

FORSYTH COUNTY EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK



Note: For revisions after 6/30/11, each topic modified will reflect a revision date. Modifications prior to 6/30/11 can be tracked by viewing “Handbook Revisions” on FCNet.

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SECTION I: GENERAL INFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

This employee handbook summarizes the general rules, regulations, and policies of Forsyth County as they relate to those employees who are appointed by the Board of Commissioners and by the County Manager, as well as to those employees in the Public Health, Register of Deeds, Sheriff, Social Services and Tax Departments for whom and to the extent the Department Managers of said departments have adopted said rules, regulations and policies. No supervisor has the authority to depart from the County's established policies or those of their department.

Department Managers have the authority to establish rules, regulations, policies and expectations for their own department within the scope of those contained in this handbook. Examples include appropriate dress, attendance and flex time.

All County employees, except those employed by Social Services or Public Health, or who have an employment contract for a definite period of time, are considered to be at-will employees. The policies and procedures contained in this handbook are not intended to be and should not be construed as creating an employment contract. This handbook supersedes any prior version or edition of the Forsyth County Employee Handbook for current use.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Forsyth County Government is to help create a community that is safe and healthy, convenient and pleasant to live in, with educational and economic opportunities for everyone. We cooperate with many other public agencies and community organizations in this mission.

We provide certain services and functions that are responsibilities of all county governments, and other services that the Board of Commissioners has determined to be necessary and appropriate. We are committed to providing quality services, efficiently and effectively, with courteous attention to the opinions and needs of individual citizens.

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF FORSYTH COUNTY

Forsyth County began as a Moravian settlement in 1753 when Bishop August Gottlieb Spangenberg acquired a hundred thousand acre tract of land from Lord Granville, one of the lord proprietors of North Carolina. The Moravians called their land Wachovia after the Austrian estate of Count Nicholas Lewis von Zinzendorf, an early protector of the Moravian church.

After the two settlements of Bethabara and Bethania were established, the town of Salem was begun in 1766 as the central town in Wachovia. Salem grew rapidly both as a religious center and as a center for crafts and trades.

In 1849, the North Carolina legislature created the new County of Forsyth out of part of Stokes County. Forsyth County was named in honor of Colonel Benjamin Forsyth, a respected landowner in Stokes County. Colonel Forsyth distinguished himself in battle during the war of 1812 at Odelltown, Canada, where he was mortally wounded. In 1851, the town of Winston was named as the County seat. The Courthouse Square was laid one mile north of Salem Square with plans for the streets of the two towns to run together.

In 1949, Willie H. Johnson, Jr., a Carver High School student, designed the Forsyth County seal during a contest to celebrate the County's centennial.

Forsyth County has progressed from its rustic past to a modern community that offers a variety of services to its citizens.

DESCRIPTION OF FORSYTH COUNTY GOVERNMENT

The Forsyth County Board of Commissioners is composed of seven members elected by Forsyth County citizens for staggered four-year terms. At the first regular meeting in December each year, the Board elects a chair and vice-chair from among its members for a one-year term. Regular meetings are held at 6:00 p.m. on the second and fourth Mondays of the month. The Commissioners also meet for briefings at 2:00 p.m. on Thursday afternoons. The public is welcome to attend these meetings.

The Commissioners consider ordinances and resolutions that establish County policies and levy taxes. They also make appointments to boards, committees and commissions and set levels of service provided to Forsyth County residents. The County acts as a co-administrative unit with the State in the areas of public health, social services and education.

The Commissioners appoint a County Manager as the administrative head of Forsyth County Government. The County Manager supervises the day-to-day operations of all departments under the general direction of the Commissioners. Forsyth County Government has a broad scope of responsibilities that includes functions such as Animal Control, Interagency Communications, Emergency Services, Sheriff, Environmental Affairs, Public Health, Social Services, Youth Services, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Services, Public Library, Parks and Recreation, Housing, Budget and Management, Management Information Services, Finance, General Services, Human Resources, Attorney, Board of Elections, County Manager, Register of Deeds, Tax and school funding.

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NEWS MEDIA

Forsyth County has a policy of cooperation with all branches of the news media as they strive to provide citizens with an accurate account of the activities of County government. To ensure the consistency of any statements to the media, you are asked to refer all requests for information to your Department Manager.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

FIRST Line, a program residing in the Forsyth County Department of Social Services, provides a comprehensive information and referral database. If you have a question about where to go to obtain almost any kind of service in our community, give FIRST Line a call during regular business hours at 703-3000 or visit their website 24 hours a day at www.firstline.ws

SECTION II: PAY AND RELATED MATTERS

POSITION CLASSIFICATION PLAN

Forsyth County uses a job classification system which groups positions into broad classes based on similarity of duties, responsibilities, knowledge, skills and abilities required to do the work. Market reference points are then assigned to each job class based on annual survey data and additional internal analysis. The objectives of the classification plan are to:

- Provide a compensation structure based on job classes determined by compensable factors in conjunction with market reference points
- Provide compensation rewards based on performance
- Monitor internal equity and equal pay for equal work

There may be times when you are asked to complete a position description questionnaire. These questionnaires assist with developing job class specifications and ensuring that all jobs are classified correctly. The County uses a widely accepted classification methodology to determine which job class is appropriate for each position.

Up-to-date job descriptions are important because they:

- Provide a history of how a position develops
- Provide a basis for comparing positions to maintain an equitable salary structure
- Identify changes that may impact the classification of a position
- Clarify who is responsible for what within the work unit
- Help define levels of positions and their relationships

Some employees may be asked to participate in a job audit which means discussing their duties and responsibilities with a Human Resources Department staff member. The review is not designed to evaluate “you” the employee, only your duties and responsibilities.

Note: Only the Department Manager can request a classification change. Usually this involves using a vacant position in a different role.

Trainees

If you do not yet fully qualify for your position based on the minimum education and experience qualifications listed on the job class specification, you may be hired in a trainee status. Trainees are paid less than the hiring rate for their job class and are not eligible for official performance evaluations or pay for performance increases. Once you become fully qualified, your salary will be increased to the hiring rate for your job class and your evaluation date will be set at one year from your fully-qualified date. On your evaluation date, you will be eligible to receive a pay for performance increase.

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEM

Philosophy

Forsyth County's performance evaluation system is based on the belief that both you and your supervisor have a need to know how well you are performing compared to performance expectations. The performance evaluation system is designed to be a consistent mechanism for evaluating your performance as well as promoting your future personal and professional growth. It is designed to help you understand what is required in your job and the standards for performance. If you are uncertain about what is expected of you in your job, you should ask your supervisor.

When you are Evaluated

All full-time County employees and part-time employees with benefits will normally have a formal performance evaluation annually. These scheduled evaluations cover a full 12 months of work in a position. Your evaluation date will change if you are promoted or demoted and may change if you make a lateral change from one department to another. Your evaluation date will be adjusted (moved into the future) for any time spent on an unpaid leave of absence (other than military leave) or in disciplinary probation status. For example, if you go on an unpaid leave of absence for one month and your evaluation date is September 1, your evaluation date will be adjusted to October 1.

Although formal evaluations occur annually, you are encouraged to seek feedback from your supervisor on a regular basis throughout the year. Trainees do not receive formal performance evaluations.

How You Are Evaluated

All employees will be evaluated in the areas of attendance, relationship with coworkers, job knowledge and skills, customer service and workplace responsibility. Additional performance expectations may also be evaluated that are specific to your job class or to your particular job. Your supervisor will assign each of these performance expectations a weight according to how important they are to your job.

The three performance ratings are:

- Exceeds Expectations
- Meets Expectations
- Does Not Meet Expectations

The County's goal is for each employee to meet or exceed the expectations of their job. A description of performance expectations for each performance expectation is included on the evaluation form. Your supervisor will assess your performance for each of these performance expectations with a numerical rating. Your cumulative, weighted score will determine your overall performance rating as either "Exceeds Expectations," "Meets Expectations" or "Does Not Meet Expectations." Any pay increase is determined by this cumulative performance rating. Only performance ratings of "Meets Expectations" or "Exceeds Expectations" are eligible for pay increases, contingent upon available funding.

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Your Opportunity for Input

Forsyth County recommends that supervisors give employees the opportunity to have input into their evaluation. Prior to the supervisor writing the evaluation, many employees provide their supervisor with a list of things they feel they have accomplished during the evaluation period.

After your supervisor has reviewed your evaluation with you, you will have the opportunity to put your own comments on the performance evaluation form. You should keep in mind that, even though you may disagree with or dislike what your supervisor has written, it is their responsibility to evaluate you. You are welcome to have a copy of your evaluation after it is signed.

A difference of opinion or a mere disagreement with your supervisor over your performance appraisal is not a grievable issue. Please see the "Grievance Procedure" section of the Employee Handbook for more information on circumstances or situations that may be grievable.

Pay for Performance

The County's annual budget may allocate money for pay for performance increases. When money is allocated, if you are a full-time employee or part-time employee with benefits who meets or exceeds expectations, you will be eligible for an annual pay for performance increase on your appraisal date. Your pay for performance increase is directly tied to your overall performance appraisal rating and is awarded as a percentage of the Market Reference Point for your job. It is added to base pay if your salary is less than 130% of the Market Reference Point and is paid as a lump sum if your salary is over 130% of the Market Reference Point.

LONGEVITY PAY

Full-time employees who have been credited with 7 or more years of compensated full-time service with Forsyth County and are on the payroll as of November 30, will receive an annual lump-sum longevity payment in December. In addition, employees receive their longevity pay for the full year if they retire March 1 through December 1. A longevity payment is considered taxable income for the year in which it is received.

The longevity payment is based on years of credited compensated service with Forsyth County and is calculated as follows:

Employees completing 7 years of compensated, full-time service as of November 30 will receive a longevity payment of \$680. The longevity amount will then increase by \$40 for each year of full-time service above 7 years, up to a maximum longevity payment of \$2000.

Receipt of longevity pay is contingent on the Board of County Commissioners' approval or revision each fiscal year.

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PROMOTION

It is the County's policy to give current employees first consideration as applicants for promotional opportunities. Your capacity to assume greater responsibility through promotion is characterized by a willingness to learn and accept additional duties, a history of getting along with others, and working with exceptional efficiency. When you progress and develop, both you and the County benefit.

A new internal listing of vacancies is prepared weekly. Employees can access this listing on the County Intranet. Employees interested in applying have 5 working days to submit an "internal" application before a decision is made whether to seek outside applicants. Members of the public who are interested in working for Forsyth County, may view our external listing of vacancies and apply for a job online.

Internal candidates must meet the minimum job requirements. Employees under a written warning or whose most recent performance appraisal rating is "does not meet expectations" are not eligible for promotions or job transfers. If no internal applicant is selected or if external candidates are desired for comparative purposes, the job vacancy will be open for external applications.

In some situations, you may choose to apply for a position that would be a lateral transfer or demotion in order to pursue a different career path or enhance career potential. The best interests of the County and the employee are considered when reviewing these requests. A demotion will normally include a reduction in pay.

Promotions are job changes to positions with at least a 2.5% higher Market Reference Point. If you receive a promotion, you will normally receive a 5% increase in pay. Any additional increase will be based on factors such as the difference in Market Reference Points, how much training is necessary and the salaries and comparable knowledge, skills and abilities of other employees in the work unit and department.

Promotions and demotions and, in some cases lateral moves, change your appraisal date. This allows your next evaluation to review a full year of your performance in your new position.

If you accept a position that moves you into the departments of Social Services or Public Health, you will be required to serve a new probationary period under the State Personnel Act.

CHANGING HOURS WORKED IN A WORKWEEK

(Rev 10/3/11)

While most work schedules are 40 hours during the County's workweek, some work schedules exceed that by working an average of 42, 42.75 or 56 hours within the County's two-week pay period.

If you laterally move to a position in which you work on average in excess of 40 hours during the County's workweek, your base annual pay will stay approximately the same but your hourly rate will be changed to reflect the different number of hours you will be working annually.

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If you are promoted or demoted to a position which changes your average hours worked within a workweek, your current hourly rate will first be recalculated and then your salary adjustment will be calculated from the new hourly rate.

Example: John works in a position that has a 42.75 hour average workweek (2223 hours annually). He is receiving a 5% promotion to a different position that has a 40 hour average workweek (2080 hours annually). His current hourly rate is \$13.50 or \$30,000 annually. The promotion calculation would be as follows:

\$30,000 divided by 2080 (new annual hours) = \$14.42 (converts current annual to the correct hourly rate for the new average workweek)

\$ 14.42 times 1.05 = \$ 15.14 (new hourly rate plus 5% promotion)

\$ 15.14 times 2080 = \$31,491.20 (new annual salary including 5% promotion)

(See also Annual Leave, Sick Leave and Overtime Compensation Sections.)

PAY PERIODS

County employees are paid every other Friday, 26 times a year. For most County employees, the pay period ends at midnight on the Friday preceding a payday. If a regular payday falls on a holiday, employees will receive their pay on the last working day prior to the holiday.

Each employee will complete a payroll time sheet to record hours worked and leave taken during each pay period. The time sheet must be reviewed for accuracy and signed by the employee's immediate supervisor. Time will be recorded in 15-minute increments and must be rounded up or down to the nearest 15 minutes. Specific instructions on completing the time sheet are available from your supervisor or the Finance Department.

DIRECT DEPOSIT

Direct deposit is the method Forsyth County uses to pay employees. You have the option to deposit your pay into either a checking or savings account with most of the area financial institutions. The Human Resources Department staff will assist you with initial enrollment and with subsequent changes of banks or accounts. A confidential "Statement of Earnings & Deductions" is accessible each payday on FCNet under Employee Self-Service.

DEDUCTIONS FROM PAY

The following standard deductions are authorized by law to be deducted from your pay:

- FICA (Social Security and Medicare)
- State Income Tax

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- Federal Income Tax
- Garnishment/Wage Withholding
- Retirement Contribution

There are other deductions that only you may authorize. You must initiate any changes to the following deductions:

- Health Insurance
- Dependent Dental Insurance
- Supplemental Life Insurance
- Credit Union Savings or Loan Repayments
- United Way Contributions
- Arts Council Contributions
- 401(k) or 457 Deferred Compensation
- Medical or Day Care Reimbursement Accounts
- Short Term Disability Insurance

ON-CALL PAY

A few positions in the County are required to be available “on-call” after normal working hours. Check with your supervisor to obtain details about your department’s “on-call” policy.

FAIR LABOR STANDARDS ACT

It is the policy of Forsyth County to fully comply with the FLSA. All positions in the County are designated exempt or non-exempt under FLSA depending on whether they meet the requirements of the act. These designations have nothing to do with the importance of a position to the County.

Employees who are non-exempt must be paid overtime or granted compensatory time for hours over 40 worked each workweek. (See Overtime Compensation for more details). There are specific exceptions under the FLSA for law enforcement and fire fighting.

