievable, the agency's Human Resources Director or other designated official will promptly schedule a conference to occur between the covered employee's next level supervisor and the covered employee, normally within five (5) calendar days of receipt of the grievance. However, any initial determination by the agency's Human Resources Director or other designated official that the matter may be grieved shall only entitle the covered employee to have the matter considered in accordance with this grievance procedure and shall in no way be construed to be an adjudication of the merits of the grievance. At the conference with the covered employee's next level supervisor, the covered employee will have an opportunity to present his position regarding the grievance. The next level supervisor may conduct appropriate investigations and fact findings to determine whether to accept, reject, or modify the disciplinary action taken against the covered employee. The covered employee will be advised of his next level supervisor's decision in writing within five (5) calendar days of the conference.

Step Two

To continue the grievance, the covered employee must notify the Agency Director or a designee in writing within five (5) calendar days after receiving the Step One decision. The Agency Director or a designee must promptly schedule and conduct a conference

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with the covered employee, normally within five (5) calendar days. The covered employee will be provided an opportunity at this time to present his position regarding the grievance. The Agency Director or a designee may conduct appropriate investigations and fact findings to determine whether to accept, reject, or modify the disciplinary action taken against the covered employee. The Agency Director or a designee must advise the covered employee of the decision in writing within five (5) calendar days of the conference. This decision will be final within the agency.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Any covered employee may appeal the decision of the Agency Director or a designee. Such appeal must be in writing and submitted to the State Human Resources Director within ten (10) calendar days of receipt of PEBA's final decision or 55 calendar days from the initial date the grievance was filed with PEBA, whichever occurs later. A covered employee may appeal directly to the State Human Resources Director in the event that PEBA does not complete its entire internal grievance procedure within 45 calendar days from the time the grievance is initially filed. Failure by PEBA to issue a final decision within this 45 calendar day period is considered an adverse decision. The failure to issue a final decision allows the covered employee to proceed with an appeal to the State Human Resources Director after 45 calendar days, but no later than 55 calendar days from the initial date the grievance was filed within PEBA. Failure by the covered employee to file an appeal within the time periods referenced in this paragraph shall constitute a waiver of the right to appeal.

Failure by the covered employee to comply with the internal time periods in PEBA's grievance procedure constitutes a failure to exhaust administrative remedies and waives the covered employee's right to further continue the grievance. The internal time periods of PEBA's grievance procedure, however, may be waived upon the mutual written agreement of both parties. The 45 calendar day period for action by PEBA may not be waived except by mutual written agreement of both parties.

The covered employee is allowed to appeal to the State Human Resources Director any grievance involving the issues specified in the Act after all administrative remedies to secure relief within the agency have been exhausted.

The covered employee has the right during the grievance and appeal process to a representative, which may include legal counsel. If the covered employee chooses to exercise the right of legal counsel, it shall be at his expense.

Preface

This document defines the policy for governing the acceptable use of agency information assets.

Document Control Information

TITLE	Information Assets Ethics and Use Policy
PROCESS GROUP	Policy
OWNER	Administration
SUBMITTER	Sharon Hammond

Revision History

Rev.	Approval date	Author	Section	Description of change
1.1	4/25/2007	Admin	All	New Policy (replaces forms 8402 and 8428)
1.2	9/29/2009	Admin	6	Revision/correction
1.3	3/11/2010	Admin	6	Revised third bullet and replaced fourth bullet with SC Budget and Control Board's limited personal use language
1.4	5/29/2013	IT	All 3	Replaces references to the Retirement Systems with PEBA. Updated confidentiality and privacy information

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1. Scope

This policy applies to all South Carolina Public Employee Benefit Authority (PEBA) employees. Its purpose is to: safeguard PEBA's assets, prevent software copyright infringement, and protect the integrity of the agency's computer environment.

2. Information Systems Access

- Employees are required to participate in appropriate training before access to the agency computers will be granted.
- Employees are not granted access to any agency data until their supervisor requests the access.
- Access into PEBA's network, outside of the facility, is considered unauthorized if the access is without prior written authorization from the Administration and Information Technology departments. The Remote Network Access form (8410) must be used to gain appropriate written authorization.
- Upon an employee's transfer or termination, the employee's supervisor will ensure that the employee's access to PEBA's data is terminated by contacting PEBA's Human Resources Manager.

3. Confidentiality and Privacy

- Employees must abide by PEBA's policies and procedures and keep confidential, unless otherwise exempted by federal or state statutes, all personal facts and health information made available to them during their employment.
- Employees must acknowledge that their supervisors have informed them of the requirements of their positions regarding the type of protected information to which they have access in order to perform their assigned job duties.
- Employees must make reasonable efforts to limit the access, use, and disclosure of, or request for, protected health information to the minimum necessary to accomplish the intended purpose for which the use, disclosure or request is made.
- Employees must make reasonable efforts to safeguard all personal facts and health information by following PEBA's privacy and security policies and procedures.
- All records of all active, retired, and inactive members of the retirement and insurance plans administered by PEBA are classified as confidential records and shall not be disclosed to third parties, except where authorized by the member, required by law, or authorized by the Director in response to a request from state or federal authorities.
- Employees must maintain the confidentiality of any confidential investment-related information received from the South Carolina Retirement System Investment Commission.
- Employees must maintain the confidentiality of assigned access codes and passwords, must not disclose access codes or passwords to unauthorized personnel, and must take immediate action to change access codes or passwords if necessary.
- Any violation of PEBA's privacy and security policies resulting in inappropriate disclosure or release of information or violation of Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) privacy and security regulations or South Carolina or federal statutes may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment and may subject employee to penalties under federal law.
- Any unauthorized disclosure or duplication of any of PEBA's information assets is contrary to this policy and may result in disciplinary action.

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4. Use of Licensed Software and Copyrighted Material

- Employees must use licensed software and vendor manuals according to vendor agreements entered into by the agency.
- Employees are not permitted to install any software on PEBA's computers. The use of any unauthorized copies of software on PEBA's computers will not be tolerated.
- Employees are not permitted to copy software from agency computers or vendor installation CDs, or any accompanying documentation or manuals, under any circumstances and are not permitted to install agency software on home or other computers.
- Employees are not permitted to give licensed software to anyone outside of PEBA, including clients, contractors, and customers.
- All software used by the agency and on agency computers will be purchased through the proper procedures. Any such purchase must be approved by an employee's supervisor, the department's executive manager, and the agency's information technology manager. Upon appropriate approval, information technology staff will purchase the software.
- All software must be installed by the agency's software manager or designee.
- Employees who illegally reproduce software can be subject to civil and criminal penalties including fines and imprisonment.

5. Personal Use

- All personal computer and software configurations will be modified by information technology staff only.
- Employees are not permitted to store personal files on PEBA's network computer systems. These files include, but are not limited to, pictures, music, movies, documents, and personal email messages.
- Any employee who determines that there may be a misuse of information assets such as unauthorized duplication of software or a lapse in confidentiality of member, subscriber, or retiree information, must immediately notify his or her department manager, PEBA's Information Technology department, or PEBA's legal counsel.

