



KNOX COUNTY  
TENNESSEE

# 2022 Teammate Handbook





# KNOX COUNTY TENNESSEE



## **Knox County Teammate Handbook**

**A GUIDE TO PERSONNEL POLICIES  
AND  
TEAMMATE BENEFITS**

**Glenn Jacobs  
COUNTY MAYOR**

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**THIS HANDBOOK WAS PREPARED BY:**

**KNOX COUNTY  
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**HUMAN RESOURCES**

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Dear Knox County Teammate,

Thank you for choosing to work for Knox County! We are glad you're part of the team!

Each of you plays an intricate role in making our community a great place to live, work, and play. You serve as an ambassador to a county that strives to provide exceptional services, high efficiency, and fiscal responsibility for our taxpayers.

We strive to provide a working environment where all teammates feel empowered, valued, and invested. Moreover, we encourage you to share your ideas and vision for Knox County.

Enclosed you will find a wealth of knowledge that outlines our personnel policies, benefits, and your responsibilities and rights as a Knox County teammate. Whether you are new or have been here for many years, I hope you read through it carefully and keep it for future reference.

If you have any questions about this handbook, please feel free to contact the Knox County Human Resources & Benefits team. Their contact information is listed on the inside cover.

I wish you great success in your career at Knox County!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Glenn Jacobs".

Glenn Jacobs  
Knox County Mayor



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## **Introduction**

We are pleased to introduce the Knox County Teammate Handbook. We refer to all employees of Knox County as teammates/team members to emphasize the importance of collaboration, communication, and inclusion. Our mission is to provide exceptional service to our communities, making Knox County the best place to live, work and raise a family. Public service is a noble career path, and we are excited to have you!

This handbook outlines and summarizes basic personnel policies, benefits, teammate responsibilities and rights. This handbook is intended to be useful for all Knox County teammates.

Knox County is committed to providing a quality workplace. It is our goal to:

- Provide management that is skilled, fair and concerned about the welfare of our team;
- Foster a culture of safety and security;
- Create and empower the leaders of tomorrow, today;
- Equitably compensate each teammate in accordance with our classification and compensation plan;
- Fill vacancies or new positions, when possible, by transfer or promotion from within the County;
- Discuss willingly and frankly any problems, complaints or questions on County personnel policies;
- Keep teammates informed of any changes that may affect them or their families, and
- Promote and encourage healthy lifestyles for our teammates and their families.

The foundation of this handbook is the Base Personnel Policies that were approved by the Knox County Commission. This handbook revokes and supersedes all prior handbooks, amendments, policies or communications related to the teammate handbook.

This handbook was developed to provide general guidelines about Knox County policies and procedures for teammates; however, it does not contain promises to any teammate about how any particular situation will be handled. It is a guide to assist teammates in becoming familiar with some of the benefits and obligations of employment, including our policy of at-will employment. None of the guidelines in this handbook are intended to give rise to contractual rights or obligations and are not a guarantee of employment for any specific period of time or any specific type of work. These guidelines, except the policy of employment at-will, are subject to modification, amendment or revocation by Knox County at any time, without advance notice. It is the intention of Knox County to adhere to all Local ordinance, State law and Federal law. To the extent any ordinance is in conflict with State law or Federal law, such law shall be the adhered-to policy, and the handbook will be updated to match.

Amendments may be made periodically by the following process:

- Approved by the County Mayor;
- Reviewed by the Law Department;
- Approved by the County Commission (if required);
- Communicated to all Knox County teammates; and
- Filed in the Knox County Clerk's Office.

It is your responsibility to ensure you have the most up-to-date version of the Handbook. All questions pertaining to information found in this handbook should be referred to Human Resources.



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## ***Policies for Teammates of Elected Officials***

Elected officials have the jurisdiction to create, maintain and administer separate personnel policies and procedures. In these cases, the elected officials will provide the handbook and policies for their teammates. A copy of these documents is on file in the Knox County Clerk's Office. T.C.A. § 5-23-103(a) outlines the initial procedure for elected officials to adopt base personnel policies and procedures separate from a county's base personnel policies.

## ***Credit Union***

The Knox County Employees Credit Union is a state-chartered, not-for-profit, financial institution founded in 1974. The credit union is open to all County teammates and their immediate families. There is no fee to join the credit union, but a minimum balance of \$25.00 is required in a share (savings) account. Members are eligible for share accounts (savings), share draft (checking), certificates of deposit, and IRA accounts. All accounts are federally insured up to \$250,000. In addition, the credit union offers competitive rates on loans to qualifying members. Visit [knoxcountyecu.com](http://knoxcountyecu.com) for a list of current rates, services offered, locations and much more.

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# Employment Policies

## ***Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Policy***

Knox County maintains an equal employment opportunity policy and does not discriminate in hiring practices or terms and conditions of employment. All applicants and teammates receive equal employment opportunities and all personnel decisions, actions, and conditions affecting teammates, including, but not limited to assignment, transfer, promotion, and compensation, will be governed by the principles of equal opportunity.

Discrimination against any person in recruitment, examination, appointment, training, promotion, retention, or discipline because of political or religious opinions or affiliations or because of race, religion, national origin, sex, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by law is prohibited. Anyone found to be engaging in any type of retaliation or unlawful discrimination will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

### **Retaliation Strictly Prohibited**

Knox County teammates who exercise their right to report violations of the Equal Employment Opportunity Policy, or assist others in exercising their rights, are protected from retaliation. Retaliation occurs when a teammate is punished for engaging in legally protected activity. Retaliation may include any negative job action, such as demotion, discipline, or termination. Teammates are protected from retaliation for having made a complaint, charge, testified, assisted, or participated in any manner in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing under state or federal employment laws, including but not limited to Title VII, Age Discrimination in Employment Act, Equal Pay Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, Family Medical Leave Act, or the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act. Teammates are also protected from retaliation for reporting illegal activities.

Unlawful retaliation against a teammate is a serious violation of policy, and a report/complaint of retaliation will be investigated promptly. Complaints shall be made in writing, on a form available through Human Resources or submitted through the [online complaint portal](#). If unlawful retaliation is found to have occurred, disciplinary action will be taken and may include termination.

### **Unlawful Discrimination**

Unlawful discrimination also includes harassment based on any status protected by law, including but not limited to gender, race, religion, national origin, age, disability, and political affiliation or activities. The nature of harassment often makes it impossible to detect unless the person being harassed makes a complaint. Teammates have a responsibility to report complaints of any violations of this EEO Policy as soon as possible using the procedures prescribed in this Handbook and Knox County's Ordinances. Violations of this EEO Policy include, but are not limited to, the following:

#### **Sexual Harassment**

Each director, supervisor, and teammate has a responsibility to maintain the workplace free of any form of sexual harassment. Sexually harassing conduct in the workplace, whether committed by teammates, non-supervisory personnel, or members of the public, is prohibited.

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Such conduct includes but is not limited to:

- Sexual flirtations, touching, advances, or propositions;
- Verbal abuse of a sexual nature;
- Graphic or suggestive comments about an individual's dress or body;
- Sexually degrading words to describe an individual;
- The display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures, including nude photographs.