Employees who are exempt do not have to be paid overtime for hours over 40 worked each workweek. Forsyth County, as a public employer with accountability to taxpayers, requires that exempt employees who have exhausted all leave not be paid for hours not worked. This will happen even when the time not worked is less than a day.

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It is County policy to promptly investigate and correct any improper payroll deductions or other payroll practices that do not comply with the FLSA. If you believe that an improper payroll practice, such as an improper deduction from an exempt salary, has occurred, you are required to file a written complaint to the Human Resources Department. The report should provide the date the reduced paycheck was issued, the circumstance that led to the deduction. HR will see that the matter is appropriately reviewed. The employee will be reimbursed for the amount of any inappropriate deduction taken.

Nonexempt employees required to work when daylight savings time begins or ends will be paid for the hours actually worked. In the spring, employees will be paid one hour less when clocks are set forward one hour. Conversely, in the fall when clocks are set back one hour, employees will be paid for the extra hour. The extra hour is work time and included for purposes of calculating overtime.

OVERTIME COMPENSATION

Employees of the County are either exempt or non-exempt under the Fair Labor Standards Act. Your supervisor can tell you whether your particular position is exempt or non-exempt.

Exempt employees are expected to work a minimum of 40 hours per week and may work more than 40 hours when it is necessary to get the job done. An exempt employee will normally not be paid overtime or accrue compensatory leave. In unusual cases where overtime is specifically authorized in advance, exempt employees will accrue compensatory leave on an hour-for-hour basis.

Non-exempt employees must be compensated for all hours worked. However, no overtime shall be worked by a non-exempt employee except as authorized by the County Manager or his designees. Therefore, non-exempt employees are not to work through their lunch, begin working early or continue working past their scheduled work time unless specifically authorized by their supervisor.

Overtime work for non-exempt employees, when properly and sufficiently authorized in advance by the County Manager, shall be compensated by monetary payment at the rate of one and one-half times the regular rate of pay.

SECTION III: EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

INTRODUCTION

This portion of your Employee Handbook describes in general terms the benefit plans available to County employees. In most cases, benefits are described in more detail in the actual plan documents themselves. If there is a conflict between the description of benefits in the handbook and the plan documents, the description in the plan documents will control.

ELIGIBILITY FOR EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Full-Time Employees

If you are in a position that is budgeted as full-time with benefits, you are eligible for all the benefits described in this handbook, and work performed in this status is considered County service.

Part-Time Employees

Work performed in a part-time position without benefits is not considered County service. However, employment in this status does count toward FMLA eligibility. (Please refer to the Part-Time No Benefits Handbook on FCNet or the County's homepage.)

Work performed in a part-time position with benefits is considered County service. If you are in a position that receives part-time benefits, you are eligible for:

- Employee Assistance Program
- Shared Leave (see policy in this section of the handbook)
- Pro-rated annual leave
- Pro-rated sick leave
- Holiday pay for the hours you would normally work during official County holidays
- Pay for performance increases as described in Section II of the handbook
- Mandatory participation in the North Carolina Local Government Employees' Retirement System
- Optional participation in the 401(k) and/or 457 plan
- Optional participation in the Credit Union
- Optional participation in health insurance (at a higher premium)

HEALTH INSURANCE

(Revised 7/1/11)

Blue Cross/Blue Shield of North Carolina is the current administrator for the County's health insurance plan. The plan, which is available only to full-time employees and part-time employees with benefits and their eligible dependents, is summarized below. There is no limit or waiting period for coverage of pre-existing conditions.

The County pays a share of the premiums for both employees and their dependents. Eligible dependents include your legal spouse and your children (natural, adopted, foster and step-children) until their 26th birthday. Dependent children certified with a disability prior to reaching the limiting age may continue to be covered regardless of age. For information about adding and deleting dependents from health insurance, see the "Making Changes to Health or Dental Insurance" section.

Most routine questions about your health insurance coverage can be answered by referring to the Blue Book found on FCNet. If your questions are not answered in this handbook, visit the Blue Cross/Blue Shield website or call their customer service department at 1-877-258-3334. If you still have questions, please call the Human Resources Department.

Blue Cross/Blue Shield PPO Plan

The PPO plan has two levels of benefits within one plan for flexibility in meeting your family's medical needs. At any time that you need medical care, you can choose to use the In-Network coverage with its emphasis on preventive care and copayment structure. Alternatively, you can choose to go outside the network with higher out-of-pocket costs. More detailed information is available in the Blue Cross/Blue Shield Blue Book on FCNet or by calling the Human Resources Department.

Health Risk Assessment and Wellness Screening

Because Forsyth County is committed to helping employees take charge of their health, the County offers a voluntary, free and confidential Wellness Screening, Health Risk Assessment (HRA), and Wellness Coaching for employees participating in the County's health insurance.

The Health Risk Assessment is a health survey that you complete online.

The Wellness Screening includes:

- Height, weight and blood pressure
- A blood test to determine risk factors for heart disease, stroke, and diabetes
- A brief meeting with a personal Wellness Coach

Employees who complete **both** the Health Risk Assessment (HRA) and Wellness Screening will qualify for a discount to their bi-weekly health insurance premium.

Based on your Wellness Score from the HRA and the results of your screenings, you will be stratified into either the low, moderate, or high risk category. At your wellness screening you will meet briefly with your personal Wellness Coach to learn of your risk category and the actions required for ongoing premium discounts.

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You will receive an easy-to-read, comprehensive report with your laboratory results, descriptions of tests, and healthy tips. This information will be mailed to your home address and your individual results will not be shared with the County.

Your Confidentiality is Assured

All information gathered in the screening and the laboratory report is personal and confidential, as protected by federal law. Forsyth County will not have access to your individual results. We value your privacy and understand its importance. There are many steps in place to assure confidentiality. For more information, contact Human Resources at 703-2400.

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DENTAL INSURANCE

<u>TYPE OF CHARGE</u>	<u>BENEFIT REIMBURSEMENT</u>	<u>DEDUCTIBLES</u>
TYPE I & II (exams, cleanings, fillings & oral surgery)	70% during 1st calendar year 80% during 2nd calendar year 90% during 3rd calendar year 100% 4th calendar year on	\$50.00 lifetime per insured
TYPE III (dentures, crowns and bridges)	50% of UCR (usual, customary and reasonable)	\$50.00 per insured per calendar year
TYPE IV (orthodontics)	50% of UCR (usual, customary and reasonable)	NONE

The County's dental carrier is Ameritas. The dental plan is available only to full-time employees and their eligible dependents. Eligible dependents include your legal spouse and your unmarried children (natural, adopted, foster and step-children) until their 19th birthday, or until age 26 if dependent is a full-time student. Forsyth County pays the entire premium for employee coverage and one-half of the premium for dependent coverage.

For Type I & II services, an insured person must visit the dentist at least once per calendar year and have all prescribed treatment done in order to move up to the next higher benefit percentage. Combined benefits for Type I, II & III services are limited to \$1200 per insured person per calendar year. Orthodontic benefits have a lifetime maximum of \$1200 per insured person.

For dental benefit information, call Ameritas at 1-800-487-5553 or visit their website at www.ameritasgroup.com

MAKING CHANGES TO HEALTH OR DENTAL INSURANCE

Forsyth County Government has established a Section 125 Benefit Plan allowable by the IRS, which allows you to **avoid paying** state, federal and FICA taxes on your portion of the health and dental premiums. All full-time employees are automatically enrolled in this pre-tax premium plan. You must request and sign a waiver if you do not want to pay your premiums with pre-tax dollars. The Section 125 Plan also allows you the option to set up reimbursement accounts to pay for certain eligible medical and daycare expenses **tax-free**. (See Reimbursement Accounts section)

In exchange for this tax-favorable treatment, the IRS requires that you have a valid family status change in order to change the amount of your pre-tax premium or reimbursement account. Any change you request must also be consistent with the actual family status change that has occurred. Valid family status changes, as defined by the IRS, include:

- Change in legal marital status (marriage, divorce, legal separation, annulment, death of spouse)
- Change in number of tax dependents (birth, adoption, or placement for adoption, death)
- Change in work schedule (including reduction or increase in hours by employee, spouse, or dependent)
- Dependent satisfies or ceases to satisfy dependent eligibility requirement (attainment of age, student status, etc.)
- Change in residence or worksite of employee or dependent (moving out of HMO service area)
- Termination or commencement of employment by employee, spouse, or dependent
- Change in coverage of a spouse under another employer's plan
- Receipt of a legal court order specifically requiring insurance coverage for a dependent child

If you wish to make a change to health or dental coverage, you must complete and sign the appropriate paperwork within 31 days of one of the valid family status changes listed above. In most cases you will be required to provide written proof of the family status change. Because health and dental premiums are deducted in advance, if you do not complete the required paperwork at least one month in advance you will be required to pay missed premiums.

If adding a newborn, the paperwork should be completed a month in advance of the baby's due date even if you already have a family policy in effect. Call the Human Resources Department as soon as possible after the birth with the pertinent information.

During the annual open enrollment for Section 125 benefits, you may add or delete dependents without a valid family status change. (See Annual Open Enrollment for Section 125 Benefits section.)

ANNUAL OPEN ENROLLMENT FOR SECTION 125 BENEFITS

The annual open enrollment period for Section 125 benefits is normally held during the first few weeks of May. Section 125 benefits include health and dental insurance, and medical and daycare reimbursement accounts. For health and dental changes made during open enrollment, the new premium is deducted from the June paychecks with coverage changes effective July 1. Deductions for medical and daycare reimbursement accounts begin with the first paycheck in July with an effective date of July 1.

The following is a description of how the annual open enrollment impacts each Section 125 benefit:

Health Insurance

The annual open enrollment period is the only time you may add or delete eligible dependents to the health insurance with no valid family status change required. There is no limit or waiting period for coverage of pre-existing conditions.

Dental Insurance

During the annual open enrollment period, you may change your level of coverage (individual, individual + one, family) even if there has not been a family status change. However, for dependents added more than 31 days after first becoming eligible, the dental plan will only pay for cleanings, exams and fluoride applications for the first 12 months of coverage.

Reimbursement Accounts

Open enrollment is the time when you may enroll in medical or daycare reimbursement accounts (see below) for the coming year. Exception: You may enroll in a daycare reimbursement account or a medical reimbursement account within 31 days of a valid family status change. Reimbursement accounts are not automatically renewable from one plan year to the next and you must complete a new enrollment form during each open enrollment. (See Reimbursement Accounts section below)

REIMBURSEMENT ACCOUNTS

Full-time Forsyth County employees are eligible to participate in a benefit plan called Reimbursement Accounts. These accounts are allowed under Section 125 of the IRS Code and give you the opportunity to pay eligible daycare and/or unreimbursed medical expenses (e.g., deductibles, co-pays, eyeglasses, etc.) tax-free. Enrollment is only for one year and can be renewed each year.

You may enroll in a medical and/or daycare reimbursement account as a new employee, during the annual open enrollment period, or within 31 days of an applicable family status change. (See Making Changes to Health or Dental Insurance section for a list of valid family status changes.)

To participate, you need to carefully calculate your annual eligible expenses and then authorize pro-rated amounts to be deducted from your pay before state, federal or Social Security taxes are withheld. Then, after you have incurred eligible expenses, you will file claims for reimbursement from the account. Please note that you may not use funds from the daycare account to pay medical expenses and vice versa.

While these accounts provide significant tax-breaks, there are also some very strict IRS regulations governing these accounts. You must be conservative in calculating the amount you will deposit into a reimbursement account because any money left over in the account at the end of the plan year is forfeited. Careful planning will minimize your risk.

More detailed information about reimbursement accounts is available from the Human Resources Department.

COBRA CONTINUATION OF HEALTH/DENTAL INSURANCE

Forsyth County Government is covered under Public Law 99-272, Title X (COBRA), which requires employers sponsoring group health plans to offer employees and their families the opportunity to temporarily extend their health and/or dental coverage (called “continuation coverage”) at group rates in certain circumstances listed below. If you choose continuation coverage, Forsyth County will offer you coverage that is identical to the coverage being provided to current employees.

Your Rights as an Employee

If you are an employee of Forsyth County, covered by one of our group health plans, you have the right to choose continuation coverage for yourself and any covered dependents for up to 18 months if:

- Your employment is terminated for any reason other than gross misconduct
- Your work hours are reduced, causing you to be ineligible under the terms of the plan

EXCEPTION: The maximum continuation period may be extended to 29 months if the Social Security Administration determines you were totally disabled under Title II or XVI of the Social Security Act on the day of the qualifying event. If you qualify under these conditions, you must provide the Human Resources Department with a copy of the Social Security determination notice before the end of the initial 18-month period. This copy must be sent to the Human Resources Department within 60 days of the date of the determination notice.

Your Dependents’ Rights

If your dependents are covered by one of our group health plans, they have the right to choose continuation coverage for up to 36 months when any of the following events occur:

- Your death
- Your divorce or legal separation
- You become entitled to Medicare benefits
- Your dependent child ceases to be eligible under the terms of the plan due to age, marriage, etc.

Under the law, you, your spouse, or another family member has the responsibility to inform the Forsyth County Human Resources Department within 60 days of the event if a dependent becomes ineligible for coverage for any reason (e.g., divorce, legal separation, aging out, marriage, becoming eligible for Medicare at any age, etc.).

Cost of Continuation Coverage

You do not have to provide evidence of insurability to elect continuation coverage. However, if continuation coverage is elected, you will be responsible for paying 100% of the premium rates (including any portion that Forsyth County now pays for you). This will include an additional 2% administrative charge. Your premium rates are subject to change whenever Forsyth County’s premiums change. During open enrollment, you have the right to add or delete dependents.

Termination of Continuation Coverage

Continuation coverage may be terminated for any of the following reasons:

- Forsyth County no longer provides group health coverage for its employees.
- The premium for the continuation coverage is not paid within the required time frame.
- The continuing person becomes entitled to Medicare.
- The continuing person becomes covered by another group health plan due to their employment, remarriage, etc.

NOTE: If a continuing person becomes covered by another group health plan which has a waiting period for pre-existing conditions, that person will be allowed to remain on the County's group health plan until their new plan covers pre-existing conditions.

Conversion Privilege

If you elect continuation coverage for the maximum duration allowed by law, you will then have the right to convert to an individual health plan at the end of the continuation period without evidence of insurability.

Contact the Human Resources Department if you have questions about continuation coverage or need to inform us of a qualifying event.

LIFE INSURANCE

Basic Term Life Benefit

Forsyth County pays the full cost of a term life insurance benefit for each full-time employee in the amount of one and one-half times the annual salary rounded up to the nearest \$1,000. The coverage amount is based on annual salary and will increase as salary increases. Employees must pay FICA taxes on the premium amounts for employer-paid life insurance coverage in excess of \$50,000. The amount of employer-provided life insurance is reduced for active employees over age 69. See your life insurance certificate booklet for more information.

Employee Supplemental Term Life Insurance

If you are covered by the basic life insurance benefit provided by the County, then you are eligible to purchase additional term life insurance coverage in the amount of one, two, or three times your annual salary. The cost for this coverage is favorable because we can offer group rates.