6. Internet/Email Use

- Transferring state government commercial traffic, as well as research and educational traffic, is an acceptable use so long as such use is acceptable to all interconnected networks along the entire route from source to destination.
- The network shall not be used for illegal purposes or to support or assist such purposes. Examples of this would be the transmission of threatening, sexually explicit, obscene or otherwise illegal materials.
- An employee's usage of the network should be prudent and should not disrupt network users, services and/or equipment, or substantially hinder others in their use of the network. Internet radio, live Internet broadcasts, Internet-based videos, and other similar services, can easily disrupt network availability, especially when used en masse. Other disruptions include, but are not limited to: distribution of unsolicited advertising; mass distribution of non business related material; propagation of computer "worms" and viruses; unauthorized attempts to enter any other computer or network related devices; and, sustained high volume network traffic.
- PEBA's computer systems and networks are to be used primarily for conducting official state business. It is recognized that employees may occasionally use these systems and networks for limited incidental personal use during non-working time. Such limited personal use may be acceptable as long as other usage policies are followed and the use does not interfere with an employee's work or negatively impact the computer system or network, and does not result in additional public expense. These systems are not available or accessible for public

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speech or any First Amendment expressive activity or for use by the public; further, the systems are expressly declared not to be a public forum.

- State employees may be subject to limitations on their use of the network as determined by the appropriate supervising authority. PEBA reserves the right to control access to internet sites.
- Use of network services provided by PEBA may be subject to monitoring for security and/or other reasons. Any contents obtained under these guidelines may be disclosed without the consent of the employee. Users of these services are therefore advised of this potential monitoring and agree to this practice.
- Any violation of the internet/email use policy may result in disciplinary action.

My signature indicates that I received a copy of the Information Assets Ethics and Use Policy, had the policy explained to me and the opportunity to ask questions, and I agree to abide by the policies.

Employee Name (Please Print)_____

Employee Signature _____ Date_____

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Preface

This document defines the South Carolina Retirement Systems' policy for the disposal of information.

Document Control Information

TITLE	Information Disposal Policy
PROCESS GROUP	All SCRS
OWNER	Administration
SUBMITTER	Sarah Corbett

Revision History

Rev.	Approval date	Author	Section	Description of change
1.0		Sarah Corbett	All	Initial release
2.0		Sarah Corbett	2	Updated description
3.0		Megan Lightle	All	Revised title and updated descriptions

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1. Scope

This policy applies to all South Carolina Retirement Systems' employees. Its purpose is to safeguard the Retirement Systems' confidential information.

2. Policy

All paper and electronic records that contain confidential member information, demographic information, or financial information about the Retirement Systems or its members must be disposed of through the secure recycling program provided by the division. Do not discard any of the above information in the trash as our trash service is not secure.

Retirement Systems' employees are reminded to use the red, blue, and/or gray recycling bins located throughout the building to discard (recycle) all white, colored, or mixed paper, such as:

Copy Paper	Printer Paper
Fax Paper	Envelopes (plain & window)
Letters	Ruled Notebook Paper
Post-it Notes	Tricolor Carbonless Paper
Letterhead/Stationery	Memos
Phone Messages	Adding Machine Paper
Shredded Paper	Legal Pad Paper
Manila Folders	Green Bar Computer Paper

Please remove all paperclips and binder clips before discarding paper. (Staples are OK to leave attached; they will not interfere with the machines used to grind up the paper.)

The following items may also be recycled, but they should be taken to the storage room located in the first floor hallway near the rear stairwell and placed in the appropriately marked recycling bin:

Phone books	Newspapers
Plastics	Magazines
Cardboard Boxes <i>(please break down before discarding)</i>	

There are receptacles for recycling plastic bottles and aluminum cans in the second floor break room.

The Information Technology (IT) Department recycles all cartridges for ink jet and laser printers, and shreds all electronic media (digital video discs, compact discs, and diskettes). Please take any copy and fax machine toner cartridges that are not returned directly to the vendor for recycling to IT as well.

The Retirement Systems does not currently recycle any of the following:

Carbon paper	Styrofoam
Glass	Metal
Wood	

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**SOUTH CAROLINA PUBLIC EMPLOYEE BENEFIT AUTHORITY
LEAVE POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

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I. Annual Leave

A. Eligibility

Annual leave shall be earned by (a) full-time employees occupying FTE positions; and (b) part-time employees occupying FTE positions who are scheduled to work at least one-half the workweek on a 12-month basis.

B. Accrual

Employees in pay status one-half or more of the workdays of the month will earn annual leave for the full month. Employees in pay status less than one-half of the workdays will not earn annual leave.

Employees earn annual leave while on annual, sick or other authorized leave with pay.

Annual leave accruals are based on the number of hours in the employee's workday. Full-time employees of the Agency are typically assigned to a 37.5 hours per week schedule (7.5 hours/day). Part-time employees earn annual leave on a prorated basis. To determine the prorated accrual, divide the total number of hours worked in a week by 37.5 then multiply the factor by the respective accrual rate in the chart below (based on years of service). Example: An employee works 30 hours per week and has 11 years of service:

$$30 \div 37.5 = .8$$

$$.8 \times 10.156 = 8.124 \text{ hours per month}$$

Employees earn annual leave based on the employee's annual leave accrual date. The leave accrual date reflects (a) all State service in an FTE position, including part-time service, adjusted to reflect periods when there was a break in service; and/or (b) all service as a certified employee in a permanent position of a school district of South Carolina.

C. Accrual Rates

Full-time employees with 10 years of service or less will accrue annual leave at a rate of one and one-quarter days per month (15 days per year). Full-time employees with more than 10 years of service will accrue an additional one and one-quarter days per year for each year of

continuous service in excess of 10 years. The number of annual leave hours that may be earned in any one calendar year shall not exceed 30 days.

Accrual Rates – 37.5 hours per week schedule:

Years of Service	Days Per Year	Hours Per Month
1-10	15	9.375
11	16.25	10.156
12	17.50	10.937
13	18.75	11.718
14	20.00	12.50
15	21.25	13.281
16	22.50	14.062
17	23.75	14.843
18	25.00	15.625
19	26.25	16.406
20	27.50	17.187
21	28.75	17.968
22 & over	30	18.75

D. Maximum Balance Carryover

Employees shall be permitted to carryover from one calendar year to the next any unused annual leave up to a total accumulation of 45 workdays except as noted in the State Human Resources Regulation 19-709.02C.

E. Maximum Usage

The maximum number of days of annual leave that may be used in any calendar year shall not exceed 30 workdays.

Exceptions:

1. For Family and Medical Leave Act qualifying reasons, the Agency may allow an employee who has used all eligible sick leave and 30 days of annual leave to use any remaining annual leave for emergencies or serious health conditions of the employee; or emergencies or serious health conditions of the employee's immediate family. (Immediate family is defined as the employee's spouse and children and the following relations to the employee or spouse of the employee: mother, father, brother, sister, grandparent, legal guardian and grandchildren.)
2. For emergency or extreme hardship conditions as referenced in SC Code of Laws 8-11-670, the Agency director or designee may allow an employee, who has used all accumulated sick leave and 30 days of annual leave, to use any remaining annual leave which he has accumulated.
3. An employee may request review by the State Human Resources Director the denial of the use of annual leave as provided in this section.

F. Annual Leave Usage

Requests to use annual leave should be made 24 hours in advance except in cases of extenuating circumstances or emergencies.

Requests to use annual leave should be submitted through the MySCEmployee website. At the supervisor's discretion, an employee may be required to adhere to an internal procedure in seeking approval for annual leave prior to submitting the request online. Use of annual leave should be entered in quarter-hour increments.

To the degree possible, an employee's request for leave will be honored. However, supervisors will take into consideration workloads, work distributions and similar factors that will influence the approval or denial of a request for annual leave. An employee must not take leave prior to approval of the request.

Supervisors are responsible for monitoring employees' use of annual leave. Supervisors will ensure that an employee does not use more than the maximum amount of annual leave allowed per year or use more than the employee's accumulated balance of annual leave.

G. Holiday During Leave

When a holiday is observed by the Agency while an employee is using annual leave, the day shall be considered a holiday, not a day of leave.

H. Transfer From One State Agency to Another

Employees who transfer without a break in service (15 days) from one Agency to another shall transfer all accumulated annual leave.