As with any form of harassment, you have the responsibility to report sexual harassment as stated in this handbook. Any teammate, supervisor, or director who is found to have engaged in sexual harassment of another teammate will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

### Abusive Conduct

Knox County believes that all teammates have the right to be treated with dignity and respect in the workplace. No teammate shall engage in threatening, violent, intimidating or abusive conduct or behavior. Abusive conduct includes but is not limited to:

- Repeated verbal abuse such as derogatory remarks, insults or epithets;
- Nonverbal conduct that is threatening, intimidating or humiliating; or
- Sabotaging or undermining a teammate's work performance.

A single act generally will not constitute abusive conduct unless such conduct is determined to be severe and egregious.

Abusive conduct does NOT include:

- Progressive Counseling/Disciplinary procedures as provided in this handbook;
- Routine counseling or correction of work performance;
- Reasonable work assignments;
- Individual differences in styles of personal expression;
- Passionate expression with no intent to harm others;
- Differences of opinion on work related concerns; or
- The non-abusive exercise of managerial prerogative.

### ***EEO/Retaliation Complaint Procedure***

Questions, concerns and complaints about any type of discrimination, harassment, unlawful retaliation or abusive conduct must be brought to the attention of the Senior Director of the Human Resources & Benefits Department, or his/her authorized representative, who is the EEO Officer. Complaints of discrimination, harassment, retaliation and abusive conduct shall be made in writing on the form available through the Human Resources Office or through the [online complaint portal](#). If you need assistance or an accommodation completing the form, the Human Resources Office will provide such assistance. Their contact information is located at the front of this Handbook. Questions regarding the filing of complaints related to illegal, improper, wasteful or fraudulent activity are referred to in the Code of Ethics policy on page 8 of this handbook.

Human Resources will investigate the complaint. You will be advised of the results of the investigation and Knox County's decision regarding the complaint. A record of the complaint and findings will become part of the complaint investigation record, and the file will be maintained separately from your personnel file. Complaints will be treated as confidential to the extent reasonably practicable.

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## **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

Knox County complies with the *Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Public Law 101-336 (ADA), as amended*, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. It is Knox County policy not to discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities regarding application procedures, hiring, advancement, discharge, compensation, training or other terms, conditions and privileges of employment.

Knox County is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities so that they may perform the essential job duties of their positions unless it would impose an undue hardship on the employer. Reasonable accommodation is any change to a job, the work environment, or the way things are usually done that allows an individual with a disability to apply for a job, perform job functions, or enjoy equal access to benefits available to other individuals in the workplace. If you have a disability, you may request a reasonable accommodation at any time during the application process or during your period of employment. You, your health professional, or any other representative acting on your behalf may request an accommodation. The request shall be made in writing, either to the ADA Coordinator, [ada.coordinator@knoxcounty.org](mailto:ada.coordinator@knoxcounty.org), or through the [online request portal](#). If you need assistance or an accommodation completing the form, the Human Resources Office will provide such assistance. Their contact information is located at the front of this Handbook. You can also email [ada.coordinator@knoxcounty.org](mailto:ada.coordinator@knoxcounty.org) for such assistance.

The ADA Coordinator and Human Resources shall initiate an interactive process in which the teammate, health care provider and employer each share information about the nature of the disability and the limitations that may affect the teammate's ability to perform the job duties. The purpose of the discussion is to determine what, if any, reasonable accommodations may be needed.

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## **Open-Door Policy for Complaints other than EEO and Ethics Matters**

Knox County is committed to an open-door policy to answer work-related questions, problems, or complaints other than EEO, ADA or Abusive Conduct complaints (*which shall be made in writing on the form available through Human Resources or through the [online complaint portal](#)*). Complaints other than these matters may be made pursuant to Knox County's Open Door Policy:

1. Discuss your concerns with your supervisor first.
2. If you and your supervisor cannot resolve the issue to your satisfaction, discuss your concerns with additional levels of supervision, including management or directors responsible for your area.
3. If you are not satisfied with the response given by your supervisor or if you do not feel comfortable bringing your concerns to the attention of management or directors in your area, you may contact Human Resources through email, phone or the [online complaint portal](#).

The open-door policy is intended to listen and take appropriate action to improve your work environment. Situations may arise when concerns, misunderstanding or different interpretations of the same situation may result in honest differences of opinion. Although anonymous complaints will be addressed to the extent logistically possible, given the lack of information inherent in such a complaint, Knox County encourages teammates making complaints under this policy to be as specific as possible in the complaint and to identify him or herself, along with the work location, so that a more meaningful response can be initiated. Complaints will be treated as confidential to the extent reasonably practicable.

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## **Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964**

Knox County complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This act requires that agencies receiving federal money develop and implement plans to ensure that no one receiving benefits under a federally funded program is discriminated against on the basis of race, color, national origin or limited English proficiency. Complaints must be made in writing or through the [online complaint portal](#). More information regarding Title VI can be [found on our website](#).

## **Veterans' Preference**

Veterans' preference is observed for veterans who served full-time in the United States Armed Forces and meet the minimum qualifications. Any person claiming preference under this section shall submit satisfactory proof of service and honorable discharge with the employment application. The preferences established by this section shall be applicable to recruitment, hiring for employment or advancement in employment classifications managed and maintained by the Human Resources Department. Candidates who have the minimum qualifications will be invited to interview.

## **Background Checks for Job Applications**

If you are selected for employment with Knox County, a background check will be conducted. The County follows the policy guidelines of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) when conducting background checks and fully complies with the law under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

- A background check will only be conducted on an applicant who has received a conditional offer of employment.
- Information sought in a background check will only be job-related.
- The acknowledgement statement granting the County permission to conduct a background check is acknowledged during the application process or the candidate will sign the acknowledgement statement when a conditional offer is made.
- Confidentiality of information obtained during a background check is governed by the Public Records Act.

### Types of background checks:

1. Criminal Background Checks—Criminal background checks will be conducted on all applicants once they are selected for employment.
2. Vehicle Driving Records—Vehicle driving records are checked if your job duties require you to drive a vehicle on County business.
3. Credit History Background Checks—A credit history background will only be conducted if your primary job duties will include handling money, finances or auditing.
4. Verification of Education and Professional Credentials—Some County departments may verify educational or professional certification of all selected job applicants in that department.
5. DOT Background Check—Commercial truck drivers who are selected for a County job driving a truck will have a DOT background check from the applicant's previous employers.

The Human Resources Department will be responsible for evaluating applicant background checks and complying with all laws and regulations pertaining to background checks.

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## ***HIPAA and Protected Health Information***

Knox County complies with the *Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA)*, including the *Privacy Rule* enacted in 2000 and as amended in 2002, which follows guidelines involving the protected health information (PHI) of teammates, dependents and patients.

The HIPAA Privacy Rule establishes national standards to protect individuals' medical records and other personal health information and applies to health plans, health care clearinghouses, and those health care providers that conduct certain health care transactions electronically.

Due to the nature of the business conducted by Knox County Government, it is a HIPAA Hybrid Entity. The Rule requires appropriate safeguards to protect the privacy of personal health information and sets limits and conditions on the uses and disclosures that may be made of such information without patient authorization.