Dependent Supplemental Term Life Insurance

If you are covered under the basic life insurance provided by the County, then you are also eligible to purchase term life insurance for your eligible dependents according to the schedule below. Eligible dependents include your legal spouse and unmarried children from birth to age 19 (or to age 26 if a full-time student). Dependent children with a certified disability may continue to be covered regardless of age.

FORSYTH COUNTY EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

Dependent Supplemental Term Life Insurance Schedule

SPOUSE COVERAGE	\$10,000 ON SPOUSE
SPOUSE PLUS COVERAGE	\$20,000 ON SPOUSE (medically underwritten)
CHILDREN COVERAGE	\$5,000 ON EACH CHILD

(Rates are available from the Human Resources Department)

Applications for employee supplemental term life or spouse coverage submitted more than 90 days after becoming eligible will normally be subject to medical underwriting and may or may not be approved. However, you can increase your coverage by one times your basic annual salary without evidence of insurability within 31 days of the following:

- Marriage or divorce
- Death of a spouse or dependent child
- Birth or adoption of a dependent child
- Change in employment status for you or your spouse

Conversion of Life Insurance

When your employment ends, you may purchase, without evidence of insurability, any non-term individual insurance policy in any amount up to the amount of your life coverage in effect on your last day of employment. You must apply within 31 days of the date you end employment. This option applies to Supplemental Life Insurance and Supplemental Dependent Life Insurance as well as Basic Life Insurance.

Portability of Life Insurance

When your employment ends, the portability provision allows you to continue your optional life or dependent life coverage. You must apply within 31 days of the date you end employment. Call the Human Resources Department for the provisions that apply.

Accelerated Benefits Option

Under the Accelerated Benefits Option, if you are diagnosed as having a terminal illness, you may be eligible to receive a portion of your group life benefits at that time. Call the Human Resources Department for more information.

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SHORT-TERM DISABILITY

Forsyth County offers a voluntary short-term disability policy with group rates to all full-time employees. This is an individual policy designed to provide you with a monthly income when you are totally disabled as a result of an off-the-job accidental injury or sickness. You can select benefits of 3 months or 6 months, and from \$400 to \$2000 a month with the maximum being 60% of your monthly salary. The premiums are payroll deducted monthly. New employees have 30 days from employment to enroll in this benefit with guarantee issue. You may apply for an increase or begin coverage at open enrollment, subject to medical underwriting. Open enrollment is also the only time you may decrease coverage. You may terminate coverage at any time. Maintaining short-term disability insurance does not provide additional job protection beyond the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Contact the Human Resources Department for detailed information.

RETIREMENT

Forsyth County is a participating member of the North Carolina Local Governmental Employees' Retirement System (NCLGERS). Participation is mandatory for full-time and part-time employees with benefits. Both you and the County contribute to the retirement system each payday. Your contribution to the retirement system is deducted before state and federal taxes are withheld and therefore your taxable income is reduced.

All of your accumulated sick leave in Forsyth County's system at the time you retire will be added to your service time for benefits computation. Therefore, saving sick leave can significantly increase retirement benefits. Employees who have in excess of 30 days annual leave at the time of retirement will have the excess converted to sick time which is added to the amount reported to the retirement system. If retiring, you may choose to use accrued annual leave during your last month of employment up to and including your last day, provided you work at least one (1) day in the month preceding your retirement date.

Retirement benefit payments are based on the number of years you have contributed to the system and your 4 consecutive years of highest annual salary. It is worth noting that, at the time of retirement, the lump sum you are paid for accrued annual leave is added to your last year of pay. Therefore, before retiring it can be to your advantage to accumulate leave up to the maximum of thirty days.

The first \$4,000 of retirement benefits you receive each year is exempt from North Carolina State taxation. All remaining benefits received at retirement are subject to normal taxation. If you had five years of participation in the retirement system by August 12, 1989 your entire retirement benefit is exempt from North Carolina State taxation.

If you terminate your employment before completing 5 years of participation in NCLGERS, you will receive only a refund of your contributions. After 5 years of participation in NCLGERS, you are vested and can receive your contributions plus interest upon termination. Once you are vested, you may also opt to leave your money in the retirement system and receive benefit payments when you qualify. NOTE: Early withdrawal of retirement contributions is subject to a 10% excise tax unless rolled over to another certified retirement plan.

FORSYTH COUNTY EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

After 5 years of participation in NCLGERS, you are eligible to apply for disability retirement benefits if you become totally and permanently disabled from your job.

For further information on the retirement program, please go to the NCLGERS website or call the Retirement System at 1-877-733-4191. The Retirement System web site provides a calculator for estimating your retirement. You can access it on the website by selecting “estimate your retirement”.

Service Retirement Procedure

If you are retiring under the provisions of the North Carolina Local Governmental Employees’ Retirement System (NCLGERS), your retirement must be effective on the first day of a month and you may not work or take paid leave on or after your retirement effective date. State law allows you to retire if the completed paperwork is received in Raleigh one day before the end of the month prior to the month you are retiring. However, for timely processing of your initial benefit payment, it is to your advantage to provide Human Resources with at least four months notice.

As soon as you make the decision to retire, you should contact the Human Resources department to notify them of your anticipated retirement date and to let them know how much accrued leave you plan to use prior to your retirement date. An appointment will be scheduled to sign your retirement paperwork and to discuss your post-retirement benefits. Human Resources will submit the required paperwork to the Retirement System on your behalf. As with resignations, a minimum of a two-week notice to your department of your intent to retire is considered appropriate.

Disability Retirement Procedure

If you are vested in the North Carolina Local Governmental Employees Retirement System (NCLGERS) and you become permanently and totally disabled from performing your job, you may apply for disability retirement, subject to the approval of the NCLGERS. New rules have been established by NCLGERS that may significantly reduce your disability income if they determine that you are able to perform any other kind of work. Please go to the NCLGERS website at www.myncretirement.com to review any and all information about disability retirement or call the NCLGERS at 1-877-627-3287.

When you authorize and submit an application for disability retirement, you are stating that you are no longer able to perform the essential functions of your job. The County deems your application for disability retirement to be a voluntary resignation effective the date you exhaust all accrued leave and FMLA, or the date your disability retirement has been both approved and is in effect, whichever occurs first. You will not be permitted to continue working after your retirement application has been submitted. However, you will be permitted to use the remainder of your paid sick and annual leave and any remaining unpaid Family and Medical Leave (FMLA), if properly certified.

Please see Section III, “Post-Retirement Benefit Options” to determine your eligibility for post-retirement health benefits. If you do meet the eligibility requirements to remain on the County’s health insurance after retirement, you must keep your health coverage in force until your disability retirement is approved, either by paying the appropriate premiums while on leave or by continuing coverage through COBRA once you have exhausted all leave and separate from service. If disability retirement is approved, you will be transferred back to the retiree health group and thereafter will pay the same premium as active employees.

FORSYTH COUNTY EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

To continue your life insurance benefits while using accrued leave or during unpaid FMLA leave, you will be required to pay only the employee share of the supplemental premiums and the County will continue to pay your basic life insurance premium. After you have exhausted all leave, you must keep your basic and any supplemental life insurance in force by paying any applicable life insurance premiums while your disability retirement is pending. If your non-payment causes your life insurance to lapse, it cannot be reinstated. If your disability retirement is approved, the County will begin paying the basic life insurance premium provided you kept the coverage in force. You must continue paying any supplemental life insurance premiums to keep that coverage in effect.

If notification is received that your disability retirement is not approved, your voluntary resignation will be deemed effective the date you exhausted all paid leave and FMLA. Continuation of health and dental insurance will be available only through COBRA. If you have kept your life insurance in force, you will have the opportunity to convert the coverage to permanent life insurance.

POST-RETIREMENT BENEFIT OPTIONS

Health Insurance

If you qualify to retire under the guidelines of the North Carolina Local Governmental Employees' Retirement System, and you were employed prior to July 1, 2007, Forsyth County allows you to continue your health insurance at the same premium as active employees until you become eligible for Medicare. If you became employed on or after July 1, 2007, the eligibility requirement to participate in Forsyth County's post-retirement health insurance plan is to attain a cumulative total of at least twenty years of service with Forsyth County. For disability retirements, eligibility to continue County health coverage is contingent upon County Human Resources receiving the official notification that your disability retirement has been approved while you are still an active employee or in an approved leave status.

You may continue to cover eligible dependents who were on your policy the day before you retired. Although you may add dependents at any open enrollment prior to your retirement date, no one may be added to your policy after your retirement. A spouse or dependent removed from your policy for any reason may not be reinstated. A spouse or dependent who is still covered when you turn 65 or otherwise become entitled to Medicare, will be eligible to continue coverage for up to 36 months under the COBRA law. (See COBRA Continuation of Health/Dental Insurance section.) Health insurance premiums will be deducted from your retirement check beginning the second month after retiring.

Your dependents become ineligible for health care coverage when you die, become eligible for Medicare; or your dependent becomes eligible for Medicare; or upon divorce or legal separation; or upon loss of eligible dependent status under the terms of the plan. When any of these events occur that do not result in the dependent having other health care coverage, the dependent will be eligible for COBRA health care coverage for 36 months. Under COBRA, a dependent can continue on Forsyth County's health insurance by paying the total cost of the coverage. This will include a 2% administrative fee.

FORSYTH COUNTY EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

Life Insurance

For retirements other than disability, your employer-provided group term life insurance will end at retirement. However, you have the option to convert to an individual, non-term life insurance policy if you apply within 31 days from the date you end employment or retirement. (See Life Insurance section on converting or porting coverage.)

For disability retirements, your employer-provided life insurance will be continued at the County's expense, subject to the age reductions described in the policy booklet. If you retire on disability, you may keep your supplemental life insurance in effect by continuing to remit the applicable premium to Forsyth County. This benefit will end should your disability retirement status end. Employees who retire with a service retirement who subsequently convert to a disability retirement will not be eligible for the County-provided life insurance continuation.

The County provides a \$2,000 death benefit for all employees retiring with a service retirement and at least 15 years of full-time Forsyth County service.

FORSYTH COUNTY EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

LEAVE WITH PAY

Annual Leave

You are provided with annual leave that you may take subject to the approval of your supervisor. New full-time employees (not those being re-employed --see Section IV, Re-employment), begin their County employment with an advance of 6 days of annual leave. The regular accrual of annual leave for full-time employees begins the first pay period following the employee's 6 month anniversary date according to the schedule below. New part-time employees with benefits begin accruing pro-rated annual leave in direct proportion to their workweek each pay period. They are not advanced any leave.

Increase in accrual rates will be effective beginning with the first pay period following completion of 4, 7, 12 and 17 years of service.

ANNUAL LEAVE ACCRUAL SCHEDULE (40 HOUR WEEK)

<u>Years of Service</u>	<u>Earned Days</u>	<u>*Earned Hours</u>
7th month - end of first year	6	48
2nd year through 4th year	12	96
5th year through 7th year	14	112
8th year through 12th year	17	136
13th year through 17th year	20	160
18th year and after	23	184

NOTE: If you are a non-exempt, full-time employee whose regular workweek exceeds 40 hours, your annual leave will be calculated in direct proportion to your work week. However, if your workweek changes, the sick and annual leave hours you have accumulated will be converted accordingly. The number of days you have earned remains the same.

If you are a full-time employee, your leave balance may exceed 30 days during the calendar year. Annual leave in excess of 30 days will be converted to regular sick leave each year at the end of the pay period that includes January 1st. Converted sick leave can be used the same as any other sick leave and is eligible to be reported to the retirement system. Annual leave in excess of 30 days will also be converted to sick leave at the time of retirement. If you are a part-time employee with benefits, no more than 240 hours may be carried forward to the next calendar year.

Employees whose County employment is terminated within their first 6 months will not be paid for any remaining advanced annual leave. For employees with more than 6 months of service, no more than 30 days of annual leave will be paid out if you separate from service for any reason, including retirement or death.

ANNUAL LEAVE - YEAR END MAXIMUM

<u>Work Week</u>	<u>Maximum Hours</u>
40	240
42	252
42.75	256.50
56	336

FORSYTH COUNTY EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

Holidays

Full-time employees have the following paid holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King's Birthday
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Day (plus 1 1/2 days as determined by the County Manager)
- One additional day designated by the County Manager (normally the day after Thanksgiving)

If a holiday falls on Saturday, the previous Friday will be observed. If a holiday falls on Sunday, the following Monday will be observed.

If you are a non-exempt, full-time employee whose regular workweek exceeds 40 hours, you will earn holiday leave in direct proportion to your work schedule. If your workweek changes, your accrual rate will change but your existing holiday balance will not be affected. If you are a part-time employee with benefits, you will be paid for the hours you would normally be scheduled to work during official County holidays.

Employees required to work on an observed holiday will receive an alternate day off with pay, on an hour-for-hour basis.

County employees who accrue holiday leave within any 12 month period of November 1st through October 31st must use that leave within that same 12 month period. Each year at the end of the pay period that includes October 31st, all unused holiday leave will be forfeited.

Employees are required to use accumulated holiday leave before using annual leave at all times.

Sick Leave

Sick leave benefits are a privilege and not a right that an employee may demand. New full-time employees (not including those being re-employed) begin their County employment with an advance of 6 days of sick leave. The regular accrual of sick leave will begin the first pay period following the employee's six-month anniversary date. New part-time employees with benefits will begin accruing sick leave immediately but will not be advanced leave. After the first 6 months, all full-time employees accrue sick leave at a rate of 12 days per year.

Non-exempt, full-time employees whose regular workweek exceeds 40 hours per week and part-time employees with benefits who work less than 40 hours will earn sick leave in direct proportion to their workweek. However, if your workweek changes, the sick and annual leave hours you have accumulated will be converted accordingly. The number of days you have earned remains the **same**.

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There is no limit to the number of sick leave days an employee may accrue. NOTE: At the end of the first pay period of the calendar year, annual leave in excess of 30 days will be converted to sick leave.

Sick leave may be used for the following purposes for you or your family member. For the purposes of this sick leave policy, "family members" will normally mean your parents, spouse, and children.

- Your personal illness, injury, or disability (including maternity for the period of actual disability resulting from childbearing and subsequent recovery)
- Illness or injury of a family member when your care is required
- Required physical or dental examinations or treatments for you or a family member
- Death of a family member (See Funeral Leave section)

If you must be absent unexpectedly due to a personal or family illness or injury, you need to notify your supervisor within 30 minutes of your normal reporting time. If you are on annual leave and become sick, your supervisor may allow you to use sick leave if you would have been too ill to report to work for that day. Your supervisor may require you to provide a written statement from a health care provider documenting your necessary absence and your ability to resume your duties.

If you resign, retire or are dismissed from County employment, you will not be paid for accrued sick leave. (See End of Employment section.) However, if you retire under the provisions of the North Carolina Local Governmental Employees' Retirement System (NCLGERS), unused sick leave may be added to your service time for benefits computation.