When a full-time employee transfers to an Agency that has a different workday, his annual leave at the transferring Agency shall be converted to equivalent days of annual leave at the receiving Agency. (e.g. employee transfers from a 37.5 hour workweek to a 40 hour workweek)

When an employee transfers to a teaching position of academic rank at a State supported institution of higher learning, the employee is paid for accrued annual leave rather than transferring.

I. Annual Leave Payment Upon Separation

Upon separation from State employment, a lump sum payment will be made for unused annual leave, not to exceed 45 days.

Upon death of an employee while in active service, the estate of the deceased shall be entitled to the lump sum payment for unused annual leave, not to exceed 45 days.

An employee beginning participation in the TERI program after June 30, 2005, will not receive payment for unused annual leave upon retirement and entering the TERI program. The employee will maintain his current annual leave balance. After the employee separates from State employment and ends participation in the TERI program, the employee will be eligible to receive payment up to 45 days of unused annual leave.

Retirement - Payment for unused annual leave will be included in the member's Average Final Compensation for Class II members in SCRS. Payment for unused annual leave will not be included in the member's Average Final Compensation for Class III members in SCRS.

II. Sick Leave

A. Eligibility

Sick leave shall be earned by (a) full-time employees occupying FTE positions; and (b) part-time employees occupying FTE positions who are scheduled to work at least one-half the workweek on a 12-month basis.

B. Accrual

Employees in pay status one-half or more of the workdays of the month will earn sick leave for the full month. Employees in pay status less than one-half of the workdays will not earn sick leave.

Employees earn sick leave while on annual, sick or other authorized leave with pay.

Sick leave accruals are based on the number of hours in the employee's workday. Full-time employees of the Agency are typically assigned to a 37.5 hours per week schedule (7.5 hours/day). Part-time employees earn annual leave on a prorated basis. To determine the prorated accrual, divide the total number of hours worked in a week by 37.5 then multiply the factor by 9.375. Example: An employee works 30 hours per week:

$$30 \div 37.5 = .8$$

$$.8 \times 9.375 = 7.5 \text{ hours per month}$$

C. Accrual Rate

Full-time employees shall earn sick leave beginning with the date of employment at the rate of one and one-quarter days per month of service (15 days per year).

D. Maximum Balance Carryover

Employees shall be permitted to carryover from one calendar year to the next any unused sick leave up to a total accumulation of 180 workdays except as noted in the State Human Resources Regulation 19-710.02.C.

E. Sick Leave Usage

Requests to use sick leave should be submitted through the MySCEmployee website. Employees shall be granted sick leave if the absence is for any of the following reasons:

- Personal illness or injury that incapacitates the employee to perform duties of the position;
- Exposure to a contagious disease such that the presence on duty could endanger the health of fellow workers;

- Appointments for medical or dental examination when such appointments cannot reasonably be scheduled during non-working hours (if possible, examination appointments must be approved in advance by the supervisor);
- Sickness during pregnancy or other temporary disabilities;
- Treatment of alcoholism and drug addiction;
- Caring for ill members of the employee's immediate family (Employees may use up to 10 days of sick leave in a calendar year to care for members of their immediate family. For the purposes of family sick leave, "immediate family" is defined as the employee's spouse and children and the following relations to the employee or spouse of the employee: mother, father, brother, sister, grandparent, legal guardian and grandchildren);
- Caring for an adoptive child after placement (Adoptive parents may use up to six weeks of their accrued sick leave to take time off for purposes of caring for the child after placement. Leave authorized by this section may be requested by the employee only if the employee is the person who is primarily responsible for furnishing the care and nurture of the child.)

Except in extenuating circumstances, an employee must notify his/her supervisor as soon as possible at the beginning of the workday if the employee is unable to report to work due to illness. Failure to do so could result in an unauthorized leave status and disciplinary action.

The use of sick leave is subject to verification. At the Agency's discretion, a physician's statement to verify the absence was due to illness may be required. The Human Resources Director should be notified prior to contact being made with a medical provider.

Absences due to illness which require three or more consecutive work days (with or without pay) will require a physician's statement to return to work. Supervisors shall ensure this requirement and forward all documentation to Human Resources.

Supervisors are responsible for monitoring employees' use of sick leave. Sick leave may only be approved and used for the qualifying reasons. Supervisors will ensure that an employee does not use more than the employee's accumulated balance of sick leave.

F. Holiday During Leave

When a holiday is observed by the Agency while an employee is using sick leave, the day shall be considered a holiday, not a day of leave.

G. Sick Leave Advancement

In extenuating circumstances, the Agency may advance up to 15 days of additional sick leave upon documentation from a health care provider that the employee is expected to return to work within that period of time. Upon return to work, the employee will have all earned sick leave applied to the leave deficit at a rate equal to the employee's monthly sick leave accrual until the deficit has been satisfied.

Requests for advancement of sick leave should be made in writing to the Human Resources Director.

H. Transfer

Employees who transfer without a break in service (15 days) from one Agency to another shall transfer all accumulated sick leave.

When a full-time employee transfers to an Agency that has a different workday, his sick leave at the transferring Agency shall be converted to equivalent days of sick leave at the receiving Agency. (e.g. employee transfers from a 37.5 hour workweek to a 40 hour workweek)

When an employee transfers to a school district of the State or a school district employee transferring to a State agency without a break in service is permitted to transfer and retain, at the new employer, all sick leave accumulated at the former employer regardless of his employment status at the new employer.

I. Separation

Retirement – An employee in Class II membership in SCRS, shall receive service credit for not more than 90 days of unused sick leave. The leave is credited at a rate of 20 days of sick leave equals one month of service. This additional service credit may not be used to qualify for retirement. Employees in Class III membership in SCRS do not receive retirement service credit for unused sick leave.

Upon leaving employment with the State, employees shall forfeit all accumulated sick leave credits.

III. Extended Disability, Illness and Maternity

For any period of certified disability due to illness, injury or maternity, an employee may apply for leave for the projected inclusive dates of disability as noted in a physician's certificate not to exceed 180 calendar days for all leave taken. To be considered for approval of an extended disability, certification by a health care practitioner, to include the projected inclusive dates of disability, must be submitted.

The request shall not be denied for a bona fide illness or disability if the employee is in an FTE position.

If the employee is unable to return to work within the 180-day period, the Agency must separate the employee.

In extenuating circumstances, two extensions are available:

- A. The Agency Director may extend the 180-day period of leave to a total of 365 days provided the health care practitioner certifies the employee's return within this time period; and
- B. The Agency Director may extend the disability leave beyond 365 days without a break in service provided the health care practitioner certifies the employee's return to work within the time frame of the requested extension.

IV. Leave Without Pay

Leave without pay requests that cannot be assigned to an extended disability or FMLA qualifying event must be submitted in writing to the Human Resources Director for approval. Leave without pay must be requested and approved prior to being taken by the employee. Failure to do so would place the employee in an unauthorized leave status, which may subject the employee to disciplinary action. Requests will not be granted until all of an employee's accumulated annual leave has been used. The circumstances in each case will be considered in determining whether approval is warranted.

Annual and sick leave do not accrue during periods of leave without pay. An employee is not entitled to receive credit for a holiday if on leave without pay the day before the holiday.

V. Declaration of Family and Medical Leave

Leave taken under the above leave guidelines may be declared as Family and Medical Leave (FMLA) and, if so, will run concurrently. Absences that exceed three days may be covered under the Family Medical Leave Act and should be reported to Human Resources. (see Family Medical Leave Policy)

VI. Other Leave

Leave covered in this section applies only to those employees occupying an FTE position.