The Rule also gives patients' rights over their health information, including rights to examine and obtain a copy of their health records, and to request corrections. If you have questions, want additional information or need to report a problem regarding your protected health information, please contact the Knox County Privacy Officer at (865) 410-6341 (cell), (865) 215-5274 (office), or email: [privacy@knoxcounty.org](mailto:privacy@knoxcounty.org).

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## Code of Ethics

It is the policy of Knox County to uphold, promote and demand the highest standards of ethics from all teammates and officials, whether elected or appointed. Accordingly, all County teammates should maintain the utmost standards of personal integrity, truthfulness, honesty, and fairness in carrying out their public duties; avoid any improprieties in their roles as public servants; and never use their County position or powers for improper personal gain.

### ***Ethical Conduct***

You are required to maintain the highest ethical standards in the conduct of your official duties. This also applies to non-work situations when you identify yourself as a County teammate (i.e., wearing a County identification badge, distributing a County business card, wearing a County uniform, driving a County vehicle, etc.). In order to fulfill this requirement, the following points are made:

- Personal characteristics such as honesty, courtesy, dependability, sobriety, and use of sound judgment are required for all teammates in all classes of work in the County;
- There shall be no activity which is in conflict with the interest of your official duties; and
- You cannot use your position with the County for private interest.

### ***Knox County Hotline***

Tennessee law requires that Knox County establish a confidential way for teammates and the general public to report illegal, improper, wasteful or fraudulent activity in the County. If you observe any teammate engaging in activity which you consider illegal, improper, wasteful or fraudulent in Knox County, view the [Knox County Internal Audit webpage](#) to access the third-party vendor who will handle the report. Reports can be made anonymously and confidentially. The Hotline operates 24/7.

### ***Duty to Report***

If you have direct or indirect knowledge of any suspected illegal, improper, wasteful or fraudulent activity, including but not limited to theft or misuse of Knox County property or services, involving a teammate with Knox County, you must immediately report such activities through the [Knox County Hotline](#), or to the Senior Director of Human Resources & Benefits, or his/her authorized representative. The report shall be in writing and failure to report such activity may lead to disciplinary action up to and including termination. Complaints will be treated as confidential to the extent reasonably practicable.

### ***Conflict of Interest***

Employment with Knox County is a public trust. You must not have any financial interest in, or receive any financial benefit from, any acquisition or expenditure related to County activities that interferes or conflicts with the full discharge of your duties. For further information, see Human Resources for a copy of the Code of Ethics Policy or [view it online](#).

### ***Political Activity***

You may join or affiliate with civic organizations of a partisan or a political nature, may attend political meetings and may advocate and support the principles or policies of civic or political organizations in accordance with the Constitution and laws of the State of Tennessee and in accordance with the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America.

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However, you may **not**:

- Engage in any political activity while on duty;
- Use official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election or a nomination for office;
- Be required as a duty of employment or as a condition of employment, promotion or tenure of office to contribute funds for political or partisan purposes;
- Coerce or compel contributions for political or partisan purposes from another teammate of the County; or
- Use any supplies or equipment of the County for political or partisan purposes.

### ***Secondary Employment***

A teammate shall not engage in any employment outside their primary employment with Knox County which adversely affects their work performance as a teammate of the County, creates a conflict of interest or creates the appearance of a potential conflict of interest.

If you engage in other employment, you must notify your supervisor in writing using the specified Secondary Employment Form, stating the name of the employer, the nature of work or business, specific duties and hours worked per week. This form can be obtained through Human Resources or your supervisor. This must be submitted annually and/or if there are changes in your secondary employment. Your supervisor will send the form to your department director and to the Human Resources Department for placement in your personnel file. If your supervisor believes there may be a potential incompatibility between the outside employment and County employment due to either the number of work hours, nature of work or scheduling requirements, he/she shall submit appropriate recommendations to Human Resources. The final decision will be made jointly by the Human Resources Director and your department director.

You shall at all times give first priority to the performance of your Knox County job. County work schedules will not be adjusted to accommodate non-County work schedules.

### ***Nepotism***

You are not permitted to directly supervise a relative. Direct or immediate supervision includes, but is not limited to, any participation in the hiring decision, promotional decision, work assignment decision, shift assignment decision, disciplinary decision or the evaluation process of another teammate.

Violations occurring as a result of marriage, living arrangement, promotion or reorganization shall be resolved by transfer to another department or resignation/termination to eliminate the violation. For the purpose of this policy, “relative” means parent, stepparent, foster parent, parent-in-law, child, spouse, brother, brother-in-law, foster brother, stepbrother, sister, sister-in-law, foster sister, stepsister, grandparent, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, grandchild, or another person who resides in the same household. A court-appointed legal guardian or an individual who has acted as a parent substitute is also included within this definition.

For the purpose of this policy, “department” means the major departments of Knox County as created by the County Mayor and approved by resolution of the Knox County Commission.



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## County Equipment

County equipment, materials, vehicles, and/or other resources assigned to you shall be used with care and economy and shall be used only for County purposes. Waste or misuse of County resources may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

## Gifts and Contributions

You may not solicit or accept, either directly or indirectly, for yourself or for any member of your household, any gift, gratuity, service, favor, entertainment, lodging, transportation, loan, loan guarantee or anything of monetary value from any person who:

- Has, or is seeking to obtain, contractual or other business or financial relations with the department or agency of Knox County by which you are employed;
- Conducts operations or activities that are regulated by the department of Knox County by which you are employed; or
- Has interests that may be substantially affected by the performance or nonperformance of your official duties.

### Exceptions

The prohibitions on accepting gifts, entertainment and favors do not apply to:

- Meals and entertainment: Food, beverage and entertainment provided as part of a meal or other event if the value of such items does not exceed \$50 per occasion, with the limit of two meals per day.
- Family members or friends of long standing: There is no prohibition if the circumstances make it clear that it is the relationship, rather than the business or the persons concerned, which is the motivating factor and where the value of the gift, entertainment or favor is appropriate to the circumstance and consistent with the long-standing relationship.
- If such a gift, entertainment, or favor exceeds \$100 in value, you must disclose the nature and value of the gift, entertainment or favor in a letter to the County Mayor.
- Ordinary loans: There is no prohibition if the loan is from an established financial institution made in the course of business on usual and customary terms. However, there can be no guarantees or collateral provided by any person described in the first paragraph of this section on Gifts and Contributions.
- Unsolicited advertising material: You may keep and use gift items with advertising (calendars, pens, key chains, etc.) as long as you did not request the items and they are of nominal value.

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# Classification and Compensation

## ***Employment At-Will***

Knox County is an at-will employer and as such there is no specific length or guarantee of continued employment. Either you or the County may terminate your employment at-will, without cause or prior notice, at any time. None of the County's policies may be construed to create a contract of employment or any other legal obligation, express or implied, and any policy may be amended, revised, supplemented, rescinded, or otherwise altered, in whole or in part, at any time, at the sole and absolute discretion of Knox County.