Transfer of Sick Leave

Employees hired or re-employed into a position with benefits after February 5, 2000, may transfer to the County hour-for-hour their unused sick leave accumulated from their previous employer, if that employer participates in the North Carolina Retirement System. The transfer of sick leave is contingent upon the employee having no longer than a one-year break in the Retirement System and Human Resources receiving sick leave verification directly from the previous employer. Transferred sick leave can be used by employees when needed and is eligible to be reported to the Retirement System at retirement.

Maternity Leave

Employees needing maternity leave who are eligible for Family and Medical Leave (FMLA) should review that topic later in Section III. The following policy is applicable only to employees who are not eligible for Family and Medical Leave (FMLA). You should request maternity leave in writing to your Department Manager as much in advance as possible, giving the projected dates of your requested medical leave and also including your request for any additional paid or unpaid leave of absence (up to six weeks) that extends beyond the period of actual disability resulting from childbirth or upon the adoption of a child.

You may use accrued sick leave and annual leave (in that order) for the period of actual disability as a result of childbearing and subsequent recovery. When adopting a child, a physician may designate a period of time that is medically necessary for the care of the child that would be covered by sick leave.

FORSYTH COUNTY EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

Paternity Leave

Employees desiring paternity leave who are eligible for Family and Medical Leave (FMLA) should review that topic later in Section III. The following policy is applicable only to employees who are not eligible for Family and Medical Leave (FMLA). You should request paternity leave in writing to your Department Manager as much in advance as possible, giving the projected dates of your requested leave, whether paid or unpaid, following the birth of your child or upon the adoption of a child.

In accordance with the County's sick leave policy, you may use accrued sick leave for the period of time a physician certifies that your care is needed to attend to the "medical" needs of your spouse and/or child. When adopting a child, a physician may designate a period of time that is medically necessary for the care of the child that would be covered by sick leave. Additional paternity leave beyond that which is medically necessary must be charged to annual or holiday leave, if available. Once all paid leave is exhausted, you may request a leave of absence without pay for up to six weeks (See Leave of Absence Without Pay).

Funeral Leave

You may request a maximum of 3 days of accrued sick leave in the event of a death in the family. Any additional time off will be charged as annual leave if such leave is available or sick leave with a doctor's statement. When there is a death of a County employee every effort will be made to allow as many employees as possible to attend the funeral. Leave would normally not be charged.

For purposes of funeral leave, "family member" will normally mean parent, spouse, child, sibling, grandparent, grandchild or parental guardian of you or your spouse. Also included are the step and half relationships of the above and people living within the same household.

Civil Leave

Juror: Time spent serving on jury duty during your regularly scheduled work day shall be with pay and without charge to accrued leave until released from duty by the presiding judge. You are expected to return to work if released from jury duty prior to the end of your scheduled workday, unless impractical and excused from returning to work by your supervisor. You may keep all jury fees received.

Witness or Attendance – County Business: You shall receive your normal salary and no leave shall be charged for the time actually required to appear at state and federal proceedings, including the North Carolina Office of Administrative Hearings ("OAH"), if subpoenaed by the County, if participation is requested by the County or if you are testifying in connection with your job duties as a County employee.

Subpoenaed Witness - Non-County Business: If you are subpoenaed to attend a state or federal proceeding during your regularly scheduled work day to give testimony which is not in connection with your job duties, no leave shall be charged and you shall receive regular pay up to a maximum of eight (8) hours. Thereafter, the County's normal leave policies will apply. You may keep any witness fees received.

FORSYTH COUNTY EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

Attendance-Legal Proceeding-Personal Business: If your attendance in court is required to resolve a personal matter, then the County's usual and customary leave policies will apply.

Notification: You must present any summons (including jury duty) or subpoena to your supervisor on your first working day after receiving notice. Time spent away from work due to any valid subpoena is an excused lawful absence.

Hours paid under the Civil Leave policy will not be considered as hours worked for purposes of calculating overtime.

Blood Donation Leave

Donating blood is important and your supervisor will normally permit you to take a reasonable amount of time off with pay to perform this community service.

UNPAID LEAVE

Leave Of Absence Without Pay (LOAWP)

Any employee in a position with benefits is eligible to request a Leave of Absence Without Pay (LOAWP). A LOAWP is not a right or entitlement. It is solely granted at the discretion of your department manager following a review of your work record and an assessment of the effect on business operations. Prior to all paid leave and any unpaid FMLA being exhausted, you may submit a "Request for Leave of Absence Without Pay" form to your Department Manager. You may request a LOAWP for a specified block of time, normally ranging from a minimum of one (1) week to a maximum of 6 weeks. The request form must indicate your intention and presumed ability to return to work at the end of the leave of absence.

Within any twelve month period, no employee may be approved for more than two (2) occurrences of LOAWP and no employee may exceed the cumulative total of six (6) weeks. A LOAWP may not be requested or taken on an intermittent basis. A LOAWP can be requested for reasons of personal or family illness, maternity or paternity leave or completing education. This is in addition to the 12 weeks of protected leave discussed in the section on FMLA, if applicable. Requests for reasons other than those listed above must be approved by the County Manager and will only be granted for reasons deemed in the best interest of both you and the County. It is County policy to provide a LOAWP to public health nurses who are in positions scheduled to work less than 12 months a year.

Your job will be held for you during an approved leave of absence. If you are unable to return to work at the end of an approved leave of absence or if your request is denied, your last day paid or your last day of FMLA, whichever is later, will be considered the end of your employment (a voluntary resignation) with Forsyth County unless some other mutually agreeable solution is identified that would allow you to keep working. If you are re-employed at a later date, you will receive credit for previous benefited service. (See Section on Re-employment.)

FORSYTH COUNTY EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

No benefits accrue (e.g. paid sick and annual leave, holidays, retirement) during a LOAWP. You will be required to pay 100% of the premium rates for health, dental and life insurance benefits (including any portion that Forsyth County now pays for you) for any pay period in which you have no hours worked or paid. You should contact the Human Resources Department to arrange for continuing your insurance benefits. Upon your return to work, your evaluation date and service date will be adjusted to reflect your unpaid leave of absence.

For short-term absences of a week or less, the County's Voluntary Furlough may be an option to consider, subject to the policy's terms and conditions described in Section III, Unpaid Leave, Voluntary Furlough Procedure in the Employee Handbook.

Voluntary Furlough Procedure

I. Definition of Voluntary Furlough

- A.** A voluntary furlough is a period of unpaid absence that an eligible employee may request, subject to advanced approval by their Department Manager. The absence is of short duration, taken in full day increments, and lasting from one to five consecutive workdays. The total number of voluntary furlough absences should not exceed ten days per fiscal year. For employees whose regular workweek exceeds 40 hours, voluntary furlough days will be calculated in direct proportion to their workweek. Furlough cannot be requested in conjunction with sick leave, leave of absence without pay, or Family and Medical Leave. The County Manager has the authority to consider exceptions to the ten day maximum after conferring with the Department Manager.
- B.** A voluntary furlough is implemented as a means of short-term cost-savings to improve the financial condition of the organization by reducing payroll costs.

II. Eligibility for Voluntary Furlough

- A.** All employees in full-time or part-time positions with benefits are eligible to participate.
- B.** No employee shall be coerced or required to take voluntary furlough.

III. Procedure to Request Voluntary Furlough

- A.** Employees desiring to request voluntary furlough should complete a "Voluntary Furlough Request" form available on FCNet under Forms/Human Resources or by calling Human Resources at 703-2400.
- B.** The completed form must be submitted to the immediate supervisor at least two weeks in advance and is subject to the approval of the Department Manager or their designee.

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C. Requests for approval of voluntary furlough will be considered by the Department Manager after assessing the impact of the absence on services and operations. Reasonable effort will be made to approve the request.

D. There is no appeal process for a voluntary furlough request that is disapproved.

IV. Effects of Voluntary Furlough on Pay and Benefits

A. Voluntary furlough is a pre-approved, **unpaid** absence.

B. Normally, insurance benefits are not affected by voluntary furlough absences. However, if there are insufficient earnings to cover your insurance premiums, any amount owed will be deducted from your next paycheck.

C. No leave is accrued nor is any retirement contribution made during a voluntary furlough.

D. Time taken as voluntary furlough up to the normal maximum of 10 days will not affect the service date or performance appraisal date.

E. While no vacation or sick leave is accrued during a voluntary furlough, vacation and sick leave already accrued is not affected.

F. Employees on a voluntary furlough will be paid for any holiday that falls within the voluntary furlough period.

G. If the employee does not return to work immediately following a voluntary furlough, they will be subject to repaying the County share of any premiums paid and any other costs that may have been absorbed by the County during the voluntary furlough.

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Parental School Leave

All Forsyth County employees who are parents or guardians of, or who act as parents to, a school-age child have always had the right to request annual leave to attend or otherwise be involved in that child's school. Under North Carolina law, Forsyth County must permit you to take up to four hours of unpaid leave a year for this purpose, provided you make advance arrangements with your supervisor for a mutually agreeable time. If you choose to take unpaid leave for this purpose, you should put the hours in the column for unpaid leave on your time sheet.

Military Leave

If you participate in the armed services you will be granted a leave of absence without pay during such participation and will be treated in accordance with state and federal law, including but not limited to the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights or its successor. You have the option to use accrued annual leave instead of leave without pay for the duration of such military time. You will need to provide the County with a copy of the orders requiring your military service.

If you are called to military service, other than routine training and you do not have (or choose not to use) accrued annual leave, you shall be eligible for additional military benefits, some of which are more generous than required by law. These include:

- Supplemental compensation
- Health insurance premiums the same as active employees
- Dental insurance premiums the same as active employees
- Continued basic life insurance paid by the County
- Credit for the time spent in military service for annual leave accrual purposes
- Credit for the time spent in military service for retirement purposes
- Law enforcement 401(k) contribution with honorable discharge

The complete Military Duty policy can be viewed on FCNet under policies and procedures.

FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT (FMLA) EMPLOYEE AND EMPLOYER RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Basic Leave Entitlement

FMLA requires covered employers to provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave to eligible employees for the following reasons:

- For incapacity due to pregnancy, prenatal medical care or child birth;
- For the birth of, and to care for, the employee's child after birth;*
- For placement of a child with employee for adoption or for foster care;*

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- To care for the employee's spouse, son or daughter (under age 18 unless disabled), or parent, who has a serious health condition; or
- For a serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the functions of their job.

*Applies equally to a father as well as to a mother and limited to a combined total of twelve weeks if both mother and father are County employees.

Military Family Leave Entitlements

Eligible employees with a spouse, son, daughter, or parent who is a member of the National Guard, Reserves or any branch of the Armed Forces and who was deployed or called to active duty **in a foreign country** may use their 12-week leave entitlement to address certain qualifying exigencies. Qualifying exigencies may include attending certain military events, arranging for alternative childcare, addressing certain financial and legal arrangements, attending certain counseling sessions, and attending post-deployment reintegration briefings.

FMLA also includes a special leave entitlement that permits eligible employees to take up to 26 weeks of leave during a single 12-month period to care for a spouse, son, daughter, parent or next of kin who is a covered service member. A covered service member is a current member of the Armed Forces, including a member of the National Guard or Reserves, who has a serious injury or illness incurred in the line of duty on active duty that may render the service member medically unfit to perform his or her duties for which the service member is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy; or is in outpatient status; or is on the temporary disability retired list. Serious illness or injury is defined as an injury or illness that was incurred by the member in line of duty on active duty while in the Armed Forces (or existed before the beginning of the member's active duty and was aggravated by service in line of duty on active duty in the Armed Forces), and that may render the member medically unfit to perform the duties of the member's office, grade, rank or rating.

The entitlement to take military caregiver leave may extend to veterans in certain circumstances when the veteran was a member of the Armed Forces at some point in the five years preceding the date on which the veteran undergoes the medical treatment or receives the therapy that necessitates the leave. A veteran is defined as a person who served in the active military, Naval, or Air Service, and who was discharged or released from service under conditions other than dishonorable.

Benefits and Protections

During FMLA leave, the employer must maintain the employee's health coverage under any "group health plan" on the same terms as if the employee had continued to work. Upon return from FMLA leave, most employees must be restored to their original or equivalent positions with equivalent pay, benefits, and other employment terms.

Use of FMLA leave cannot result in the loss of any employment benefit that accrued prior to the start of an employee's leave.

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Eligibility Requirements

Employees are eligible if they have worked for a covered employer for at least one year, for 1,250 hours over the previous 12 months, and if at least 50 employees are employed by the employer within 75 miles.

Definition of Serious Health Condition

A serious health condition is an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves either an overnight stay in a medical care facility, or continuing treatment by a health care provider for a condition that either prevents the employee from performing the functions of the employee's job, or prevents the qualified family member from participating in school or other daily activities.

Subject to certain conditions, the continuing treatment requirement may be met by a period of incapacity of more than 3 consecutive calendar days combined with at least two visits to a health care provider or one visit and a regimen of continuing treatment, or incapacity due to pregnancy, or incapacity due to a chronic condition. Other conditions may meet the definition of continuing treatment.

Use of Leave

An employee does not need to use this leave entitlement in one block. Leave can be taken intermittently or on a reduced leave schedule when medically necessary. Employees must make reasonable efforts to schedule leave for planned medical treatment so as not to unduly disrupt the employer's operations. Leave due to qualifying exigencies may also be taken on an intermittent basis.

Substitution of Paid Leave for Unpaid Leave

The law allows and Forsyth County requires use of accrued paid leave while taking FMLA leave. In order to use paid leave for FMLA leave, employees must comply with the County's normal paid leave policies. Prior to going into unpaid FMLA status, all forms of paid leave must be exhausted in the following order: sick leave, holiday leave, annual leave. Time spent in an unpaid FMLA status will adjust your service, longevity and evaluation dates.

Employee Responsibilities

Employees must provide 30 days advance notice of the need to take FMLA leave when the need is foreseeable. When 30 days notice is not possible, the employee must provide notice as soon as practicable and generally must comply with an employer's normal call-in procedures.

Employees must provide sufficient information for the employer to determine if the leave may qualify for FMLA protection and the anticipated timing and duration of the leave. Sufficient information may include that the employee is unable to perform job functions; the family member is unable to perform daily activities, the need for hospitalization or continuing treatment by a health care provider, or circumstances supporting the need for military family leave. **Employees also must inform the employer if the requested leave is for a reason for which FMLA leave was previously taken or certified.** Employees will be required to provide a "Certification of Health Care Provider" form and, upon request, periodic recertification supporting the need for leave. The County may require a second or third opinion at County expense.

Employer Responsibilities

Covered employers must inform employees requesting leave whether they are eligible under FMLA. If they are, the notice must specify any additional information required as well as the employees' rights and responsibilities. If they are not eligible, the employer must provide a reason for the ineligibility.

Covered employers must inform employees if leave will be designated as FMLA-protected and the amount of leave counted against the employee's leave entitlement. If the employer determines that the leave is not FMLA-protected, the employer must notify the employee.