A. Death in Immediate Family Leave

An employee, upon request, shall be granted up to three consecutive workdays of leave with pay upon the death of any member of immediate family. Immediate family is defined as the spouse, great-grandparents, grandparents, parents, legal guardians, brothers, spouse of brothers, sisters, spouse of sisters, children, spouse of children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of either the employee or the spouse.

Requests to use death in immediate family leave should be submitted through the MySCEmployee website. The employee must then provide a statement to the supervisor stating the name of the deceased and the employee's relationship to the deceased.

B. Administrative Leave

Employees who are physically attacked while in the performance of official duties and suffer bodily harm as a result of the attack may be placed on administrative leave with pay. The period of administrative leave per incident may not exceed 180 calendar days.

C. American Red Cross Certified Disaster Service Leave

An employee who is a certified disaster service volunteer for the American Red Cross may use up to 10 days of paid leave in a calendar year to participate in specialized disaster relief services with the approval of the Agency Director or his designee.

D. Blood Drive and Donation Leave

Employees are permitted to participate in Agency arranged blood drives during the employee's regular work hours without using accrued leave. State employees desiring to donate blood at a time other than an Agency arranged volunteer blood drive must be excused from work during the employee's regular work hours without using accrued leave.

The employee desiring to donate blood shall notify his supervisor of the scheduled donation and amount of time needed for the donation as far in advance as may be practicable. The supervisor may deny the employee's request if the absence would create an extraordinary burden on the Agency. The supervisor shall take into consideration such factors as workload and staffing. The supervisor, as a condition of approving the request, may require documentation of the donation.

E. Bone Marrow Donor Leave

Employees who work an average of 20 hours or more per week and who seek to undergo a medical procedure to donate bone marrow may be granted paid leave of absences. The combined length of paid leave may not exceed 40 work hours unless a longer length of time is approved by the Agency Director. Such leave may require verification by a physician for the purpose and length of the request.

F. Court Leave

An employee who is summoned as a member of a jury panel shall be granted court leave with pay, and jury fees and travel payment shall be retained by the employee.

An employee subpoenaed as a witness shall be granted court leave with pay and may retain witness fees or payment for travel if they do not receive any personal gain from the outcome of the litigation.

An employee subpoenaed in the line of duty to represent the Agency as a witness or defendant shall not be granted court leave with pay, but shall be considered time worked.

Court leave will not be granted for court attendance when an employee is engaged in personal litigation. An employee may be granted annual leave or leave without pay in such cases with prior supervisory approval.

Employees utilizing court leave of any type will be expected to work on any given day the number of hours that, when added to the hours required by the court, equal the normal workday for the employee unless the employee has requested and had approved annual leave or sick leave (for a qualifying reason).

G. Military Leave

Employees of the Agency who are either enlisted or commissioned members of the SC National Guard, the US Army Reserve, the US Air Force Reserve, the US Naval Reserve, the US Marine Corps Reserve, or the US Coast Guard Reserve are entitled to leaves of absence from their respective duties without loss of pay, time, or efficiency rating for one or more

periods not exceeding an aggregate of fifteen regularly scheduled workdays in any one year during which they may be engaged in training or any other duties ordered by the Governor, the Department of Defense, the Department of the Army, the Department of the Air Force, the Department of the Navy, the Department of the Treasury, or any other department or agency of the government of the United States having authority to issue lawful orders requiring military service.

In the event an employee serves during an emergency, they are entitled to 30 additional workdays of paid leave of absence in each subsequent year associated with the same emergency.

In the event an employee is called upon to serve on active duty in a combat zone and all available military leave is exhausted, they are entitled to receive an additional 30 workdays of military leave in any one year.

In the event an employee serves on active duty as a result of an emergency or conflict declared by the President of the United States, they are entitled to use up to 45 days of annual leave and up to 90 days of sick leave in a calendar year.

“Any one year” means either a calendar year or the fiscal year (for members required to perform active duty for training or other duties within or on a fiscal year basis) of the National Guard or reserve component issuing the orders.

Saturdays, Sundays, and State holidays may not be included as a workday unless the particular Saturday, Sunday, or holiday to be included is a regularly scheduled workday for the employee involved.

Employees who on or after June 25, 1950 have been or shall be commissioned, enlisted, or selected for service in the Armed Forces of the United States shall be granted leave without pay beginning with the date of induction and ending 90 calendar days after the date of separation from military service but in no event for a period longer than five years from the date of entry into the Armed Forces of the United States. During such leave of absence, the employee shall be entitled to retain all seniority and efficiency rating. However, such time while on military leave without pay shall not count toward eligibility for merit salary advancement.

H. Education Leave

An employee is encouraged to schedule classes during off-duty hours, whenever possible. When a class cannot be scheduled during off-duty hours, the supervisor may adjust the employee's work schedule, if doing so will not interfere with normal efficient operations of the office. When a class cannot be scheduled during off-duty hours and the office cannot feasibly adjust the work schedule of the employee, the employee may be allowed to take annual leave or may be granted leave without pay in order to attend classes.

I. Hazardous Weather

Upon issuing a Declaration of Emergency, the Governor has the authority to excuse all employees of State government from reporting to work during extreme weather or other

emergency conditions. Emergency conditions are circumstances that would expose State employees to harmful or unsafe conditions as determined by the Governor's Office. Unless such a Declaration of Emergency has been issued, all State government employees are expected to report to work.

The Declaration may be applicable to all employees in the entire State or only to those employees in one geographical region of the State or a combination of geographical regions. Non-essential employees who live or work within the region(s) specified in the Declaration of a state of emergency, the Governor may provide State employees with up to five days of leave with pay for absences from work due to the state of emergency for hazardous weather.

During a Declaration of Emergency, all essential and direct care services will be maintained. Supervisors shall identify essential employees by position, classification, or internal title and indicate this designation on the employee's Position Description.

Nothing contained in this section precludes the necessary, immediate evacuation of a facility by an individual in a supervisor capacity in the interest of personal safety.

During normal working hours, the Human Resources Director will be notified of a decision to close and this information will be disseminated appropriately. During off-duty hours all Declarations of Emergency will be communicated to the news media. Employees will assume an individual responsibility to remain informed and respond accordingly.

J. Voting Leave

Employees who live at such a distance from the assigned work location as to preclude voting outside of working hours may be authorized a maximum of two hours of leave with pay for this purpose. An employee may not be granted election leave to work at the polls during elections. However, annual leave may be approved at the discretion of the supervisor.

**SOUTH CAROLINA PUBLIC EMPLOYEE BENEFIT AUTHORITY
LEAVE TRANSFER PROGRAM POLICY**

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I. Policy

The SC Public Employee Benefit Authority's Leave Transfer Program consists of annual and sick leave donations made by Agency employees for use by Agency employees who qualify and are approved as recipients.

II. Donation of Leave

Employees may voluntarily request a transfer of accrued sick and/or annual leave to the Agency leave transfer pool by using the Leave Donation Request form. The following restrictions apply:

- Employee must retain a minimum of 15 days in their sick leave account
- Employee may donate no more than one-half of the annual or sick leave earned within a calendar year
- Leave must be donated prior to December 31st of the year for which the donation is to be made
- Once leave has been transferred to a pool account, it cannot be restored or returned to the leave donor
- Donations cannot be designated for specific individuals

III. Request for Leave Transfer

An employee with a personal emergency may request sick or annual leave from the appropriate pool account by completing a Leave Recipient Request form and submitting it Human Resources. While there is no limit to the number of separate requests that may be submitted, each request shall be limited to no more than 30 workdays and generally not to exceed a total of 90 days. The established minimum criteria for requests are:

- The employee must be eligible to accrue sick and/or annual leave to qualify as a recipient of transferred leave.
- The employee must have experienced a personal emergency which means a medical or family emergency or other hardship situation that is likely to require an employee's

absence from duty for a prolonged period of time and to result in substantial loss of income to the employee because of the unavailability of paid leave.