## **New Teammates**

An initial evaluation of your performance may be conducted upon completion of your first 90 days of employment. Your supervisor may evaluate your performance more often if necessary.

## ***Temporary and Seasonal Teammates***

You are considered a temporary teammate when hired for a stated or specific term of employment of less than one year and work less than 18.5 hours per week (<962 hours yearly).

## ***Part-Time Teammates***

You are a part-time teammate if hired to work less than 30 hours per week on a regular basis.

## ***Full-Time Teammates***

You are a full-time teammate if hired to work a minimum of 30 hours per week on a regular basis.

## ***Job Classification***

All job classifications are based on an analysis of the duties and responsibilities of each position and include minimum requirements of education, training, experience, skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary for the job. The Human Resources Department keeps job descriptions on file. When you begin a new position, you should receive a copy of your job description.

## ***Compensation Plan***

The compensation plan intends to provide equal compensation for work of equivalent responsibility, pay according to work performance and/or outstanding service and establish pay rates which are comparable with those of other government entities and regional employers. Each position is rated according to experience, knowledge, training, duty complexity, leadership, effect of errors, communication, problem solving, physical demands, potential work hazards, financial stewardship/responsibility and education. Teammates are generally hired at the first step of the position's pay grade but may receive a higher salary depending on experience and skill level.

## ***Pay Periods***

You are paid on a bi-weekly basis. Payroll is processed every other Friday. Some pay dates may occur earlier due to holidays.

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## ***Exempt and Non-Exempt Teammates***

If you are a non-exempt teammate, you are covered by the overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act. You will receive time-and-a-half in compensatory time for any time actually worked beyond 40 hours in one week. (Time off such as holidays, annual leave, or sick leave does not count as time worked.)

If you are an exempt teammate, you are not covered by the overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act. There are several categories of exempt teammates, including those in bona fide executive, administrative and professional positions. Exempt teammates do not receive compensatory time regardless of time worked.

Classifying a position as “exempt” is made on the basis of comparing actual job duties with criteria established by the Department of Labor. A job title, for example, is not sufficient data to classify a job as exempt from overtime status. The responsibility for classifying Knox County positions as exempt or non-exempt lies with the Human Resources Department.

### **Overtime Compensation/Compensatory Time**

In accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act, Knox County grants non-exempt teammates compensatory time off instead of payment for time worked in excess of 40 hours in a work week. Compensatory time will be granted at time-and-a-half for all time worked in excess of 40 hours.

You may use accrued compensatory time within a reasonable period after making the request if your absence does not unduly disrupt the operations of the department. If you wish to use “comp time,” you should request leave using the procedure in place in your department. Be aware that work and staffing may impact approval, but your supervisor should make a reasonable effort to honor your request.

Compensatory time is cumulative to a maximum of 240 hours (160 hours of actual overtime worked) for all eligible Knox County teammates. No hours of compensatory time may be accrued beyond the maximum of 240 hours, except under the following circumstances:

- If your additional work hours were for a public safety activity, an emergency response activity, or a seasonal activity, you may accrue no more than 480 hours of compensatory time (320 hours of actual overtime worked).
- All accrued compensatory time must be used by June 30 of each year, or it will roll to your sick leave account.

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## ***Working During Lunch Periods***

Lunch period is time set aside for eating. This time is not considered part of the basic workday and no pay is earned during this period. A workday may not be shortened by “working through” or reducing the lunch period on a voluntary basis. Eliminating or reducing your lunch period requires prior approval from your immediate supervisor. Such approvals must be limited and will typically be for one day due to unusual or special circumstances. Working through the lunch period is not to be used as an on-going solution for scheduling issues.

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## ***Working Before/After Regular Hours***

You may not voluntarily begin work early, or work after hours, to extend your workday for the purpose of accumulating compensatory time. Prior approval from the immediate supervisor is required for any adjustment to the work schedule.

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# General Personnel Policies

## ***Attendance***

You are an important member of the Knox County team. We are committed to providing the highest level of services and functions to better serve the community. In order to accomplish this, your prompt and regular attendance is required.

In case of an illness or injury that would prevent you from reporting to work at the scheduled time, you are required to contact your supervisor prior to your shift. Your supervisor may specify the method(s) of communication allowed for this type of notification, such as phone call, text message or email. If your supervisor is unavailable, you are required to contact the next-level manager, director, or to the person designated by your supervisor.

Failure to provide notification of absence for three consecutive workdays may result in removal from the payroll as having resigned without notice. Teammates who resign under such circumstances are not eligible for rehire.

## ***Personal Appearance***

Dress, grooming and personal cleanliness standards have lasting impressions on all teammates and members of the public. During business hours, it is expected that everyone has a clean and neat appearance and is dressed according to the requirements of their position.

## ***Work Hours and Time Records***

The normal workweek consists of 37.5 hours or 40 hours depending on the job classification and work location. Core business hours are 8:00 am to 4:30 pm. Some jobs may require other hours of service. In such cases, the immediate supervisor will inform you of your work hours.

You will be responsible for completing a Knox County timecard with your beginning and ending work times, including lunch. This is necessary for payroll calculation of your earnings. Non-exempt teammates are required to complete an accurate timecard of beginning and ending work times, including lunch. Exempt teammates may also be required to complete accurate timecards. **Anyone who willfully falsifies a time record will be subject to immediate dismissal.**

## ***Alternative Work Arrangement Options (Other than ADA Accommodations)***

Knox County recognizes the importance of alternative work arrangement options in certain circumstances. However, not every position is eligible with the best interests of Knox County governing the decision. The department director, in consultation with the Human Resources Department, is responsible for determining which roles are eligible. A teammate requesting an alternative work arrangement option must submit the request form. Email [human.resources@knoxcounty.org](mailto:human.resources@knoxcounty.org) to receive a copy of the request form. If approved, a signed copy of the alternative work arrangement agreement will be added to your personnel file.

Knox County is an at-will employer and as such there is no specific length or guarantee of continued employment. Either you or the County may terminate your employment at-will, without cause or prior notice, at any time.

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## ***Canvassing or Solicitation***

Non-teammates are not permitted to solicit, whether verbally or by distribution of written material to Knox County teammates or the general public, for commercial purposes during work hours in work areas. Solicitations by Knox County teammates made to other Knox County teammates are permitted only in non-work areas and during non-work hours.

Non-work areas include lobbies, hallways, elevators, stairs, sidewalks, parking areas, patios, lunchrooms or other areas not regularly scheduled for work activities. Non-work hours include before and after scheduled work hours, lunch periods and approved breaks.

Teammates or outside charitable organizations who wish to solicit Knox County teammates for charitable purposes or to schedule activities in Knox County offices, must submit a request and must be approved by the County Mayor.

## ***Inclement Weather***

Inclement Weather without Official Closing: Inclement weather usually does not warrant closing of county offices. Absence due to inclement weather requires you to make a personal judgment pertaining to your safety in traveling to and from work. Loss of work time for this reason is charged to your accrued compensatory time or annual leave. If you have no compensatory time or annual leave, then the time is charged as leave without pay.