Recording Family and Medical Leave

A "Record of Family and Medical Leave Taken" timesheet must be completed for each pay period during which an employee takes paid or unpaid leave that is designated (or provisionally designated) as FMLA. This special timesheet may be completed by either the employee or the employee's supervisor if the employee is unavailable. It should be submitted to the department level individual responsible for posting hours to the department's Payroll Service Report. An employee who has compensable hours to report should also continue to submit a regular payroll timesheet to report these hours.

Once the "Record of Family and Medical Leave Taken" timesheet has been entered into the Payroll Service Report, it should be retained in a separate, confidential file in the department for at least three (3) years.

Unlawful Acts by Employers

FMLA makes it unlawful for any employer to:

- Interfere with, restrain, or deny the exercise of any right provided under FMLA;
- Discharge or discriminate against any person for opposing any practice made unlawful by FMLA or for involvement in any proceeding under or relating to FMLA.

Job Benefits and Protection

- You will not be penalized for absences which are FMLA-qualified or for any decreases in productivity that result directly and solely from taking FMLA-qualified leave.
- For the duration of the FMLA leave, Forsyth County will maintain your health insurance coverage under the employee group health insurance plan so long as you meet your obligation for payment of premiums. You will pay the employee portion of your insurance premiums: (1) through normal payroll deductions while on paid FMLA leave; and/or (2) by direct payment to the County during any period of unpaid leave. Direct payments are due in the Human Resources Department by the 20th of each month to pay for the next month's coverage.
- With certain exceptions, upon return from FMLA leave, you will be restored to your original position or to an equivalent position with equivalent pay, benefits, and other terms and conditions of employment. **Any unpaid employee insurance premiums will be deducted from your paycheck.** Appropriate adjustments will be made to the employee's service dates for purposes of performance appraisal scheduling and for longevity pay and annual leave accrual entitlement.

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- The use of unpaid FMLA leave will not result in the loss of any employment benefit that accrued prior to the start of FMLA leave.
- While on FMLA leave, you may be required to contact your supervisor at least once per month and indicate your intention to return to work as scheduled. If you do not return to work at the end of the FMLA leave period for any reason other than your continuing serious health condition, you will need to reimburse the County for all insurance premiums paid by the County on your behalf during the unpaid portion of the FMLA leave.

End of FMLA Protected Leave

If you exhaust all FMLA protected and/or paid leave and are still unable to return to work, you may request up to a 6-week leave of absence through your Department Manager. (See the Leave of Absence Without Pay section.) If you do not request a leave of absence without pay or if the leave is not granted, the last day of FMLA or the last day of paid leave, whichever is later, will be considered the last day of your employment and your separation will be considered a voluntary resignation. COBRA benefits will be offered. (See the COBRA section.) At any point in the future, past employees are welcome to apply for openings. If selected for re-employment, credit will be given for previous service. (See the Re-employment section.)

SHARED LEAVE PROGRAM

The Shared Leave Program provides an opportunity for County employees to share and/or receive leave donations during periods of prolonged absences from work due to a catastrophic medical condition that results in exhaustion of all paid leave.

In cases of a catastrophic medical condition, you may apply for leave donations from other County employees and/or from the shared leave “bank.” Consenting employees may agree to have leave donations transferred from their accumulated sick, annual and/or holiday leave balances to the sick leave account of an employee who has been approved by the Shared Leave Committee or to the leave “bank.” Coercion and/or intimidation are prohibited and should be reported to the Human Resources Director. Administration of this program will be by the Shared Leave Committee, and there is no right to appeal. The Shared Leave Program is employee to employee and is being offered in addition to the benefits provided by the County. Shared Leave is not “accrued” or “earned” under this program. All full-time and part-time employees with benefits who have been employed with the County for the previous 12 months are eligible for this program.

Definitions

Catastrophic Medical Condition: A non-job related illness/injury that is extremely serious, totally incapacitating, or life-threatening and for which the employee anticipates being absent from work for at least six weeks.

Immediate Family Member: Immediate family member includes parent, spouse and children.

Shared Leave Bank: A holding account for leave. Leave can be donated directly to this account by employees to unnamed recipients. Excess leave donated to individuals and unused leave is also deposited into this account. Donation drives to the Shared Leave Bank will be held periodically.

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Direct Donations: Leave donated from an employee to a qualifying named recipient.

Shared Leave Committee: A committee of 7 voting members from various County departments whose job is to review applications for Request to Receive Donated Leave and to administer the Shared Leave Program. The Benefits Analyst from Human Resources will be a non-voting permanent member of the committee.

Terminating employment: Ending employment for any reason

Rules/Procedures

Recipient (Employee requesting shared leave)

- Recipients may request shared leave donations for a catastrophic medical condition when they anticipate being absent from work for at least six weeks. The catastrophic medical condition can be the employee's own or that of the employee's immediate family member.
- All applications to receive shared leave must first be submitted to the recipient's Department Manager for his/her comments before forwarding to the Human Resources Department.
- The employee's completed shared leave request must be delivered to the Human Resources department prior to the exhaustion of paid or unpaid leave.
- The Recipient's current performance must be at an acceptable level (meets expectations or higher).
- Recipients must exhaust all paid leave (sick, annual, holiday, and compensatory time) before receiving leave from direct donation or from the Shared Leave Bank. The application process can be started prior to the actual depletion of leave.
- A Request to Receive Donated Leave form must be completed. If the Recipient is unable to complete the application, their supervisor may do so upon verbal permission of the employee. No medical information can be released without the signature of the Recipient.
- A Certification of Health Care Provider form must accompany the application.
- A Recipient who does not receive adequate leave from direct donations may be eligible for leave available in the Shared Leave Bank.
- A Recipient may not receive more than 4 months donated leave per occurrence.

Upon returning to work or terminating employment, any unused leave received under this policy will be removed from the Recipient's sick leave account and placed in the Shared Leave Bank. The Recipient will be able to retain any sick or annual leave accrued in their account while on paid leave.

Donor

- Employees donating leave must maintain a combined balance of 12 days of annual and sick leave (not to include holiday time).
- Sick, annual and/or holiday leave may be donated to a qualifying named recipient or to the Shared Leave Bank. Leave must be donated in one-hour increments.
- A Donor Information Sheet must be completed. A specific form has been designed for this purpose.
- Direct donations in excess of requested leave will be deposited in the Shared Leave Bank.
- Terminating employees may donate annual leave, but are not eligible to donate sick leave.

OTHER BENEFITS

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Wellness Programs

Healthkick

The Forsyth County Department of Public Health administers a wellness program called Healthkick for County employees. The wellness program includes an exercise incentive plan, lunchtime seminars and discounts to various local health clubs. A committee made up of volunteers from various County departments meets regularly to plan special fitness events and to provide input into the wellness program. A quarterly wellness newsletter and periodic information about Healthkick events are sent to all employees. If you are interested in volunteering or have questions about Healthkick, contact the Wellness Coordinator at 703-3216.

Wellness Screening and Health Risk Assessment

Because Forsyth County is committed to helping employees take charge of their health, the County offers a voluntary, free and confidential Wellness Screening and Health Risk Assessment (HRA) for employees participating in the County's health insurance.

The Wellness Screening includes:

- Height, weight and blood pressure
- A blood test to determine risk factors for heart disease, stroke, and diabetes

The Health Risk Assessment is a health survey that you complete online. After you complete the Health Risk Assessment, you will receive an easy-to-read, comprehensive report with your laboratory results, descriptions of tests, and healthy tips. This information will be mailed to your home address and your individual results will not be shared with the County.

Employees who complete **both** the Wellness Screening and Health Risk Assessment (HRA) will be eligible to receive a discount to their bi-weekly health insurance premium once the screening process has been finalized. Employees hired after the screening cutoff or employees who declined to participate will have the opportunity to participate during the next screening.

Your Confidentiality is Assured

All information gathered in the screening and the laboratory report is personal and confidential, as protected by federal law. Forsyth County will not have access to your individual results. We value your privacy and understand its importance. There are many steps in place to assure confidentiality. For more information, contact Human Resources at 703-2400.

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Deferred Compensation

Forsyth County offers 2 different plans which are designed to help you save systematically and conveniently to supplement your retirement income.

The plans offered are the State 401(k) and the Nationwide Retirement Solutions (NRS) 457. The 401(k) and 457 plans are regulated by separate sections of the IRS Code and, therefore, have some differences.

However both plans offer you the opportunity to shelter contributions and earnings from taxes until you withdraw the funds at retirement or when you leave employment.

You may enroll in or make changes to your 401(k) and/or 457 plan at any time during the year. More detailed information about enrollment in each of these plans is available from the Human Resources Department. As of December 1, 2002, we no longer allow enrollment into the ICMA 457 plan.

Once enrolled, you may contact your plan directly at:

401(k) Plan1-866-627-5267 x 4015
ICMA 457 Plan1-800-669-7400
NRS 457 Plan1-877-677-3678

Social Security

Forsyth County participates in Social Security and matches your mandatory contributions. Social Security is the nation's basic method of assuring a continuing income for you and your family when earnings stop or are reduced due to retirement, disability or death. Social Security payments are not intended to replace all lost earnings and should be supplemented by retirement plans, deferred compensation plans, personal savings, investments and insurance. Forsyth County will take precautions to protect the privacy of your social security number and will only require that you provide it where there is a valid business need.

Further information can be obtained by visiting the Social Security website or by calling Social Security at 1-800-772-1213.

Workers' Compensation

As required by the North Carolina Workers' Compensation Act, Forsyth County provides Workers' Compensation insurance for all employees. Forsyth County has a self-insured Workers' Compensation program that provides coverage for lost wages and medical costs defined as "reasonable and necessary" for work-related injuries and illnesses.

The schedule for wage replacement benefits is established annually by the North Carolina Industrial Commission. Employees receiving wage replacement benefits are not contributing to the North Carolina Local Governmental Employees Retirement System. Contact the Retirement System if you are interested in information about purchasing this lost time.

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Work related claims should not be filed under the County's regular group health plan.

If you are injured at work or become ill as a result of your work, follow these procedures:

- 1) Notify your supervisor immediately.
- 2) As soon as the supervisor is aware of a job-related injury, he/she shall notify Risk Management by calling 703-2067, 703-2058 or 703-2061.
- 3) Complete the Employee Injury/Illness Report form on the day of the incident or within 24-hours. If you cannot complete the form, your supervisor shall complete it for you.
- 4) Minor first aid may be provided in the workplace. Complete the Injury/Illness Report form even for minor injuries.
- 5) If medical assistance is necessary, you must go to an approved Primary Care Provider. If you fail to do so, you may not claim workers' compensation benefits. To view the list of approved Workers' Compensation providers, go to the Listing of Associated forms. Medical care by other than an approved provider will not be covered.
- 6) If the injury occurs after hours, you should go to Baptist Medical Center. In the case of serious or life threatening injury, you should go directly to the nearest emergency room.
- 7) The Primary Care Provider must authorize all additional medical treatment and all referrals to an approved specialist.

If you lose time from work as a result of an eligible work-related injury or illness you will receive a weekly benefit payment, based on your earnings, subject to the following:

- 1) Worker's Compensation pays approximately 2/3 of an employee's lost wages if the injury or illness requires an absence of work for eight or more days. No compensation is allowed for the first seven days except the benefits provided for approved medical or surgical treatment.
- 2) The employee who is absent from work as authorized by the treating physician may use available sick or annual leave during the seven day waiting period.
- 3) The employee who is working and/or on restricted duty and is receiving medical care for a work related injury or illness must use sick or annual leave for time away from work for doctor visits or treatment appointments.

Return to Work Program for Injured Employees

The County has an active Return to Work Program to benefit employees with a work-related injury resulting in a temporary disability. The Return to Work program is designed to provide temporary, transitional duty assignments, consistent with the Primary Care Provider's recommendations, to promote quick recovery, improve morale and allow the injured worker to earn their normal wage.

Return to work transitional duty assignments are coordinated by the Risk Manager and the employee's supervisor who strive, whenever possible, to have the employee returned to their normal work unit with appropriate modifications or place the employee in another temporary assignment.

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Tuition Reimbursement

(Revised 7/1/11)

The County has a tuition reimbursement program to assist you in furthering your education and expanding your skills. Financial assistance is generally available to cover courses that will improve your present job skills or enhance your potential for advancement.

Courses that are not job-related or are primarily avocational will not be approved. Therefore, reimbursement consideration will be given on a course-by-course basis and not based on a general curriculum or educational program.

The County will pay 100% of the first \$400 per employee per fiscal year. Reimbursements will be limited to actual costs for registration, tuition, books and supplies. Reimbursement can only be made for successful completion (grade "C" or better). Original receipts are required to qualify for reimbursement.

If tuition reimbursement requests exceed the budgeted funds, disbursements will be made on a first-come, first-served basis. After the course is completed, a reimbursement request should be submitted on the Request for Tuition Reimbursement form along with a grade report and all original receipts for payment of expenses incurred. Additional information is available from the Human Resources Department.

Training

Just as the many functions of County Government are diverse, so are the training needs of County employees. For this reason, the assessment of training needs and program planning to meet these needs is handled at the departmental level when possible. If you have an interest or need to participate in a developmental program that is relevant to your present or future responsibilities with the County, discuss this with your supervisor.

The Human Resources Department periodically conducts or sponsors training programs that are of a general nature or applicable to employees in more than one department. Information about these programs is provided through Department Managers.

Service Awards

The Forsyth County Commissioners and the County Manager demonstrate appreciation to full-time employees who have completed landmark years of service by presenting them with a service award.

Active full-time employees as of December 31st of each year who complete 10 years of service during that year and every five years thereafter, will be eligible to select and receive a service award and are honored at a luncheon. Employees who retire during the year and complete the landmark years of service will also be eligible to receive a service award of their choice and are honored at the luncheon.

Employee Assistance Program

(Revised 7/1/11)

Few of us escape serious personal problems during our lifetime. These problems can harm us personally, affect job performance and impact our service to citizens.

Forsyth County recognizes that some problems require professional help and therefore contracts with McLaughlin-Young Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to provide confidential, professional assistance to employees and their families. Examples of situations for which you may need assistance include depression, alcoholism, drug abuse, emotional crisis, marriage and family problems, and financial and legal problems. There is no charge for services provided by the EAP. If the problem requires long-range treatment or therapy, the EAP counselor will refer you to affordable services in the community.

You and your family members become eligible for participation on your first day of employment. You or your family member may contact the EAP counseling office by calling 1-800-633-3353 to make an appointment for a confidential session.

Your Department Manager or your supervisor may make an appointment for you when personal problems are adversely affecting your job performance. They will then be told only whether or not you kept the appointment and whether you are following through with recommended treatment, if applicable.

You will not be charged leave for the initial visit to EAP, providing you are willing to tell your supervisor that you have scheduled the appointment. Subsequent appointments would require the use of sick or annual leave.