- A personal emergency is limited to catastrophic and debilitating medical situations, severely complicated disabilities and severe accident cases – each of which would require a prolonged period of recuperation. Routine disabilities or disabilities resulting from elective surgery do not qualify for leave transfers.
- An employee must have used all eligible accrued sick leave and annual leave prior to using approved transferred leave.
- Employees who become eligible for other paid benefits for periods of absence from work will generally be considered ineligible for leave transfers. Examples of other paid benefits include, but are not limited to, workers' compensation, long-term disability, and disability retirement benefits.
- Whether transferred leave may be applied retroactively and for what length of time will be determined on a case-by-case basis.
- The Agency must have sufficient leave in the appropriate leave pool and sufficient funds to pay for the requested leave.

IV. Adjudication of Requests

- Upon receipt of a request, the Human Resources Director will gather necessary documentation. The Executive Director or designee will review the requests and make a determination. If denied, the denial is final and the employee has no right to appeal.
- Requesters may be required to furnish a detailed, personal statement to document the financial hardship incurred as a result of the unavailability of paid leave.
- The employee's leave usage history and length of State service may be used when considering leave transfer requests.

V. Usage of Transferred Leave

Upon approval of a request, the appropriate leave will be conditionally transferred to the employee's leave account from the leave pool. The leave may then be used for the approved purpose and in the same manner as if the employee had accrued the leave.

Leave that accrues to the account of the recipient subsequent to the transfer must be used before using any leave from the pool.

The supervisor and Human Resources will monitor the status of the personal emergency affecting the recipient to ensure that the leave recipient is not permitted to receive or use transferred leave after the personal emergency ceases to exist.

The personal emergency terminates when it is determined that the personal emergency no longer exists or the leave recipient's employment terminates at which time any transferred leave remaining to the credit of the employee must be restored to the appropriate pool account.

**SOUTH CAROLINA PUBLIC EMPLOYEE BENEFIT AUTHORITY
NEPOTISM POLICY**

THE LANGUAGE USED IN THIS DOCUMENT DOES NOT CREATE AN EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT BETWEEN THE EMPLOYEE AND THE AGENCY. THIS DOCUMENT DOES NOT CREATE ANY CONTRACTUAL RIGHTS OR ENTITLEMENTS. THE AGENCY RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REVISE THE CONTENT OF THIS DOCUMENT, IN WHOLE OR IN PART. NO PROMISES OR ASSURANCES, WHETHER WRITTEN OR ORAL, WHICH ARE CONTRARY TO OR INCONSISTENT WITH THE TERMS OF THIS PARAGRAPH CREATE ANY CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT.

I. Purpose

To provide guidance to employees on the subject of nepotism in order to comply with the requirements of the Ethics, Governmental Accountability and Campaign Reform Act of 1991 (Ethics Act) and to promote a positive public image and harmonious working environment.

II. Policy

It is the policy of the Agency to restrict the hiring of family members within the same program area or equivalent work unit.

In accordance with the Ethics Act, no employee may cause the employment, appointment, promotion, transfer, or advancement of a family member to a position in which the employee supervises or manages. Nor may employees participate in an action relating to the discipline of the employee's family member.

III. Definitions

A family member is defined as an individual who is a spouse, parent, brother, sister, child, mother-in-law, father-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, grandparent, or grandchild; or any other member of the individual's household as defined below:

- A child residing in an employee's household; or
- An individual claimed by the employee or employee's spouse as a dependent for income tax purposes.

The Agency has further defined a family member to include children, brothers, sisters, grandparents, grandchildren, nieces or nephews of an employee or an employee's spouse.

IV. Disclosure

Employees are required to disclose relationships covered by this policy to Human Resources whenever the relationship comes to exist. Employees have up to 90 days after marriage to find employment in either a suitable unit within the Agency or outside the Agency. An

employee's failure to disclose such information can lead to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

**SOUTH CAROLINA PUBLIC EMPLOYEE BENEFIT AUTHORITY
PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE GUIDELINES POLICY**

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I. Policy

The South Carolina Public Employee Benefit Authority (PEBA or Agency) recognizes its continued responsibility to develop and administer appropriate disciplinary procedures in the interests of PEBA and its employees. Management efforts should be concentrated on preventing serious disciplinary problems from occurring or reoccurring rather than punishing employees. This disciplinary policy does not apply to probationary or other employees exempt from the State Employees Grievance Procedure Act (SEGPA), who may be disciplined at the agency's discretion.

Disciplinary problems should be handled by one or more of the following actions, but not necessarily in this order:

1. Informal Counseling
2. Oral Reprimand
3. Written Reprimand
4. Reassignment
5. Demotion
6. Suspensions During Investigation
7. Suspension
8. Termination

The appropriate discipline for any incident of misconduct is a matter for the Agency's management to determine in light of all surrounding circumstances. PEBA's Human Resources will consult with management as necessary in administering disciplinary action.

Disciplinary actions beyond an oral reprimand must be approved in advance by the Human Resources Director or designee. When misconduct does not result in immediate termination, an employee should be given notice that continued improper conduct could result in termination. The original of all disciplinary actions above oral reprimands should be transmitted to PEBA's Human Resources for inclusion in the employee's official personnel file.

Created 07/2012

APPROVED
HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION
Deather Pope
8/29/12

Any disciplinary action above informal counseling will be discussed with the Department Head or designee and the Human Resources Director or designee. The Human Resources Director or designee will seek approval of the Executive Director or designee on any disciplinary action above a written reprimand prior to effecting the action.

While an employee should sign disciplinary notices, his signature means only that he has received a copy and not that he agrees with the contents or the action taken. If the employee refuses to sign the disciplinary notice, another supervisory employee should sign as a witness that the employee received the disciplinary notice.

All covered employees may have the right to appeal certain disciplinary actions in accordance with PEBA's Grievance policy.

Employees, exempt from SEGPA, may be disciplined and/or terminated by the Department Head or designee at any time for any or no reason without recourse, and therefore, nothing in these disciplinary rules limits the Agency's discretion with respect to such employees. PEBA's Human Resources Director or designee must be consulted prior to terminating employees exempt from SEGPA.

All employees have access to a copy of the Employee Discipline Guidelines through the intranet or by contacting PEBA's Human Resources.

II. Forms of Disciplinary Action

1. Informal Counseling

To accomplish an informal counseling session, the supervisor holds a discussion with an employee in which he/she coaches the employee on the expected proper conduct. The supervisor should document any counseling session with the employee and be maintained in supervisory files.

2. Oral Reprimand

The discussion a supervisor holds with an employee in which he/she reprimands the employee for improper conduct. Ordinarily, an employee should receive an oral reprimand for relatively minor infractions involving inappropriate behavior, misconduct or violation of rules. The supervisor should inform the employee in private that an oral reprimand is being given and that the employee has the opportunity to correct the problem. The supervisor should further inform the employee that unless the problem is corrected, the employee will be subject to stronger disciplinary action up to and including termination. This original written documentation of the oral reprimand should be maintained in human resources, to be used to support future discipline, if needed. Documentation of oral reprimands does not become a part of the employee's official personnel file.

3. Written Reprimand

A written reprimand may be administered for the first offense of a more serious nature or for cumulative lesser violations. The nature of the offense, the dates of any counseling sessions and oral reprimands (if given) should be referenced in written reprimands. The employee should be told in the written reprimand that repetition of an offense or a more serious offense will warrant further disciplinary action. The employee should sign the written reprimand as having been received. The original written reprimand becomes a part of the employee's official personnel file and a copy of the written reprimand should be given to the employee.