Official Closings Due to Inclement Weather: The County Mayor will decide if Knox County offices will be closed on normal workdays during inclement weather. The official outlet for closing information is the County's website, [www.knoxcounty.org](http://www.knoxcounty.org). Closing information will be posted on the County website and on social media before it is distributed anywhere else. Closing information will also be given to Knoxville media outlets for publication, if they so choose. Senior Directors or their designees may determine closing for departments that work evenings and/or weekends (i.e., Library, Convenience Centers).

The County Mayor will also contact your director to inform him/her of the closing and each department will have a notification process. If you have any question about an official closing, you should contact your immediate supervisor. The County Mayor (or designated Senior Directors) will also determine whether certain "critical emergency service personnel" must report to work during inclement weather.

Such critical emergency service personnel may include teammates from:

- Engineering and Public Works
- Regional Forensic Center
- Health Department
- Information Technology

If other teammates are needed to assist with services, they will be contacted by a supervisor.

If you are not required to work during an inclement weather closing, you will receive administrative pay for your regularly scheduled working hours during the period of closing. If you are among the critical emergency service personnel who must work, you will receive wages plus compensatory time for the hours actually worked. If you are not scheduled to work during an inclement weather closing, you will not be paid for the closing. Any teammate on annual, sick, or any other leave with pay during the declared times of closing, you will receive administrative leave with pay and will **not** have to charge that time to your leave balance.

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## Central Digital Personnel Files

The central digital personnel files are public records and are maintained in the Human Resources Department. To review a file, visit [www.knoxcounty.org/recordsmgmt](http://www.knoxcounty.org/recordsmgmt). There is an online portal that streamlines the process, saves time, and reduces waste. Hard copy requests can also be made by submitting a request form also found at the link above. Paper copies will be printed and made available to you for viewing. A sign-out sheet will be maintained showing who reviewed the file and the date. A teammate of Human Resources will remain in the room while the file is being reviewed.

The Human Resources Department will make a reasonable effort to notify a teammate of any public requests made to review his/her personnel file.

It is important that you maintain up-to-date personal information via the Employee Self Service (ESS) portal or promptly report any changes to the Human Resources & Benefits Department. Other records, such as educational accomplishments, should also be updated as they are factors in consideration for future promotional opportunity. Be sure that your ESS profile and the Human Resources & Benefits Department always has your correct:

- Address and contact numbers such as telephone, mobile phone, and email address;
- Marital status;
- Any increase or decrease in number of dependents; and
- Any change affecting Social Security records.

Tennessee law (TCA Sections 10-7-502 through 10-7-507) requires that “all state, county, and municipal records... shall at all times, during business hours, be open for... inspection by any citizen of Tennessee.” The statute applies to personnel records and allows you to review your personnel file, as well as allowing any member of the public to do so. Medical records are not part of the personnel file.

There is, however, restricted access to certain types of teammate information. The following records of County teammates will not be open for inspection by members of the public:

- Home address;
- Home telephone and personal cellular numbers;
- Bank account information;
- Personal tax information, such as W4's
- Beneficiary designation forms
- Benefits enrollment/declination information
- Social security numbers;
- Driver license information;
- Personal, non-employer issued email address;
- Emergency contact information;
- Same information about a teammate's immediate family members.

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## Performance Management

Performance Management is a broad collection of activities designed to maximize individual and, by extension, organizational performance. Performance reviews are conducted to provide both supervisors and individuals the opportunity to discuss performance objectives, job tasks, encourage and recognize strengths, identify opportunities, and discuss positive, purposeful approaches for meeting goals.

Annual performance reviews are generally completed in the anniversary month of hire. Together you and your supervisor will develop goals to enhance your performance and professional growth.

## Progressive Counseling

In cases where a teammate displays inappropriate conduct, violates policy and procedures, or continues to exhibit poor performance – and the activity does not call for automatic dismissal – Knox County may or may not follow a progressive counseling process. Knox County's generally preferred approach is to remind teammates of our expectations and give each of them a reasonable opportunity to adjust their behavior and/or performance while providing consistency in counseling and discipline. The four steps to the progressive counseling process may include a verbal warning, written warning, final warning or adverse action.

1. Verbal – The first step is usually a documented verbal warning from the supervisor. The supervisor includes dates, times and details of incidents of improper conduct or poor performance, an outline of clear expectations, and the date the warning was given. The teammate may also be placed on a performance improvement plan. This is then sent to Human Resources for review and scanned into the personnel file of the teammate. The teammate may submit a written statement, if desired. After one year, the teammate may request removal of a verbal warning from their personnel file, if no other disciplinary actions have been taken.
2. Written – The second step in the process is usually a written warning with specific examples cited, a specific time frame for correction, and consequences of failure to improve. The teammate may also be placed on a performance improvement plan. A copy is sent to Human Resources for review and scanned into the personnel file of the teammate. The teammate may submit a written statement, if desired.
3. Final Warning – The third step in the process is usually a final warning from the supervisor, with additional examples cited demonstrating the failure of the teammate to correct their actions or performance. The teammate is placed on a performance improvement plan with a specific time frame for correction, and consequences of failure to improve. A copy is sent to Human Resources for review and scanned into the personnel file of the teammate. The teammate may submit a written statement, if desired.
4. Adverse Action – If repeated attempts fail to produce satisfactory results, the teammate will be subject to some form of adverse action. The term adverse action means an action involving suspension, demotion or dismissal. Before the action becomes effective, the supervisor must obtain approval from the Department Director and approval of the Human Resources Director or his/her designee.

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Any teammate who receives three documented warnings in a 12-month period is subject to dismissal as is the teammate who receives repeated progressive counseling for any reason. Knox County is under no obligation to follow these steps in sequence or even to follow them at all. Knox County reserves the right to terminate anyone's employment immediately without warning. Either you or Knox County may terminate your employment at will, without cause or prior notice, at any time.

### ***Dismissals/Terminations without Progressive Counseling***

Knox County has no tolerance for certain behaviors or violations, which will be considered cause for immediate dismissal on the first offense. Some examples, though NOT all-inclusive, are:

- Unlawful conduct, including but not limited to theft of property or services, vandalism, willful destruction of County or teammate property, and unlawful discrimination or retaliation
- Conduct involving dishonesty, including but not limited to falsifying a time and attendance record;
- Insubordination (refusal to follow supervisor's instructions);
- Workplace harassment or abusive conduct;
- Endangering your own health or safety or the health or safety of other teammates or citizens;
- Sabotaging the work of others;
- Making fraudulent statements on teammate applications or job records;
- Absence from work without authorization or notification;
- Any violation of the County Alcohol and Drug Policy;
- Improper/unsafe operation of a county vehicle as specified in the Fleet Safety Program; and
- Any other infraction when dismissal is determined to be in the best interests of the County.

### ***Suspensions***

The Department Director may suspend you for cause and without pay for a period of time not to exceed 10 working days in any three-month period. You may not take annual leave, sick leave, or compensatory leave ("comp time") while on suspension. You are also not entitled to any holiday or administrative pay that may occur during your suspension. The progressive counseling process may or may not be followed prior to suspension.