Forsyth County's contract with McLaughlin-Young includes internet resources on work and family issues. For instructions on how to access this information, see the McLaughlin-Young section on Human Resources homepage. These instructions allow you to access these resources from both County and non-County computers. If you would like more information on the EAP, feel free to contact the Human Resources Department, the EAP office, or ask your supervisor.

EMPLOYEE SERVICES

Credit Union

The Forsyth County Employees' Credit Union, an affiliate of Summit Credit Union, is a state-chartered savings and loan institution established for the employees of Forsyth County, CenterPoint Human Services, and the Airport Commission of Forsyth County. The Credit Union is sponsored by Forsyth County and operates under the supervision of the North Carolina Credit Union Administration and the National Credit Union Administration. Savings accounts are insured up to \$250,000 by the National Credit Union Administration, an agency of the United States Government.

All employees and immediate family members are eligible for membership. Prospective members may call or come by the Credit Union for membership applications. New members must deposit \$25.00 to a Membership Share account or sign up for a payroll deduction of at least \$10.00 per pay period. A \$25.00 minimum balance in Membership Shares is a condition of membership and a requirement for other services.

The Credit Union offers a variety of services and benefits to its members, including:

- Competitive loan rates
- Competitive rates on savings accounts
- ATM cards on Savings Accounts
- Christmas Club
- Checking accounts with Debit card
- Certificates of Deposit
- Twenty-four hour access to account information through a Home Banking Phone Teller, and internet access through Home Banking 24 internet at www.forsythccu.com or www.summitcu.org
- Member business hours are 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday; Closed from 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 pm. for lunch.

When conducting business at the Credit Union branch located at 8 West Third Street, members receive free parking in the open parking lot across Main Street with ticket validation. For locations of other Summit Credit Union branches, go to the Summit Credit Union website.

THIRD STREET BRANCH PHONE:	336-727-2968
FAX:	336-727-2971

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United Way

Because of the valuable service the United Way provides to the citizens of Forsyth County, the County sponsors an annual United Way fund drive. You may make voluntary contributions to the United Way through payroll deduction.

Arts Council

In support of the cultural arts in our community, Forsyth County allows employees to authorize payroll deductions for contributions to the Arts Council.

SECTION IV: WORK POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

(Rev. 10/3/11)

Fair treatment to all persons seeking employment or currently employed is one of the guiding principles of Forsyth County. It is Forsyth County's policy to offer equal job opportunity for employment, training, and advancement to all qualified persons without regard to age, race, color, religion, sex, national origin, pregnancy, disability, or any other factor that is not reasonably related to job performance. All human resource actions such as compensation, benefits, promotions, transfers, dismissals and training are to be administered in a non-discriminatory manner.

If you feel that you have not been afforded equal employment opportunity, you should follow the established grievance procedure outlined in this handbook. (See Grievance Procedure section.)

In compliance with applicable federal laws, Forsyth County has an Equal Employment Opportunity Plan (EEO) available for review by County employees and the public. You may view the County's EEO using the link on Human Resources' Homepage on FCNet or by using the link found on the County's public website. If you prefer to view a bound copy of the County's EEO, it can be found in the reception area of the Human Resources Department.

INTRODUCTORY PERIOD

Both Forsyth County and new employees need some time to determine if the selection process has resulted in a good fit. Therefore, all appointments to full-time and part-time positions will be for an introductory period of six months. If the employee is in a trainee status, the introductory period will be six months or the training period, whichever is longer. Department Managers have the authority to extend the introductory period for up to three additional months in which case the employee will be notified in writing.

The range of time for the introductory period for employees of Social Services and Public Health is described in the State Personnel Act. Employees of those departments should receive notice of their introductory period upon the effective date of employment, and should ask their supervisor about any other terms of their introductory period, the requirements for satisfactory completion and any appeal rights, if any, during the introductory period.

During the introductory period, the Department Manager is responsible for determining whether an introductory employee is working proficiently or should be dismissed from County employment. An employee who is dismissed during the introductory period may not appeal the decision to the County Manager.

HOURS OF WORK

The normal working hours for most County employees are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. However, some departments provide service to the public on a 7 day, 24-hour-per-day basis and have work schedules in excess of 40 hours per week. Department Managers have the authority to set each employee's work schedule, including flexible schedules, based on business need.

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BREAKS

Breaks during the average workday are not required by the Fair Labor Standards Act. However, the County recognizes that employees who constantly serve the public by phone or in person benefit from brief periods of relief from their responsibilities. These employees normally receive an approximate fifteen-minute break twice a day. If one of these breaks is missed for any reason, it is gone. Breaks may not be added to lunch time, taken at the end of the day or saved for another day.

ATTENDANCE, ABSENTEEISM, TARDINESS

The quality of service provided to the public is a reflection of the consistent and dependable performance of County employees. Your unscheduled absence or tardiness places a burden on co-workers and hinders effective County operations. In situations where you must be tardy or absent, you must notify your immediate supervisor within the 30-minute period following your normal reporting time.

You are expected to maintain adequate leave balances to cover any unplanned absences that may occur. Excessive tardiness and absenteeism, even if using paid leave, are unacceptable and may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Unapproved absences or unpaid absences that are not protected by law are also subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Any absence of three consecutive workdays without prior approval is deemed to be a voluntary resignation.

GENERAL RULES OF CONDUCT

The proper conduct of all employees is necessary to ensure a safe, productive and pleasant working environment. As a County employee, you are expected to conduct yourself in accordance with the following guidelines:

- Know and observe all established County policies and procedures.
- Perform the job assigned to you as instructed by your supervisor.
- Be prompt in reporting to work and devote full attention to your work while on duty.
- Know and abide by the published safety rules of the County for your own protection, that of fellow employees and the public.
- Be fair, courteous and cooperative in dealing with the public and with fellow employees.

The following actions are not permitted. Any employee discovered committing any of the following offenses while on duty is subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. This list is not all-inclusive.

- Displaying disrespect toward or refusing to carry out the instructions of a supervisor or other authorized person
- Repeatedly disappearing from the work area without permission or without an acceptable reason
- Allowing personal relations in the workplace to become disruptive
- Removing County property from the premises without permission from the proper authority
- Theft or misuse of County property or services (e.g., mailing personal things, personal use of a County car, extensive use of cell phone or office phone for personal calls, making personal long distance phone calls at the County's expense, personal use of tools or supplies, etc.)
- Intentionally falsifying County records
- Using internet access, e-mail, the telephone, a facsimile machine or any other means to view, generate, send or receive materials that could be construed as fraudulent, illegal, harassing, obscene, indecent, profane or intimidating

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- Violating the drug and alcohol policies of Forsyth County (see Section IV. Drug Testing Policy and Alcohol Policy)
- Fighting or provoking a fight on County property; using abusive, obscene, profane or threatening language; or engaging in immoral conduct while on duty

- Engaging in workplace violence which includes, but is not limited to intimidation, threats, physical attack, domestic violence or property damage
- No County employee shall possess or carry, whether openly or concealed, any weapon, as described in G.S. 14-269(a) and G.S. 14-269(a1) of the NC General Statutes: in or on the grounds of real property or buildings owned by or leased to Forsyth County; in or upon County motor vehicles; or while on duty or when expected to perform services on behalf of the County. This section shall not apply to officers or employees of the County, charged with the execution of the laws of the state, when acting in the discharge of their official duties if authorized by law to carry weapons or full-time sworn law enforcement officers when so authorized by the sheriff as provided by law.
- Operating a County vehicle without a valid N.C. driver's license or otherwise in violation of policies regarding the use of County vehicles
- As a condition of continued employment, each County employee whose job requires a valid drivers' license must notify their supervisor prior to reporting for their next scheduled shift of their conviction of any offense that causes their license to be revoked or suspended
- Unwelcome or unsolicited speech or conduct based on age, race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability or any other factor that creates a hostile work environment.

REQUIRED LICENSURES AND CERTIFICATIONS

(New 7/15/11)

If your job requires a specific license (including drivers' license) or certification, it is your responsibility to keep that license or certification current and in good standing. You are required to notify your supervisor immediately upon notice of any pending disciplinary action, sanction or loss of privileges, suspension, revocation, lapse or loss of any credentials that make you eligible to perform your duties. While the County will assess each situation based on the specific circumstances, a failure to maintain required credentials in good standing may deem you unqualified for your job and may subject you to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

It is the responsibility of each County department to confirm proof through the proper licensing authority that such credentials are valid for each new hire, to monitor credentials regularly dependent upon the renewal cycle, and to perform periodic checks of licenses and certifications for all employees whose job requires it.

COMPUTER AND PHONE USAGE

Most employees of Forsyth County are provided with computers and telephones as tools to assist with their work. All of your work-related communications should contain only business-appropriate content. Employees may not include personal, political or religious content in voicemail greetings or email taglines. Your computer and phone and the data that is created, sent, received or stored in it are at all times the

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property of Forsyth County. Forsyth County reserves the right to retrieve and read any messages or documents with or without advance notice or employee consent.

Internet access, e-mail and voicemail are provided by Forsyth County as working tools but remain County property. You are expected to exercise good business judgment and comply with all County policies at all times when using these tools. Any abuse of the use of computers, the Internet, e-mail or phones is grounds for disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Some examples of abuse are accessing Internet information that is inappropriate in the workplace, using County time to pursue personal interests either over the Internet or through e-mail, sending or forwarding e-mail that a reasonable person could consider offensive or harassing. These examples do not include all possible misuse of these tools.

The County's workplace harassment policy, as well as other policies, procedures and rules of conduct, applies with equal force to your use of the County's computer system, e-mail, telephones or any other electronic equipment as well as any personal electronic devices or any other means you bring into the workplace.

PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS

Forsyth County realizes we all have personal matters that need to be attended to from time to time while at work. However, personal communications can be a disruption in the workplace and should always be kept short. Personal communications includes personal use of the County's or your own phone, computer, texting device or any other electronic equipment. Excessive time spent on personal communications can be grounds for discipline up to and including dismissal.

VETERANS

The re-employment of veterans who were employed by the County immediately prior to their entering the armed services shall be in accordance with the provisions of the Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act or its successor.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT POLICY

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits employment discrimination against qualified persons with physical and mental disabilities. The ADA is complex legislation with many detailed definitions and requirements. The following is a general summary of the ADA. You may ask questions about this benefit directly to your supervisor or to the Human Resources Department. The Human Resources Director serves as the Forsyth County ADA Coordinator and should be consulted by supervisors and department managers.

ADA defines a person with a disability as an individual who meets one of the following criteria:

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

A qualified person with a disability is someone with a disability who meets the necessary skill, work experience, education, training, licensing or certification, and other job-related requirements of a position. Forsyth County is committed to providing equal employment opportunities for qualified persons with disabilities. Forsyth County will accommodate persons protected by the ADA by making changes in the work environment or by changing certain practices and procedures so long as such changes are not unreasonable, would not pose an undue hardship on the County, alter the essential functions of a job or create a direct threat to health or safety. Persons with questions about ADA issues are encouraged to talk to their supervisor or the Human Resources Department.

ALCOHOL POLICY

Forsyth County has implemented an alcohol policy to promote and maintain a workplace environment that is free from the negative aspects of alcohol and to protect employees and the public by ensuring that County employees are at all times capable of performing their assigned duties. This section summarizes the alcohol policy. The complete Alcohol Policy can be viewed on FCNet.

Forsyth County is interested in providing appropriate assistance to employees who are experiencing alcohol-related problems. Under most circumstances, an employee who has a positive alcohol test result will be referred to the Employee Assistance Program. Employees will be expected to successfully complete all recommended treatment.

Department Managers who have reasonable suspicion that an employee has consumed or is under the influence of alcohol while working, can authorize alcohol testing. The employee will not be allowed to work until the results of the test are known. Anyone refusing to take a test will be recommended for dismissal. Refusing to sign a consent form or attempting to delay the test constitutes refusal to take the test.

Normally, a breath-alcohol test will be used to determine the presence of alcohol. Only laboratories that are properly certified and observe strict chain of custody procedures will be used. The employee will be notified in writing of a positive alcohol test result. Employees have the right to provide an explanation for their alcohol test results.

Employees who have successfully completed any recommended treatment will be subject to unannounced alcohol testing for 2 years after completing the treatment. Anyone failing such an unannounced test will be recommended for dismissal.

Notification of Loss of License: Any employee who drives a County vehicle must notify their supervisor when their driving privileges are suspended. An employee who drives a County vehicle without a valid N.C. driver's license will be recommended for dismissal.

Notification of Conviction: As a condition of continued employment, each County employee must notify their supervisor of their conviction of any alcohol-related offense not later than five days after such conviction. All County employees are prohibited from operating a County motor vehicle until they possess a valid, unrestricted N.C. driver's license. Loss of a driver's license could result in dismissal.

Requirements for Employees Required to Have a Commercial Driver's License: In compliance with Department of Transportation regulation 49 CFR part 382, employees who are required to have a Commercial Driver's License and who operate a vehicle over 26,001 pounds or a vehicle that was designed to carry 16 or more passengers are subject to alcohol testing in the following circumstances:

- Post-accident when there is a fatality or the driver receives a citation
- Reasonable suspicion as discussed above
- Random testing as required by law
- Return-to-duty and follow-up tests, after evaluation or any necessary rehabilitation.

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DRUG TESTING POLICY

Forsyth County has implemented a drug testing policy to promote and maintain a drug-free workplace in order to ensure the safety of employees and the public. A summary of the policy follows. The complete Drug Testing Policy can be viewed on FCNet.

Department Managers who have reasonable suspicion that an employee is using or is under the influence of drugs are authorized to schedule a drug test and require the employee to cooperate fully with testing personnel. Anyone refusing to take the drug test will be recommended for dismissal.

Before the drug test is administered, the employee will be asked to sign a consent form authorizing the test and permitting the release of test results to County officials with a need to know. The consent form also explains the procedure for confirming an initial positive test result, the consequences of a positive test result, the employee's right to explain a positive test result, the appeal procedures available, and the consequences of refusing to undergo a drug test.

If a drug test result is positive, the Human Resources Director will notify the employee in writing, including the identity of the particular substance found. The employee will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. The employee's work history, job assignment, length of employment, current job performance and past disciplinary actions will be factors in determining the disciplinary action taken. An employee permitted to continue employment and receive assistance under the Employee Assistance Program will be required to use accrued sick leave, annual leave, compensatory leave or leave without pay for all time away from work. The intent of this opportunity for assistance is to allow substance abusers to get the help they need and to restore their productivity.

Those employees satisfactorily completing a drug rehabilitation program will be subject to unannounced drug tests for 2 years after completion of the program. Upon a positive drug test result, the employee will be recommended for dismissal.

Requirements for Employees Required to Have a Commercial Driver's License: In compliance with Department of Transportation regulations 49 CFR part 382, employees who are required to have a Commercial Driver's License and who operate a vehicle over 26,001 pounds or a vehicle that was designed to carry 16 or more passengers are subject to drug testing in the following circumstances:

- Post-accident when there is a fatality or the driver receives a citation
- Reasonable suspicion as discussed above
- Random testing as required by law
- Return-to-duty and follow-up tests, after evaluation or any necessary rehabilitation.