4. Suspensions During Investigation

In some cases Human Resources may determine an investigatory suspension may be used by placing the employee on suspension during investigation without pay. Suspension during investigation means the interruption of active employment status (without compensation) pending investigation and a decision as to the extent of disciplinary action. Time off during an investigatory suspension may be considered part of the disciplinary suspension period if the investigation determines that disciplinary suspension is appropriate. If PEBA's investigation determines that the employee did not engage in misconduct, he may be entitled to reinstatement with back pay. An employee who is suspended may be terminated if, after a completed investigation, PEBA's Director or designee determines that termination is warranted.

5. Suspension

A suspension may be administered for the first offense of a serious nature or for cumulative lesser violations. The period of suspension will vary depending on the seriousness of the offense and/or if previous disciplinary actions have been issued. In cases where the suspension is based on cumulative, lesser violations, details of the previous disciplinary actions that led up to the suspension, including counseling sessions, shall be cited in the notice of suspension. The employee should be made aware of the reasons for the suspension and the consequences of future violations or problems. The employee should sign the notice of suspension as having been received. The original notice of suspension becomes a part of the employee's official personnel file and a copy of the suspension notice should be given to the employee. All suspensions are without pay. (Accrued annual, sick leave or other paid leave (comp time, holiday comp time, etc.) may not be used for a suspension). During the suspension period, the employee will not be allowed in the workplace, or to perform PEBA work.

6. Termination

If other discipline fails to eliminate behavioral problems or violations of rules or if an employee commits a serious infraction, the employee is subject to termination. Gross or aggravated misconduct may call for immediate termination without prior warning or attempts to correct the problem.

All pertinent facts should be considered in the evaluation of events leading up to the recommendation for termination. If it is determined that termination is proper and justified, a letter of termination should be prepared by the Human Resources Director for the Department Head or designee's signature.

7. Reassignments and Demotions

Reassignments and demotions may also be used in conjunction with the above sanctions or separately as a form of disciplinary action.

III. Procedures for All Actions Above Informal Counseling

1. The supervisor and/or manager will present all facts surrounding the incident to the Department Head or designee, with a recommendation for discipline.
2. The supervisor and/or manager will discuss the matter with the Human Resources Director or the designee. PEBA's Human Resources will coordinate the involvement of the Agency's General Counsel.
3. The Human Resources Director or designee will then discuss any actions above a written reprimand with the Executive Director or designee. The Department Head or his designee signs notifications of suspension, demotion and dismissal.
4. The above should occur prior to the action becoming effective unless, in management's sole discretion, circumstances dictate the immediate suspension of an employee pending the outcome of an investigation.
5. The Human Resources Director or the designee will approve the wording of written reprimands, suspensions, terminations or other disciplinary related documents.

IV. Conduct Which May Result in Disciplinary Action

It is not possible to list all conduct issues, which may result in disciplinary action. The list, which follows, includes some of the things which are unacceptable and which will result in disciplinary action or termination. The list is by no means complete.

The Agency Head or his designee has sole discretion to determine what degree of disciplinary action is appropriate. The Agency Head or his designee will take into account various factors such as the seriousness of the offense, the employee's prior disciplinary record, the employee's prior work record and the employee's length of service. Which factors are to be considered and the weight to be given them are matters resting in the discretion of management.

The following range of disciplinary actions in response to specific offenses is to be used only as a guideline and is not intended to be all-inclusive. At the occurrence of any of the listed offenses or any that are not listed, the Agency Head or his designee will determine the appropriate disciplinary action after the particular circumstances of the case have been carefully considered.

OFFENSE	RANGE OF DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS	
Unauthorized Leave	Written Reprimand to Termination	
Habitual Tardiness or Failure to Observe Assigned Work Hours	Oral Reprimand to Termination	
Abuse or Misuse of Leave	Written Reprimand to Termination	(Refer to Family and Medical Leave Act and Americans With Disabilities Act)
Excessive Absenteeism	(To be used for employees who become unreliable because of frequent absenteeism, even if for good and sufficient reasons. Termination should be preceded by oral counseling in an attempt to inform the employee of the problem. Refer to Family and Medical Leave Act and Americans With Disabilities Act)	
Leaving Work Station Without Authorization	Oral Reprimand to Termination	
Reporting to Work Under the Influence of Alcohol	Suspension to Termination	(Refer to Section 8-11-110 of the SC Code of Laws; Act on Alcoholism)
Drinking Alcoholic Beverages on the Job	Termination	(Refer to Section 8-11-110 of the SC Code of Laws; Act on Alcoholism)
Reporting to Work Under the Influence Of Drugs	Suspension to Termination	
Possessing or Using Illegal Drugs on the Job	Termination	
Insubordination	Written Reprimand to Termination	

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OFFENSE	RANGE OF DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS
Falsification of Records or Documents	Suspension to Termination
Stealing/Theft	Termination
Negligence	Oral Reprimand to Termination
Willful Violation of Written Rules Regulations or Policies	Written Reprimand to Termination
Unauthorized Use of State Equipment or Property	Oral Reprimand to Termination
Destruction or Misuse of Property or Equipment	Written Reprimand to Termination
Unauthorized Solicitation or Sales on State Premises	Oral Reprimand to Termination
Unauthorized Possession of Firearms on the Job	Termination
Unauthorized Distribution of Written, Printed or Electronic Material of Any Kind	Written Reprimand to Termination
Sleeping While on Duty	Written Reprimand to Termination
Gambling	Written Reprimand to Termination
Offensive Use of Profane/Abusive Language to Others	Written Reprimand to Termination
Loafing	Oral Reprimand to Termination
Interference With Other Employee's Work	Oral Reprimand to Termination
Working on Personal Jobs During Work Hours	Oral Reprimand to Termination

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OFFENSE	RANGE OF DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS	
Excessive Use of Telephone or E-mail for Personal Matters	Oral Reprimand to Termination	
Defacing State Property	Written Reprimand to Termination	
Harassment	Written Reprimand to Termination	(Refer to Anti-Harassment Policy)
Conviction of a felony	Termination	
Conviction of a Misdemeanor	Oral Reprimand to Termination	
Discourteous treatment of visitors and/or customers	Oral Reprimand to Termination	
Failure to maintain satisfactory or harmonious working relationships with employees or supervisors	Oral Reprimand to Termination	
Improper conduct or conduct unbecoming a state employee	Written Reprimand to Termination	
Willful false statements to a supervisor	Suspension to Termination	
Misrepresentation of Facts	Written Reprimand to Termination	
Bullying and Workplace Violence	Suspension to Termination	(Refer to Workplace Violence Policy)
Releasing Confidential Information or Electronic Material	Written Reprimand to Termination	
Engaging in Incompatible Employment or Serving In a Conflicting Interest	Written Reprimand to Termination	
Gross Misconduct	Suspension to Termination	

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OFFENSE	RANGE OF DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS
Any accumulation of 3 offenses within a period of 1 year where the offense warrants a written reprimand as a minimum of the range	Suspension to Termination

The state and federal laws referenced above are not all-inclusive in administering discipline.

V. Substandard Work Performance

When an employee's work performance falls below performance requirements, a Warning Notice of Substandard Performance may be necessary. In cases of substandard work performance, the Employee Performance Management System (EPMS) Policy should be followed.

VI. Abandonment of Position

An employee who voluntarily fails to report to work for three consecutive workdays and fails to contact the appropriate supervisory authority during this time will be considered to have voluntarily resigned from PEBA. The resignation is automatically accepted. A voluntary resignation is not a grievable issue.

VII. Employee Comments

The employee may attach additional comments to any disciplinary action, if desired, within two weeks from the date of the disciplinary action.