### ***Demotions***

Demotions, an assignment to a job at a lesser basic pay rate, may be made with or without cause including, but not limited to, violations of rules, failure to perform job duties adequately, misconduct, neglect of duty, or reduction in force. The progressive counseling process may or may not be followed prior to demotion.

### ***Promotions, Transfers and Reassignments***

Knox County ensures that no person or groups of persons shall, on the grounds of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information or any other characteristic protected by law, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any and all programs, services, or activities including all employment practices.



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**Promotions:** Knox County continually strives to promote teammates and fill job vacancies on an equal opportunity basis. Promotions are based on an objective evaluation of each vacancy and the candidates involved. Generally, vacancies will be advertised and when possible, Knox County will promote from within and will first consider teammates with the necessary qualifications and skills, unless outside recruitment is deemed to be in the best interest of the County.

You may view internal job postings by logging in to your ESS profile and clicking on Employment Opportunities. You can also view external openings on the Knox County website at [www.knoxcounty.org/hr](http://www.knoxcounty.org/hr). Other local agencies, including the University of Tennessee, may also receive notice of postings.

**Transfers and Reassignments:** It is the policy of Knox County that it may, at its discretion, initiate or approve teammate job transfers. You may request a voluntary job transfer by applying for a posted open position. However, to be eligible for a voluntary transfer, you must be able to meet the requirements of the new position, must have satisfactory performance, must have held your current position for at least six months, and must have no adverse actions during the same time period. The six-month requirement may be waived in situations where a transfer or reassignment is within the best interest of the County.

## ***Resignations***

If you want to resign your position, please notify your immediate supervisor or the department director in writing as soon as possible. A two-week notice is preferred. After you give notice, your supervisor or department director may release you from the job in less than 10 working days provided that all state and federal legal requirements are met. Knox County reserves the right to terminate anyone's employment immediately without warning. Either you or Knox County may terminate your employment at will, without cause or prior notice, at any time.

## ***Reduction in Force***

A reduction in force is the release of a teammate due to lack of funds, curtailment of work, or reorganization. If you are discharged because of a reduction, you are considered terminated unless you are offered and accept another position.

The department director will determine when a reduction in force is warranted and, in coordination with the Senior Director of Human Resources & Benefits, which teammate(s) will be released. The decision about individual teammates is made with consideration of job knowledge, skills, and work performance. If all factors are equal, seniority will govern. If you lose your job through a reduction in force, you may apply for other posted positions, now or in the future.

## Safety

All teammates are risk managers so if you see a hazard, report it to the Risk Management team by calling 865-215-2175 or by emailing [riskmanagement@knoxcounty.org](mailto:riskmanagement@knoxcounty.org). Knox County is concerned for your health and safety in the performance of your job. You must observe all safety rules. Any workplace accidents, incidents or injuries must be reported immediately to your direct supervisor and the Risk Management Department. You will also have to complete a written report and send it to Risk Management within 48 hours. If you are injured and unable to report immediately, then you should report the incident as soon as possible. Your supervisor will also have to file a report.

The Risk Management Department also sponsors a Safety Committee with membership representing all areas of Knox County. This group meets monthly and advises both management and teammates on matters of safety and health. For additional information about any safety concern, please contact the Risk Management Department at (865) 215-2175 or [riskmanagement@knoxcounty.org](mailto:riskmanagement@knoxcounty.org).

**Failing to report an accident, wear proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) or failing to follow County-wide or departmental safety protocols may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.**

## Garnishments and Levies

In the event that garnishment or similar proceedings are instituted against a teammate, Knox County will deduct the required amount from the teammate's paycheck. If your wages are garnished, be sure that all correspondence to your employer are sent to:

**Knox County Payroll Department  
Room 635 City-County Building  
400 Main Street  
Knoxville, TN 37902**

## Alcohol and Drugs – Drug Free Workplace Policy

Knox County is committed to a safe working environment and to making adequate provisions for the safety and health of its teammates at their place of employment. The County regards its personnel as individuals as well as teammates and believes that alcoholism and drug addictions are illnesses and should be treated as such. Knox County further believes that if you develop alcoholism or other drug addictions you can be helped to recover and should be offered appropriate assistance.

It is in the best interest of you and the County that when alcoholism or drug addiction is present it should be diagnosed and treated at the earliest possible date. Confidential treatment of the diagnosis and recovery process for alcoholism or drug addiction is essential.

Substance abuse can be reasonably expected to produce impaired job performance, lost productivity, absenteeism, accidents, wasted materials, lowered morale, rising health care costs, and diminished interpersonal relationship skills. Knox County and its teammates share a commitment to create and maintain a drug-free workplace.

The full Drug and Alcohol policy is available from the Human Resources & Benefits Department. Please call (865) 215-2321 if you would like a copy. This section offers a brief summary of that policy.

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**Pre-Employment Testing:** All applicants considered for employment in safety-sensitive positions are required to submit to a urinalysis test for the detection of the illegal use of drugs, examples are but not limited to:

Lifeguard	Equipment Operator
Laborer	Mechanic
Light-equipment operator	Medical Examiner
Heavy-equipment operator	Medical Legal Death Investigator
All positions requiring a commercial driver license (CDL)	Autopsy Technician

**Teammates on Duty or on County Property:** You must not manufacture, distribute, dispense, possess, or use illegal drugs or drug paraphernalia, nor may you be under the influence of such drugs. Furthermore, you must not be under any degree of intoxication or odor from alcohol, or possess open alcoholic beverage containers while on duty, or on County property or in attendance at County approved functions.

**Use of Prescription Drugs:** You must not use or take prescription drugs above the level recommended by your prescribing physician and must not use prescribed drugs for purposes other than those for which they are intended. If you are authorized to drive a County vehicle or if you use your own vehicle for county purposes, you must notify your supervisor or director of any illness, physical condition or use of medication that may impair or affect your ability to safely drive a vehicle. Failure to notify your supervisor that you are taking medication that may affect driving may lead to disciplinary action up to and including termination (See *Fleet Safety Program* §10(A), 2016).

**Teammates Convicted of a Criminal Drug Law:** If you are convicted of any criminal drug law offenses (including alcohol, prescription drugs, or over-the-counter drugs), you must notify your supervisor or director no later than five days after the conviction. Within 30 days after receiving notice of a conviction, the County will take appropriate disciplinary action and/or refer the teammate to an appropriate substance abuse rehabilitation program. Your failure to report the conviction within the time prescribed will lead to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

**Reasonable Suspicion of Drug or Alcohol Use:** Whenever a department director, the Senior Director of Human Resources & Benefits and/or someone authorized in his/her absence reasonably suspects that your work performance or on-the-job behavior may have been affected in any way by illegal drugs or alcohol or that you have otherwise violated the Knox County Drug-Free Workplace Substance Abuse Policy, you may be required to submit a breath and/or urine sample for drug and alcohol testing.

When a supervisor observes or is notified of behaviors or events that lead the supervisor to believe that a teammate is in violation of the Drug-Free Workplace Substance Abuse Policy, the supervisor must notify the hiring authority or director.