Additional Testing for Certain Employees: Certain safety-sensitive positions may be subject to random drug testing through a separate policy adopted by their department.

PANDEMIC FLU POLICY

During periods of pandemic flu outbreak, the County Manager **may** activate the County's Pandemic Flu Policy. County employees will be notified when the Pandemic Flu Policy is in effect. The policy provisions are as follows:

- Employees are instructed not to report to work if they have "influenza-like" symptoms (fever equal to or greater than 100 F and significant respiratory symptoms).
- Employees should not return to work until they have been free from fever for at least 24 hours without fever-reducing medication.
- Employees observed with flu-like symptoms while at work will be required to go home immediately.
- Per normal County policy, sick leave would be used for flu absences; if none is available, the use of annual leave will be allowed.
- If no accrued paid leave is available, the County's "Leave of Absence Without Pay" policy will apply for short-term absences not normally covered by that policy. This special use of the "Leave of Absence Without Pay" policy would be available only for absences due to the employee's personal illness with flu-like symptoms or the employee's care being needed for their spouse, parent or child who has flu-like symptoms.
- Any paid or unpaid leave taken for the purpose of flu-like symptoms will not result in disciplinary action and will not be considered in a performance appraisal or in any other personnel matter. Employees are required to follow their department's normal call in procedures.
- Employees' children under age 18 will not be allowed in the workplace for any reason.

Pandemic Flu Prevention Measures

In an effort to follow recommended federal guidelines for decreasing the spread of influenza and reducing its impact in the workplace, the following measures are in effect regardless of whether the County Manager has activated the County's Pandemic Flu Policy. County employees are:

- Encouraged to get vaccinated against both seasonal and pandemic flu. Because of the importance of being vaccinated, employees will be allowed to use work time to participate in the Public Health department's flu clinic(s). Supervisors will be responsible for staggering work schedules so that all employees desiring to participate in the flu clinic can do so.
- Asked to use all precautionary measures recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). A link to these measures can be found on the County's public website and on the County's intranet (FCNet).
- Directed to STAY HOME when they are sick with flu-like symptoms, even if undiagnosed, and to return to work only after they have been free from fever for at least 24 hours without fever-reducing medication.
- Permitted to use sick leave for flu absences, per normal County policy.
- Asked to minimize face-to-face exposure (e.g., conference calls versus meetings)
- Strongly encouraged to plan ahead for alternate arrangements if schools and/or daycares should close.

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LIFE-THREATENING COMMUNICABLE DISEASE POLICY

This policy applies to those diseases which the Public Health Director has determined pose little reasonable risk of transmission in the workplace by normal contact, including the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and other life-threatening communicable diseases. View the complete Life-Threatening Communicable Disease Administrative Policy on FCNet.

- Employees with a life-threatening communicable disease will be treated with dignity and respect.
- Employees with such diseases will be allowed to perform their jobs as long as they are physically and mentally able to do so.
- Testing for HIV infection is not a condition for employment.
- All employees are expected to attend training sessions to receive accurate information pertaining to life-threatening communicable diseases. Employees who work in areas that pose increased risk of exposure may be required to attend additional training specific to their area of employment.
- All information regarding employees, prospective employees or clients with life-threatening communicable diseases is confidential. Access to this information is limited to persons who have a legal right to know.
- New employees will receive education in life-threatening communicable diseases as a part of their orientation session.
- All County employees will provide services and carry out their duties to the public and clients regardless of whether or not the person being served has a life-threatening communicable disease or is perceived to have such a disease to which this policy applies. All such people will be treated with dignity and respect.
- Center for Disease Control guidelines should be followed in the development of individual department procedures pertaining to the control of life-threatening communicable diseases. Employees are expected to follow the established procedures.
- All workplace accidents involving blood and body fluids must be promptly reported to the supervisor with all appropriate reports completed.
- Reasonable accommodations will be made to allow an employee with a life-threatening communicable disease to continue working as long as the employee is capable of continuing satisfactory performance on the job.
- Any employee whose life-threatening communicable disease has reached the stage where his/her symptoms are beginning to interfere with the satisfactory performance of the duties of the position should inform his/her supervisor, who should contact the Human Resources Director for assistance.
- An employee with such a disease can request that his/her private physician consult with the County Public Health Director and the Human Resources Director as needed.
- Employees working with another employee who has a life-threatening communicable disease, but with whom casual contact does not put a person at risk, are expected to continue to perform their duties.

WORKPLACE HARASSMENT POLICY

(Revised 7/1/11)

Forsyth County Government strives to provide an environment where all employees are free to perform their job duties with respect and dignity. Therefore, Forsyth County will not tolerate or condone workplace harassment on the basis of race, sex, gender, religion, national origin, age, color, or disability in any department by co-workers, supervisors, or non-employees who conduct business with the County. Retaliation or interference, coercion, restraint or reprisal against any person complaining of, or participating in an investigation of, alleged harassment is also prohibited. The County has established a training program for all employees as a part of its prevention plan. View the complete Workplace Harassment Policy on FCNet.

- **Workplace Harassment** is defined as unwelcome speech or conduct based upon race, sex, gender, religion, national origin, age, color, or disability or other protected status that creates a hostile work environment or constitutes quid pro quo harassment.
- **Hostile Work Environment** is defined as unwelcome speech or conduct that unreasonably interferes with job performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment. Whether a hostile work environment exists may depend upon, among other things, the following factors: (i) whether the harassment was verbal or physical or both; (ii) how frequently the harassment was repeated; (iii) how hostile and clearly offensive; (iv) the identity of the harasser (coworker or supervisor); (v) whether other people joined in the harassment; and (vi) whether the harassment was aimed at more than one person. In addition to actual verbal or physical behavior, some examples of things that could contribute to a hostile work environment include posted written materials and/or cartoons, radio or recorded audio played and computer images or websites that another person could find offensive based on one of the protected statuses listed above.
- **Quid Pro Quo** harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct when:
 - 1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, or
 - 2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual.
- **Retaliation** is defined as adverse treatment of an employee that occurs as a result of a report of, investigation of a report of, or opposition to workplace harassment.

I. Complaint Procedure:

A. **All Employees Other Than Employees of DSS and Public Health**

- 1) Any employee who believes he or she may have a complaint of workplace harassment must immediately file a complaint with their immediate supervisor, the Human Resources Director ("HR Director"), or the County Manager (only if the complaint is against the HR Director).
- 2) It is the employee's responsibility to complain in writing or to request an individual interview and be prepared to provide as much specific information as possible. Supervisors on notice of, or any employee who witnesses workplace harassment should also report the prohibited conduct to their supervisor or the HR Director.

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B. DSS and Public Health Employees Only

- 1) Any employee who believes he or she may have a complaint of workplace harassment must submit a written complaint pursuant to the department's internal grievance procedure within 30 calendar days of the alleged harassing action. If any step in the applicable department grievance procedure involves reporting harassment to the alleged harasser or it involves any action or decision by the alleged harasser, then the employee and the department shall bypass that step of the procedure and proceed with the next step of the department grievance procedure.
- 2) The department will take appropriate action, if any, as soon as possible, but no longer than within 60 calendar days.

II. Investigation:

The confidentiality and privacy of County employees and others involved will be maintained throughout the investigatory process to the extent practical and appropriate under the circumstances.

The parties and appropriate management officials will be advised of the outcome of investigations. Any employee found to be in violation of this policy will be subject to disciplinary procedures up to and including dismissal.

A. All Employees Other than DSS and Public Health

Working very closely with Department Managers and other County administrators, the HR Director is responsible for managing all complaints of workplace harassment and for ensuring that complaints are investigated promptly, thoroughly and impartially.

B. DSS and Public Health Employees Only

Working closely with the department staff and other agency management, the Department Manager is responsible for managing all complaints of workplace harassment and for ensuring that complaints are investigated promptly, thoroughly and impartially.

III. Appeal — DSS and Public Health Employees Only

An appeal to the State Personnel Commission must be filed with the Office of Administrative Hearings within 30 calendar days after the 60 calendar days allotted the department for consideration of the complaint.

NOTE: This policy is applicable to all County employees except the Sheriff's department which is subject to procedures set forth in its "Discrimination and Sexual Harassment," Section 234 of the Standard Operating Procedures.

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE POLICY

Forsyth County strives to provide a workplace free from violence. Therefore, all employees should know what will not be tolerated and the importance of reporting any behavior that may lead to violence. We will hold perpetrators of violence or threats of violence accountable and we will provide assistance and support to victims.

Prohibited workplace violence includes, but is not limited to, intimidation, threats, physical attack, domestic violence or property damage. It includes acts of violence committed by employees, clients, relatives, acquaintances or strangers against a County employee in the workplace.

Violent conduct while not at work may also be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal if there is a potential adverse impact on a County employee's ability to perform their assigned duties and responsibilities.

When it is reasonable to suspect the potential for violence exists, an employee may be required to undergo an assessment coordinated by the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to determine the risk of danger. Compliance with recommended treatment will be mandatory.

Employees who are victims of workplace violence will be offered all available security measures. Victims may want such things as an adjustment to work schedule, location or leave of absence for a period of time to enhance their safety. These requests will be accommodated whenever possible and appropriate. The County will work closely with the victims to ensure that both the needs of the victims and the County are addressed. All victims will be encouraged to use the services of the Employee Assistance Program.

It is important for all employees to be alert to the possibility of violence by employees, former employees, clients and strangers. Safety should be the highest concern. All acts and threats of violence must be reported immediately to your supervisor and the Department Manager. If those people are not available, contact Human Resources, Risk Management or the Attorneys Office. Of course if the situation warrants it, 9-1-1 should be called immediately.

Any retaliation against an employee who, in good faith, reports the behavior described in this section will be strictly prohibited. Every effort will be made to protect the safety and anonymity of anyone who comes forward with concerns about a threat or act of violence. Information will only be released on a need-to-know basis.

As part of the County's efforts to prevent workplace violence, searches may be performed as described in the Workplace Searches section.

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

Forsyth County encourages County employees to take their civic responsibility seriously and support good government. Employees may join, affiliate with and support the principles or policies of civic organizations of a political nature in accordance with the Constitution and laws of the United States of America and the State of North Carolina. However, no employee shall:

- Engage in any political activity while on duty or within any period of time during which he/she is expected to render services compensated by the County
- Be required, as a duty of his/her office or employment, or as a condition of employment, promotion or tenure of office, to contribute funds for political or partisan purposes
- Solicit, or act as custodian of, funds for political or partisan purposes while on duty as an employee of the County
- Coerce or compel contributions for political or partisan purposes from any other employee of the County
- Use any County supplies or equipment for political purposes

Any non-elected county official or employee who becomes a candidate for public office shall be required to take a leave of absence without pay or take annual leave, holiday or compensatory time 1 month preceding the primary, if the official or employee is a candidate in the primary. If successful in the primary, or not subject to the primary, the candidate must take a leave of absence without pay or take annual leave for 1 month preceding the general election.

All constitutional and elected officers are exempt from this entire section, but no such constitutional or elected officers are to use any County funds, goods, supplies or materials for partisan political purposes.

DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Unless it is your responsibility as part of your job as an employee to disclose County information and/or documents to the public, information learned in connection with performing your duties and responsibilities as an employee as well as County documents are to be treated as confidential. Disclosure of confidential information or documents by an employee is prohibited unless such disclosure is with the prior approval of your Department Manager. Violation of this rule is grounds for dismissal.

GIFTS AND FAVORS

No County employee is permitted to accept any valuable gift, whether in the form of entertainment, products, money, services, loans, or promise from any person, firm or corporation that has or anticipates a direct or indirect business interest with the County. No County employee is permitted, in the discharge of their duties to grant any improper favor, service, or gift.

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USE OF COUNTY VEHICLE

At various times your job may require travel. When the use of a vehicle is required, departmental policy and the availability of a County fleet vehicle will govern whether you drive your personal vehicle or a fleet vehicle. If use of a fleet vehicle is desired, you should reserve a vehicle from the County fleet at least 1 week in advance.

Use of a personal vehicle is appropriate if it is authorized by your Department Manager and within budgeted funds. You will receive mileage reimbursement at the current effective rate if use of a personal vehicle is authorized.

Employees must have a valid N.C. driver's license to drive a County vehicle. Employees must let their supervisor know when they have temporarily lost their driving privileges. Driving a County vehicle without a valid driver's license will be considered misconduct and the employee will be recommended for dismissal. (See also Alcohol Policy and Drug Testing Policy sections.)

An employee whose job entails authorized use of a County vehicle for commuting to and from work should be aware that this usage is a taxable fringe benefit. More detailed information is available from the Finance Department.

SOLICITATIONS

In order to protect employees from unwanted interruptions, it is the policy of Forsyth County that solicitation by outsiders for any reason is forbidden. Solicitation by co-workers should only be done with the prior approval of the Department Manager.

Distribution of literature of any kind to employees without the prior approval of your Department Manager is not permitted. With the prior approval of the Department Manager, fundraiser brochures may be left in a central area or break room for co-workers to view during breaks and lunch hours.

This policy does not apply to any County Manager-approved events or community activities such as the United Way, Arts Council and Blood Drives.

OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT

The work of the County must have precedence over any other occupational interest of its employees. If you wish to hold outside employment for salary, wages or commission and/or any self-employment, you must request permission in writing and have it approved by your immediate supervisor and Department Manager prior to beginning such employment. No time during County working hours may be used to promote or carry out outside employment, nor shall any County equipment, supplies or office space be used in conjunction with outside employment (except public safety uniforms when used in approved outside employment).

Conflicting outside employment shall be grounds for dismissal. Not disclosing outside employment is grounds for disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Due to the County's fiscal responsibility to the public you are prohibited from working in any situation that may be perceived to be a conflict of interest. Examples of situations of this type include:

- Providing services to the County as an independent contractor
- Having close ties to a vendor or potential vendor in your department
- Performing consulting work that is closely related to your County role or that of your department
- Participating in an interview that involves a friend or relative
- Misusing your position in the County for personal gain

Whenever you are unsure whether a situation may be a conflict of interest, or whenever a potential conflict of interest arises, you are required to discuss it with your Department Manager to make sure you are complying with this policy.

INTERNAL INVESTIGATIONS

It is the responsibility of the County to investigate any serious matter brought to its attention. It is the responsibility of all County employees to report any activities that may need investigating and to cooperate with all investigations.

WORKPLACE SEARCHES

Situations will arise where there is a legitimate, job-related concern that requires Forsyth County to conduct a search. All employees should assume that what they do while at work or on County premises is not private. A search is a part of an investigation process to determine the facts and does not constitute an accusation of wrongdoing. The reasons for such searches may include, but are not limited to the suspicion of using or possessing County property without permission or in an unauthorized manner; use or possession of drugs, alcohol, weapons, stolen property or other illegal contraband; and harassment, violence or threats of violence.