Preface

This policy establishes a standard for the approval and use of removal media that contains or accesses information resources at the South Carolina Retirement Systems.

Document Control Information

TITLE	Removable Media Policy
PROCEDURE AREA	IT Security Policy
OWNER	Network Security Administrator
SUBMITTER	Greg Meetze

Revision History

Rev.	Approval date	Author	Section	Description of change
1.0			All	Initial release
2.0		G. Meetze	4.2.1	Greg Meetze removed second bullet exception section referring to non-personally identifiable information
2.0		G. Meetze	4.1	Added the reference to 8416
2.0		G. Meetze	4.3	Removed division director reference; removed whether encryption was used; and added date to reflect the exact date and time.
2.0		G. Meetze	5.0	Replaced section with the Retirement Systems' current disciplinary action statement
3.0		M. Lightle	All	Edited for consistency in division style

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1. Overview

The use of removable media is a critical tool for conducting business operations for the South Carolina Retirement Systems (Retirement Systems). The use of this type of media represents a high security risk for the Retirement Systems and should be closely monitored and controlled.

2. Purpose

This policy establishes a standard for the approval and use of removal media that contains or accesses information resources at the South Carolina Retirement Systems.

3. Scope

The scope of this policy includes, but is not limited to portable drives, data keys/USB keys/thumb drives, writable CD/DVD media, and tapes.

4. Policy

4.1. Approval

Authorization from the Information Technology (IT) Department must be received via Form 8416 and documented prior to removable media being issued and used to store Retirement Systems' data and/or removable media accessing any information resources at the Retirement Systems.

4.2. Encryption

Use of encryption is required for any removable media that is capable of storing Retirement Systems' data. This media will be provided to authorized Retirement Systems personnel by the IT Department. The employee receiving the media device will be required to sign it out and instructed on how to properly use the media device.

Approved Exceptions:

- Media used to store data such as hardware drivers, system manuals, system upgrades, and other related items that do not include Retirement Systems personally identifiable information or other sensitive data.

4.3. Loss of Media

In the event that any removable media is lost or misplaced that contains Retirement Systems personally identifiable information or other sensitive data, the IT Department or other department head must be notified within two hours. The contacted individual should be provided with the type of media, the contents on the media, and the exact date and time of the loss.

4.4. Disposal

All removable media must be disposed of in accordance with Retirement Systems' policies.

5. Enforcement

Any violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action.

**SOUTH CAROLINA PUBLIC EMPLOYEE BENEFIT AUTHORITY
PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE GUIDELINES POLICY**

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I. Policy

The South Carolina Public Employee Benefit Authority (PEBA or Agency) recognizes its continued responsibility to develop and administer appropriate disciplinary procedures in the interests of PEBA and its employees. Management efforts should be concentrated on preventing serious disciplinary problems from occurring or reoccurring rather than punishing employees. This disciplinary policy does not apply to probationary or other employees exempt from the State Employees Grievance Procedure Act (SEGPA), who may be disciplined at the agency's discretion.

Disciplinary problems should be handled by one or more of the following actions, but not necessarily in this order:

1. Informal Counseling
2. Oral Reprimand
3. Written Reprimand
4. Reassignment
5. Demotion
6. Suspensions During Investigation
7. Suspension
8. Termination

The appropriate discipline for any incident of misconduct is a matter for the Agency's management to determine in light of all surrounding circumstances. PEBA's Human Resources will consult with management as necessary in administering disciplinary action.

Disciplinary actions beyond an oral reprimand must be approved in advance by the Human Resources Director or designee. When misconduct does not result in immediate termination, an employee should be given notice that continued improper conduct could result in termination. The original of all disciplinary actions above oral reprimands should be transmitted to PEBA's Human Resources for inclusion in the employee's official personnel file.

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Any disciplinary action above informal counseling will be discussed with the Department Head or designee and the Human Resources Director or designee. The Human Resources Director or designee will seek approval of the Executive Director or designee on any disciplinary action above a written reprimand prior to effecting the action.

While an employee should sign disciplinary notices, his signature means only that he has received a copy and not that he agrees with the contents or the action taken. If the employee refuses to sign the disciplinary notice, another supervisory employee should sign as a witness that the employee received the disciplinary notice.

All covered employees may have the right to appeal certain disciplinary actions in accordance with PEBA's Grievance policy.

Employees, exempt from SEGPA, may be disciplined and/or terminated by the Department Head or designee at any time for any or no reason without recourse, and therefore, nothing in these disciplinary rules limits the Agency's discretion with respect to such employees. PEBA's Human Resources Director or designee must be consulted prior to terminating employees exempt from SEGPA.

All employees have access to a copy of the Employee Discipline Guidelines through the intranet or by contacting PEBA's Human Resources.

II. Forms of Disciplinary Action

1. Informal Counseling

To accomplish an informal counseling session, the supervisor holds a discussion with an employee in which he/she coaches the employee on the expected proper conduct. The supervisor should document any counseling session with the employee and be maintained in supervisory files.

2. Oral Reprimand

The discussion a supervisor holds with an employee in which he/she reprimands the employee for improper conduct. Ordinarily, an employee should receive an oral reprimand for relatively minor infractions involving inappropriate behavior, misconduct or violation of rules. The supervisor should inform the employee in private that an oral reprimand is being given and that the employee has the opportunity to correct the problem. The supervisor should further inform the employee that unless the problem is corrected, the employee will be subject to stronger disciplinary action up to and including termination. This original written documentation of the oral reprimand should be maintained in human resources, to be used to support future discipline, if needed. Documentation of oral reprimands does not become a part of the employee's official personnel file.

3. Written Reprimand

A written reprimand may be administered for the first offense of a more serious nature or for cumulative lesser violations. The nature of the offense, the dates of any counseling sessions and oral reprimands (if given) should be referenced in written reprimands. The employee should be told in the written reprimand that repetition of an offense or a more serious offense will warrant further disciplinary action. The employee should sign the written reprimand as having been received. The original written reprimand becomes a part of the employee's official personnel file and a copy of the written reprimand should be given to the employee.

4. Suspensions During Investigation

In some cases Human Resources may determine an investigatory suspension may be used by placing the employee on suspension during investigation without pay. Suspension during investigation means the interruption of active employment status (without compensation) pending investigation and a decision as to the extent of disciplinary action. Time off during an investigatory suspension may be considered part of the disciplinary suspension period if the investigation determines that disciplinary suspension is appropriate. If PEBA's investigation determines that the employee did not engage in misconduct, he may be entitled to reinstatement with back pay. An employee who is suspended may be terminated if, after a completed investigation, PEBA's Director or designee determines that termination is warranted.

5. Suspension

A suspension may be administered for the first offense of a serious nature or for cumulative lesser violations. The period of suspension will vary depending on the seriousness of the offense and/or if previous disciplinary actions have been issued. In cases where the suspension is based on cumulative, lesser violations, details of the previous disciplinary actions that led up to the suspension, including counseling sessions, shall be cited in the notice of suspension. The employee should be made aware of the reasons for the suspension and the consequences of future violations or problems. The employee should sign the notice of suspension as having been received. The original notice of suspension becomes a part of the employee's official personnel file and a copy of the suspension notice should be given to the employee. All suspensions are without pay. (Accrued annual, sick leave or other paid leave (comp time, holiday comp time, etc.) may not be used for a suspension). During the suspension period, the employee will not be allowed in the workplace, or to perform PEBA work.

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6. Termination

If other discipline fails to eliminate behavioral problems or violations of rules or if an employee commits a serious infraction, the employee is subject to termination. Gross or aggravated misconduct may call for immediate termination without prior warning or attempts to correct the problem.