**Refusal to Submit to Required Testing:** If you are required to submit to drug/alcohol testing based upon reasonable suspicion and refuse, you may be charged with insubordination and necessary procedures may be taken to terminate your employment.

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## ***Tobacco Use***

Tobacco products, including electronic/vapor cigarettes, may only be used outside buildings in a specific area designated by the building manager. Ask your supervisor where this area is located at your facility. Additionally, tobacco products, including electronic/vapor cigarettes, may not be used in any vehicle owned or leased by the County.

## ***Computers, Smartphones, Tablets and Other Electronic Equipment***

Information Technology (IT) assets, including but not limited to, computers, smartphones, tablets, peripherals, software, electronic media and files are County property and are provided for the use of County teammates for conducting official County business.

Electronic signatures on email must state only general information about the teammate (i.e., name and contact info). Your supervisor may instruct to change text, icons, backgrounds, fonts or other information to be consistent with professional email communication.

The Knox County Fleet Safety Program prohibits teammates while operating vehicles on county business from using electronic communication devices, with the exception of hands-free devices.

The County actively monitors network services and resources, including, but not limited to, real time monitoring. County teammates should have no expectation of privacy. These communications are considered to be County property and may be examined by management for any reasons including, but not limited to, security and/or teammate conduct.

This includes but is not limited to:

- Monitoring your internet usage;
- Reviewing your internet browser history;
- Reviewing any downloaded or uploaded material;
- Reviewing emails sent or received by you; and/or
- Monitoring the content of stored files on County devices such as computers, smart phones, tablets or other tech and related equipment.

Passwords: All passwords used to gain access to any device owned by the County must be provided to the department director or the Information Technology department upon request. The use of undisclosed passwords is prohibited. Knox County will not request or require a teammate to disclose a password that allows access to personal accounts.

All Knox County teammates that have access to County IT resources must abide by the Information Security Management Policy and any subsequent policies, guidelines, or requirements surrounding the protection of County IT resources.

Prohibited Use for County Network Resources:

- Intentional distribution or sharing with unauthorized persons any information that is confidential by law, rule, or regulation.
- Installing or utilizing hardware or software that has not been authorized by KCIT.
- Attaching processing devices that have not been authorized by KCIT.

- Using network resources to play or download games, music, or videos that are not in support of business functions.
- Leaving workstations unattended without engaging password protection for the keyboard or workstation.
- Intentional use of network resources for activities that violate conduct policies established in the Knox County Teammate Handbook.
- Sending, displaying, disseminating, or storing inappropriate, illegal, or sexually explicit material is prohibited unless the user can demonstrate a legitimate County interest in such conduct (i.e. criminal investigations, etc.).
- Prohibited Use for County E-mail:
  - Intentional distribution of unsolicited junk email or chain letters (e.g. “spam”).
  - Intentional distribution of any material that contains viruses, Trojan horses, worms, time bombs, cancelbots, or any other harmful or deleterious programs.
  - Intentional distribution or receipt of communications that violate conduct policies established by the department where the user is employed or under contract.
  - Intentional distribution of confidential material to an unauthorized recipient or sending confidential email without the proper security standards (e.g. encryption) being met.
  - Using the email system to solicit or to conduct personal business (e.g., Netflix, household bills, etc.).
  - Sending or posting discriminatory, harassing, or threatening messages or images via the County’s email service.

Prohibited Use for County Internet Access:

- Using the Internet to access illegal or sexually obscene, offensive, or explicit material.
- Utilizing unauthorized peer-to-peer networking or peer-to-peer file sharing.
- Utilizing the Internet when it violates any federal, state, or local law.
- Downloading, copying, or pirating software and electronic files that are copyrighted or without authorization.
- Sending or posting discriminatory, harassing, or threatening messages or images on the Internet.
- Visiting potentially dangerous websites that can compromise the safety and integrity of Knox County’s network and computers.
- Accessing any social media for anything other than Knox County business.

Knox County teammates that access, create, transmit, or maintain County owned electronic data agree to:

1. protect County confidential data, facilities, and systems against unauthorized disclosure and/or use;
2. maintain all computer access codes in the strictest of confidence; immediately change them if I suspect their secrecy has been compromised and will report activity that is contrary to the provisions of acceptable use to my supervisor or KCIT;
3. be accountable for all transactions performed using my computer access codes;
4. not disclose any confidential information other than to persons authorized to access such information as identified by my supervisor;
5. report to KCIT any suspicious network activity or security breach;
6. complete annual security training as instructed by KCIT;
7. return all assets unlocked to my supervisor or KCIT at my primary job location or the City County Building and provide any passwords to KCIT, if requested;

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8. and acknowledge that as a County teammate, I am the custodian and record keeper for all my emails and electronic communication and that I am responsible for maintaining any records that are considered public record.

Noncompliance with the prohibited use may result in the following immediate actions:

- Written notification will be sent to the Department Director, Elected Official, and/or to the designated points of contact in Knox County Human Resources and Information Technology Departments to identify the user and the nature of the noncompliance as “cause”. In the case of a vendor, subrecipient, or contractor, the contract administrator will be notified.
- Access may be terminated immediately by KCIT, and the user may be subject to subsequent review and action as determined by the department, board, commission leadership, or contract administrator.
- Teammates who have separated from Knox County who refuse to provide passwords, passcodes, or return unlocked devices acknowledge that Knox County reserves the right to not release the user’s final paycheck until the user provides the information requested.

Willful violation or disregard of this policy may result in loss of access and disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment, and any other appropriate legal action, including but not limited to, possible criminal prosecution under the provisions of all applicable laws.

Hardware and software that violate this policy may be disconnected from the network until such violations are corrected.

### ***Personal Electronic Communication Device Usage and Etiquette***

Knox County understands the important and integral part smartphones and other electronic communication devices play in our everyday lives. However, the use of personal devices during work hours must not interfere with a teammate’s job duties or performance. If a teammate’s use of personal devices becomes disruptive or interferes with another teammate executing their job duties, they may be asked to not bring the device into the workplace.

Please be respectful to those around you to minimize disruptions. This means silencing your device during work, in meetings or when interacting with members of the public. Be mindful of those around you when speaking on the phone. It is best not to discuss personal matters in earshot of the general public. All County-owned devices are subject to public records requests.

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## ***Social Media***

Knox County recognizes that online social media has become an integral part of how people communicate, express themselves and interact with others, both on and off the job. As a teammate of the County, you are expected to represent the County responsibly, whether on the job or in the community.

Because of the rapid evolving industry regarding social networking, all teammates should expect periodic updates, edits and amendments to this policy. Any failure to mention a specific program or platform does not suggest or imply exclusion from this policy:

- A. Teammates should understand that they are fully responsible for anything they write, publish, post or view online. Discipline or legal action can result from any teammate that violates the County policy, Code of Ethics or creates a hostile work environment.
- B. Teammates' digital social activity (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) should not insult, defame or attack coworkers, managers or members of the public as this would not align with our Code of Ethics.
- C. Avoid identifying, discussing or posting pictures of others unless documented permission has been obtained.
- D. Except where permitted by applicable Local, State or Federal law, do not reveal confidential information about fellow teammates, personnel issues or any other information that has not been approved for release.
- E. Some teammates may have job responsibilities or job descriptions that specifically call for or prohibit digital activity. Any teammate that has questions regarding how this policy applies to their respective job functions should contact his or her direct supervisor. For those teammates authorized to participate in digital activity while on the job, we ask that they focus that activity on material directly relevant to their job.