A department, after consultation with the Human Resources Director, may search or inspect persons, vehicles, work spaces, desks, lockers, computers, telephones, packages or other items on County premises or on those premises where an employee is conducting business on behalf of the County. Employees refusing to allow or to properly cooperate in a search where there is reasonable suspicion will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

In addition, it is expected that in the normal course of work employees may enter your work areas in your absence to continue work related functions. Anything that is discovered in this process is subject to investigation.

RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT

No person is eligible to hold any Department Manager, deputy county manager, or assistant county manager position, or any office or position which must be filled by the action of the board of commissioners unless that person is a resident of Forsyth County, or becomes a resident no more than 180 days after the effective date of their appointment.

Failure to comply with the residency requirement at the end of the 180 day period will result in the loss of county employment. Continued residency in the county is a requirement of continued employment. The board of commissioners may grant hardship exceptions to the residency requirement upon recommendation of the County Manager.

EMPLOYMENT OF RELATIVES

The employment of close relatives or immediate family members within the same department or unit will be avoided unless significant recruitment difficulties exist. This includes consideration of internal applicants for job changes in addition to external applicants for employment. If there are fewer than 3 other available and qualified applicants for a vacancy and it is necessary for close relatives or immediate family members to be considered for employment, or if 2 individuals already employed within the same department or unit marry each other, the following will apply:

Close relatives or members of an immediate family shall not be employed within the same department or unit of the department if such employment will result in one supervising a close relative or member of his/her immediate family, or where one member occupies a position which has influence over the other's employment, promotion, salary administration or other related management or personnel considerations. The County Manager may make exceptions in cases with extenuating circumstances.

The terms "close relatives" and "immediate family" mean wife, husband, mother, father, brother, sister, daughter, son, grandmother, grandfather, grandson, and granddaughter of the employee. Also included are the step, half and in-law relationships of the above. It may also include others living within the same household or otherwise closely identified with each other where potential difficulty may develop within the department or unit.

REDUCTION IN FORCE AND SEVERANCE PAY

In the event that a reduction in force becomes necessary, consideration will be given to the need for the service, the quality of each employee's performance and seniority in determining which employees will be retained. Under certain circumstances, employees affected by a reduction in force may be eligible for severance pay.

Employees of the Public Health and Social Services departments are subject to the RIF procedures set forth in the "Personnel Policies for Local Government Employment Subject to the State Personnel Act" manual. Employees in these departments should see their supervisors and/or Human Resources with any questions regarding those procedures.

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INCLEMENT WEATHER

To fulfill Forsyth County's obligations to the public, it is each Department Manager's responsibility to ensure that his/her department is open during recognized office hours. It is not County policy to delay opening, close early or close all day in the event of inclement weather. All absences or tardiness caused by inclement weather should be charged to annual leave, compensatory leave or leave without pay. Use of leave without pay during inclement weather is subject to the approval of your Department Manager.

Although every effort will be made for County offices to remain open for the full scheduled work period, employees who anticipate problems with transportation will be permitted to use leave privileges as listed above. If you will be late or absent due to inclement weather, you are expected to follow your department's normal call-in procedure.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

During and after major emergencies and disasters (such as tornadoes, ice storms, hazardous material spills) the residents of Forsyth County will still expect the County to provide some level of service; therefore there is an expectation that you will be available to work. Emergency Management is a combined City/County Department that provides the following information for employees to follow in an emergency. You may:

- be assigned to staff a position in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC)
- be assigned to augment another department
- be expected to perform your normal duties.

If a disaster occurs during work hours:

- Try to remain calm. Take whatever action is necessary to protect yourself and direct any citizens to do the same (e.g. Duck, Cover & Hold; find a safe area of refuge; exit the building; find high ground) until the danger has passed.
- Immediately after the danger has passed, check the condition of others in the area. If safe to do so, render assistance and call for help. If appropriate or directed, evacuate the building and proceed to the designated assembly area. (Always know your assigned assembly area.)
- As soon as the situation is under control, check in with your supervisor(s) to see if and where you should report. If you are not at your normal work location, try to make your way back to it, or to the nearest County facility.
- If you are assigned to an EOC team, ask your supervisor; call City Police Communications, 773-7700; or call the City Fire Department, 773-7900, to see if the EOC is being activated. If calls are not possible, make your way to the EOC location.

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If you are home when a disaster occurs:

- There is an expectation that you will be available to work once you have taken care of your family. Take whatever action is necessary to protect yourself and your family first.
- As soon as it is possible, contact your supervisor to find out if you are to report to work and what supplies/equipment you will need to bring.
- If you are assigned to an EOC team, contact City Police Communications, 773-7700, the City Fire Department, 773-7900, or the EOC, 661-6440. DO NOT DIAL 9-1-1 FOR THIS INFORMATION. If the telephone system is not operational, listen to the radio or TV for emergency information or listen to the directions of the Emergency Alert System.

PERSONNEL RECORDS

Forsyth County takes utmost precautions to protect the confidentiality of your social security number. It is maintained in secured files for necessary business purposes only. While most of the information contained in your personnel file is confidential, the following information is a matter of public record under North Carolina law (G.S. §153A-98):

- Name
- Age
- Date of original employment
- Terms of any written or oral employment contract
- Current position title
- Current salary (including benefits, incentives, bonuses and deferred and all other forms of compensation)
- Date and amount of **each** increase or decrease in salary
- Date **and type of each** promotion, demotion, transfer, suspension, separation or other change in position classification
- **Date and general description of the reasons for each promotion**
- **Date and type of each dismissal, suspension, or demotion for disciplinary reasons**
- **For dismissals due to disciplinary reasons, a copy of the written notice of final decision setting forth the specific acts or omissions that are the basis for the dismissal**
- The office to which you are currently assigned

All requests for public records described above should be forwarded to your Department Manager or the Human Resources Director. All requests for references on present or past employees should be directed to Human Resources.

You may examine the information contained in your personnel file with the exception of references solicited prior to employment. It is important that you keep your personnel records up-to-date by notifying the Human Resources Department of any change in your:

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- Address or phone number
- Legal name
- Marital status
- Beneficiary for life insurance, retirement, 401k or 457
- State or federal tax withholding
- Emergency notification information

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

Problems can arise in any job situation. It is Forsyth County's management philosophy that problems can best be resolved by free and open discussion. The County Grievance Procedure is designed to promote such discussion along with an orderly resolution to the problem. It is the County's desire to address employee grievances promptly and fairly.

Except as specified under the Exceptions to Grievance Procedure section, any employee who has a problem or complaint concerning his/her job, working conditions or County policies may utilize the following grievance procedure. You are expected to continue to perform your job as directed by your supervisor until the grievance is resolved.

For purposes of this Grievance Procedure, a mere disagreement or difference of opinion with your supervisor or other employee, including disagreement with a performance appraisal, a written warning or a position classification decision, is ordinarily not a grievable issue (See also "Right to Appeal Disciplinary Action" in the Disciplinary Action section.)

Step 1. You should first discuss the problem with your immediate supervisor. Many concerns can be resolved at this level.

Step 2. If a satisfactory solution is not reached in Step 1, you may request an appointment and meet with your Department Manager to discuss the matter further. At the meeting with the Department Manager, you should openly discuss the problem. If a satisfactory solution is reached, the matter may be considered resolved.

Step 3. If the matter cannot be satisfactorily resolved in a conference between you and your Department Manager, you may then request an appointment to discuss the matter with the Human Resources Director. The Human Resources Director will investigate the matter and report his/her findings to you and your Department Manager in writing.

Step 4. After meeting with the Human Resources Director, if your problem is still unresolved, you may request an appointment and meet with the County Manager. After this conference, the County Manager will consider the matter and will respond to you and your Department Manager through the Human Resources Director. The decision of the County Manager is final.

Exceptions to the Grievance Procedure

If you feel that your problem is of a highly sensitive nature (e.g., sexual harassment, discrimination, or an accommodation for a disability), you may submit a written description of the situation to the Human

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Resources Director. The Human Resources Director will notify you in writing of the appropriate procedure to follow.

Public Health and Social Services employees are subject to the State Personnel Act and therefore follow a different grievance procedure. Employees of these departments should consult their supervisors and/or Human Resources with any questions regarding their particular grievance procedure.

The Sheriff and the Register of Deeds are elected officials and, by law, have the sole right to hire and dismiss their employees, as does the Tax Assessor for certain employees. Any employee in one of these departments who has a grievance should follow the grievance procedure established by his/her department.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION

While it is Forsyth County's desire and expectation that all employees' job performance meet or exceed expectations, realistically there may be times when an employee's job performance or personal conduct falls below an acceptable level. In those instances where an employee does not achieve acceptable standards of performance or violates established rules of conduct, supervisors are expected to take prompt action in accordance with the disciplinary procedures provided below.

The disciplinary procedure for employees of the departments of Public Health and Social Services are determined by the provisions of the State Personnel Act and are different from the process described in this section. Employees of those departments who need information about their department's disciplinary procedures may access that information using the following steps:

1. Go to www.osp.state.nc.us
2. Go to Local Government
3. Go to LG Resources Manual
4. Go to Section 1 – Local Government Administrative Code
5. Go to section .2300 for the Disciplinary Process

Employees of Public Health and Social Services should also check with their individual Department Manager or the Department Manager's designee for Human Resources matters.

Progressive Discipline

The purpose of disciplinary action is to give employees the opportunity to correct unacceptable performance or behavior unless an employee's offense is of such a serious nature as to warrant dismissal from employment without prior warning(s). Accordingly, disciplinary action should be appropriate to the offense. Any disciplinary action taken since an employee's last performance appraisal will be considered in the employee's next performance appraisal.

As soon as performance and/or conduct problems occur, supervisors are encouraged to counsel or give verbal warning to employees. If one or more verbal warning fails to resolve the problem, supervisors should proceed to the following disciplinary measures:

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- 1) **Written Warning.** A written warning is to be used for a first instance of a serious failure or problem in job performance or personal conduct, or when coaching, counseling and/or verbal warning(s) have failed to resolve a particular issue. Receipt of written warning places an employee in a probationary status for not less than ninety (90) days. This probationary status can be extended if another event occurs in that 90-day period which would warrant further disciplinary action. An employee in a probationary status is not eligible for pay-for-performance increases, and his/her performance appraisal date is adjusted by the amount of time he/she is on probation.

An employee may receive one or more written warnings for the same issue or problem, as his/her supervisor deems appropriate. Failure to show immediate and sustained improvement in the area(s) noted in a written warning will result in further disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from employment.

- 2) **Dismissal.** Dismissal from employment will result when an employee fails to demonstrate improvement in problem areas despite written warning(s) as noted above or when an employee engages in misconduct or violation of policy which is so serious as to warrant dismissal without progressive discipline. Examples would include, but not be limited to, engaging in criminal actions in the workplace, workplace violence, use of alcohol or drugs in the workplace, gross insubordination, theft of County property.

It is important to note that Forsyth County Department Managers have varying authority related to disciplinary action (see “Disciplinary Authority” section below). If dismissal occurs, some employees have certain appeal rights which vary by department as described below under “Right to Appeal Disciplinary Action”. All employees dismissed will be removed from the payroll immediately.

Disciplinary Authority

- Department Managers that are not appointed by the County Manager have the authority to suspend, demote, or dismiss employees. However, they typically consult with the Human Resources Director on disciplinary actions. These Department Managers are the County Attorney, Board of Elections Director, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Director, Public Health Director, Register of Deeds, Sheriff, Social Services Director and Tax Assessor/Collector.
- All other Department Managers are required to consult with the Human Resources Director prior to taking action to suspend, demote, or dismiss employees. Suspensions and demotions are very rarely used as disciplinary action but may be considered in unusual circumstances. Demotions will result in a reduction in pay.

Right to Appeal Disciplinary Action

Employees in departments whose Department Manager is appointed by the County Manager may appeal any suspension, demotion, or dismissal to the County Manager. To appeal such a decision by a Department Manager, the employee must notify the Human Resources Director in writing within 15 days of the date of the decision. If the County Manager should decide in favor of the employee’s appeal, the employee will be reinstated.

The decision of the County Manager is final. Employees in their introductory period are not included in this appeal process.

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Employees in departments whose Department Manager is not appointed by the County Manager (listed above) may or may not have appeal rights. Employees of those departments should check with their supervisor about any appeal rights.

Employees of the departments of Public Health and Social Services who desire to appeal a disciplinary action may obtain a copy of the Personnel Petition Form at www.oah.state.nc.us/hearings.

END OF EMPLOYMENT

If you plan to resign or retire from your employment with the County, you are requested to submit a letter to your Department Manager (with a copy to the Human Resources Department) stating the effective date of your resignation or retirement. Two weeks notice is considered appropriate in most cases, but earlier notice is always appreciated.

Your end of employment date will be the same as your last day worked for all cases of separation except in the case of retirement and/or certain FMLA leave periods. If you are retiring, you are permitted to use annual leave for your last day provided you work at least one (1) day in your last month of employment. For all other separations, you may not use accrued leave beyond your last day worked in order to receive longevity pay, holiday pay, or for any other reason. Your final paycheck will include payment for accrued annual leave up to 30 days if you have been employed longer than 6 months. (Employees working 6 months or less have advanced, not accrued, leave) You must turn in all County property to your supervisor on your last day of work, including keys and identification badge.

Annual Leave Maximum Paid at End of Employment

Work Week	Maximum Hours
40	240
42	252
42.75	256.50
56	336

It is important that you have an exit interview to discuss the status of your insurance benefits and other pertinent matters. (See Exit Interview section.)

If you change your mind and wish to continue to work after the County has accepted your clear verbal or written notice of separation from employment, it will be up to your department manager whether to allow you to withdraw your initial notice of voluntary separation from employment.

If you resign from Forsyth County employment and retire within a year, Forsyth County will report to the Retirement System your accrued sick leave at the time of termination. If you resign and go to another

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North Carolina government agency be sure to check with your new employer to see if they accept a transfer of sick leave.

RE-EMPLOYMENT

If you are a former Forsyth County employee selected for re-employment after November 1, 2002, you will receive credit for your previous service. This includes the annual leave accrual rate and longevity and service date adjustments. A sick leave balance is reinstated only if there has been less than a year break in service and you had accrued (not advanced) sick leave at the time of your separation. It is considered a break in service to move from a position with benefits to a position without benefits. (If sick leave was transferred to another North Carolina government agency, see "Transfer of Sick Leave.") Because you are being re-employed, you are not considered a new employee and you are not advanced the 6 days of sick and annual leave. Salary is determined in the recruitment process.

EXIT INTERVIEW

When you end your employment with Forsyth County by resignation or retirement, you will have an exit interview scheduled with the Human Resources Department. If the Human Resources Department has not contacted you by your next to the last day of employment, you should contact the Human Resources Department to arrange an exit interview. The purpose of the exit interview is to discuss relevant matters of concern to you as a terminating employee. Such matters include:

- Reason for termination
- Status of employee benefits
- Refund of retirement contributions
- Forwarding address