All pertinent facts should be considered in the evaluation of events leading up to the recommendation for termination. If it is determined that termination is proper and justified, a letter of termination should be prepared by the Human Resources Director for the Department Head or designee's signature.

7. Reassignments and Demotions

Reassignments and demotions may also be used in conjunction with the above sanctions or separately as a form of disciplinary action.

III. Procedures for All Actions Above Informal Counseling

1. The supervisor and/or manager will present all facts surrounding the incident to the Department Head or designee, with a recommendation for discipline.
2. The supervisor and/or manager will discuss the matter with the Human Resources Director or the designee. PEBA's Human Resources will coordinate the involvement of the Agency's General Counsel.
3. The Human Resources Director or designee will then discuss any actions above a written reprimand with the Executive Director or designee. The Department Head or his designee signs notifications of suspension, demotion and dismissal.
4. The above should occur prior to the action becoming effective unless, in management's sole discretion, circumstances dictate the immediate suspension of an employee pending the outcome of an investigation.
5. The Human Resources Director or the designee will approve the wording of written reprimands, suspensions, terminations or other disciplinary related documents.

IV. Conduct Which May Result in Disciplinary Action

It is not possible to list all conduct issues, which may result in disciplinary action. The list, which follows, includes some of the things which are unacceptable and which will result in disciplinary action or termination. The list is by no means complete.

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OFFENSE	RANGE OF DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS	
Excessive Use of Telephone or E-mail for Personal Matters	Oral Reprimand to Termination	
Defacing State Property	Written Reprimand to Termination	
Harassment	Written Reprimand to Termination	(Refer to Anti-Harassment Policy)
Conviction of a felony	Termination	
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Engaging in Incompatible Employment or Serving In a Conflicting Interest	Written Reprimand to Termination	
Gross Misconduct	Suspension to Termination	

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When an employee's work performance falls below performance requirements, a Warning Notice of Substandard Performance may be necessary. In cases of substandard work performance, the Employee Performance Management System (EPMS) Policy should be followed.

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An employee who voluntarily fails to report to work for three consecutive workdays and fails to contact the appropriate supervisory authority during this time will be considered to have voluntarily resigned from PEBA. The resignation is automatically accepted. A voluntary resignation is not a grievable issue.

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The employee may attach additional comments to any disciplinary action, if desired, within two weeks from the date of the disciplinary action.

SOUTH CAROLINA RETIREMENT SYSTEMS

BUSINESS CASUAL DRESS POLICY

PURPOSE

This policy offers the opportunity for South Carolina Retirement Systems employees to dress in business casual attire during the work week.

POLICY

Traditional business attire or business casual attire is acceptable for South Carolina Retirement Systems staff Monday through Friday. Employees are responsible for ensuring that their attire projects a positive image to all customers, both internal and external, at all times.

GUIDELINES

Employees must use good judgment in determining what attire is appropriate to wear to the office. This policy provides for a relaxation of traditional business attire guidelines; however, it is not intended to allow attire which does not present a professional image of the South Carolina Retirement Systems.

- **Acceptable Attire**

Business casual attire encompasses many looks. However, for purposes of this policy, business casual attire means clothing that allows employees to feel comfortable at work yet is appropriate for an office environment. Business casual attire includes, but is not limited to: slacks, khakis, and chinos that are without tears or holes, sport shirts and blouses, skirts, dresses, Capri pants, and sweaters. Denim jeans and tennis shoes can be worn on Fridays provided they are clean and without tears or holes. (**Note: If it is necessary to wear tennis shoes Monday through Thursday for medical purposes, please provide medical documentation to the Human Resources Manager**). Leggings may also be worn but only under skirts and dresses. Men must wear collared or crew neck shirts (no T-shirts of any kind) Monday through Friday. Clothing must be neat and clean.

- **Unacceptable Attire**

Unacceptable attire includes, but is not limited to: wind suits, sweatpants, sweatshirts, or workout attire; hospital scrubs, shorts, Bermuda shorts, T-shirts, beach attire, halter, tank or midriff tops; dresses or skirts that are excessively short, spandex pants, flip flops, flip-flop type shoes (Rainbows, etc.). Skirts and dresses must not be shorter than one inch to two inches above the knee standing and Capri pants must be below the knee. Capri pants that are at knee length or shorter are unacceptable. Also unacceptable is clothing that is sheer or otherwise revealing, distracting, or provocative.

- **Choice**

This policy does not require employees to purchase or wear business casual attire. Employees who prefer to dress in traditional business attire should feel free to do so.

**SOUTH CAROLINA RETIREMENT SYSTEMS
BUSINESS CASUAL DRESS POLICY
(CONTINUED)**

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Employees should consider each day's activities when determining what to wear. Employees hosting or attending meetings with customers, vendors, employees from another office, agency or the public should refrain from wearing casual attire.

Managers and supervisors can specify traditional business attire based on the business needs of their department.

Managers and supervisors are responsible for interpreting and enforcing this policy. Any employees whose appearance is not appropriate should be counseled and informed that disciplinary action may be taken if attire is offensive, excessively distracting or in direct conflict with this policy.

EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIONS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT OF POLICY

I have read the South Carolina Retirement Systems' Casual Dress Policy and agree to abide by its terms and limitations.

I understand that this policy can be canceled at any time, for any reason or for no reason.

Employee Signature:_____ Date:_____

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**SOUTH CAROLINA PUBLIC EMPLOYEE BENEFIT AUTHORITY
WORKPLACE VIOLENCE POLICY**

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I. Policy

The SC Public Employee Benefit Authority has a zero tolerance policy regarding any type of harassment, intimidation, or workplace violence committed by or against employees or members of the public. The Agency is committed to providing a safe and healthy work environment.

II. Prohibited Conduct

Employees are prohibited from making threats or engaging in violent activities. Examples of prohibited conduct may include but are not limited to:

- Physical – the use of force in order to harm
- Threats – expressions of intent to inflict injury
- Harassment – words, gestures, and actions which tend to alarm, abuse, trouble or worry another person
- Property Damage – intentional damage to property owned or leased by the state, employees, visitors, or vendors
- Weapons – weapons of any kind are prohibited on premises and in possession of an employee during work time (exception for law enforcement)

III. Reporting Procedures

Employees should call 911 for all emergency situations before calling designated officials. Any dangerous or potentially dangerous situations should be reported immediately to a supervisor or Human Resources. Supervisors receiving a complaint or who has reason to suspect violence, threats, or harassment must notify Human Resources immediately.

All reported incidents will be investigated. Investigations will be conducted confidentially to the extent possible and information will be disclosed to others only on a need-to-know basis. Parties involved in a situation will be provided the appropriate assistance and resources and will be apprised of the results of the investigation.

IV. Prevention

Hiring – The Agency will conduct criminal background checks to reduce the risk of hiring individuals with a history of violent behavior.

Safety – Supervisors should regularly review the workplace to evaluate and identify any vulnerability to workplace violence or hazards. Necessary corrective action will be taken to reduce risks.

Awareness – While employees are not expected to be skilled at identifying potentially dangerous persons, they are expected to exercise good judgment and to inform Human Resources if they are aware of behavior which could be a sign of a potentially dangerous situation – such behavior includes:

- Obsession with weapons or bringing them to the workplace
- Displaying overt signs of extreme stress, resentment, hostility or anger
- Making threatening remarks
- Sudden or significant deterioration of performance
- Displaying irrational or inappropriate behavior
- Domestic violence situations

V. Enforcement

Threats, threatening conduct, or any other acts of aggression or violence in the workplace will not be tolerated. Any employee determined to have committed such acts will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination. Non-employees engaged in violent acts on the employer's premises will be reported to the proper authorities.