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# Leave Policies

## Annual Leave

If you work 18.5 hours or more per week on a regular basis you are eligible for annual leave. The following guidelines apply:

- You may take annual leave anytime during the calendar year (with prior approval) Jan. 1 through Dec. 31;
- If you are involved in military training, you will continue to earn leave while being paid;
- You accrue leave based on the number of paid hours in a pay period. This number may be greater or lesser than your scheduled hours; and
- Your accrual rate increases each year as shown in the table below. The accrual factor increase takes effect the first pay period following your employment anniversary date.

**Annual Leave  
Accrual Factor Table**

Years of Service	Accrual Factor	Maximum Accrued Hours per Year*
Less than 1	.0462	96
1	.0500	104
2	.0538	112
3	.0577	120
4	.0615	128
5	.0654	136
6	.0692	144
7	.0731	152
8	.0769	160
9-20	.0808	168
Over 20	.0923	192

\*Based on a 40-hour work week.



**To calculate your earned hours of annual leave:**

- **From the Accrual Factor Table, find the line for the number of years you have been employed;**
- **Multiply the Accrual Factor number on that line by the number of hours in your bi-weekly pay period (64, 75, 80, etc.);**
- **That answer tells you how many hours of annual leave you earn per bi-weekly pay period;**
- **To determine how many days of annual leave you earn per year, multiply that number by 26 (number of pay periods per year), then divide the resulting number by the number of scheduled hours in your workday (7.5, 8.0, 10.0, etc.).**

**Example If you have been employed two years and work 37.5 hours per week (or 75 hours per pay period):**

$$.0538 \times 75 = 4.035 \text{ hours of leave earned per pay period}$$

$$4.035 \times 26 = 104.91 \text{ hours of leave earned per year}$$

$$104.91 \div 7.5 = 13.988 \text{ days of annual leave earned per year}$$

**The Payroll Dept. rounds fractions to the nearest quarter hour (15 minutes).**

The minimum amount of annual leave you can take is 15 minutes, and leave can only be taken in 15-minute increments.

You may not take annual leave before you have earned it.

The number of accrued leave hours to be used for one day of leave is equal to the number of scheduled paid hours of work for that day of leave. For example, if you work four 10-hour days per work week, you must use 10 hours of annual leave to have the entire day off. If you work 7.5 hours per day, then 7.5 is the number of hours of annual leave you must use to equal one day.

You may take annual leave in the year you earned it, or you may carry it over for use in later years. However, there is a limit to the amount of annual leave you may accrue. Those limits are:

Years of Service	Maximum Accrued Hours
1 - 8	288
9 - 20	312
Over 20	344

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- If you earn annual leave in excess of the maximum amount listed on the table, the excess will be transferred to your sick leave account as of June 30. (and annually thereafter).
  - Authorized time off for annual leave will not be considered as working time for calculating weekly overtime.
  - When you terminate employment, you are entitled to payment for any unused annual leave balance. Payment is based on the rate of compensation received at the time of termination. Annual leave payment is computed on the regular payroll day and is available at the normal time and place. No payment is issued in advance.
  - Terminated teammates that are eligible for rehire will have their original rate of accrual restored if they return within one (1) year of their termination. If a terminated teammate returns after that time period, their accrual rate will reset.
  - Certain amounts paid for unused accrued annual leave when you terminate or retire are treated as compensation for Knox County Retirement System purposes. These amounts are subject to mandatory teammate contribution to the asset accumulation plan, 457(b) deferred compensation plan and the Closed Defined Benefits Plan (DB) teammate contributions, if applicable. These amounts are also counted for purposes of computing the County match contributions to the Asset Accumulation Plan, 457(b), and for Closed DB benefit purposes.

For Retirement System purposes, the maximum amount of your payment for unused accrued annual leave that can be counted is:

1. For termination or retirement after July 1, 2017, your maximum amount listed on the table as of the immediately preceding June 30.
2. Regardless of the Retirement System limits, annual leave accrued above the maximum limit will be paid to you, without withholding for Retirement System teammate contributions.

### ***Annual Leave Scheduling***

You may take your annual leave at any time of the year as long as you have accumulated the time and the needs of the department are met. You must submit your annual leave request to your supervisor and receive approval prior to taking the leave. Your department may have a special form or a procedure for requesting use of annual leave.

### ***Sick Leave Accrual***

If you work 18.5 hours or more per week on a regular basis, you are eligible for paid sick leave for authorized absences as defined in this sick leave section.

The amount of sick leave you earn is based on the number of paid hours per pay period. The number of paid hours is multiplied by the accrual factor of 0.0462 to determine the total sick leave earned.

Examples of sick leave accrual are as follows:

No. of Paid Hours Per Pay Period	Accrual Factor	Hours of Earned Sick Leave Per Pay Period	Hours of Earned Sick Leave Per Year
37	.0462	1.71	44.5
64	.0462	2.96	77.0
75	.0462	3.47	90.2
80	.0462	3.70	96.2

You may not use any hours of sick leave in advance of earning them. There is no “cap” or maximum for the amount of sick leave you can accrue. You may not convert unused sick leave into cash, personal holidays, or annual leave. In addition, unused days of accumulated sick leave are not paid when employment terminates, except as provided upon your retirement. If a terminated teammate, who did **not** retire, is eligible for rehire and returns to Knox County within one (1) year, their sick leave balance will be restored. See *Sick Leave Retirement Payout Eligibility*.

### ***Sick Leave Retirement Payout Eligibility***

Retiring Knox County full time (40hrs / 37.5hrs) teammates with sick leave maintained by the County’s payroll system shall be eligible to receive a payment for unused accumulated sick leave at a rate of \$100.00 per eight or seven and one-half hours (8hrs / 7.5hrs) of accumulated sick leave up to a maximum of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) in accordance with the following:

- The teammate shall retire from the County;
- Retirement eligibility shall be based on the policies of the County Retirement and Pension Board;
- Teammate shall provide a 60-day notice by submitting the Payment of Accumulated Sick Leave Request form to Human Resources. Email [human.resources@knoxcounty.org](mailto:human.resources@knoxcounty.org) to request that form;
- Sick leave is non-pensionable.

If less than 60 days’ notice is given, unused accumulated sick leave shall be paid at a rate of \$60.00 per eight or seven and one-half hours (8hrs / 7.5hrs) of accumulated sick leave up to a maximum of six thousand dollars (\$6,000).

### ***Sick Leave Notification and Approval***

To be eligible for sick leave with pay, you must give your supervisor as much advance notice of an absence as possible. Notification must be no later than the scheduled start time of your workday. Your supervisor may specify the method(s) of communication allowed for this type of notification, such as phone call, text message or email. If your supervisor is not available, you must communicate directly with the manager, department director or to the person designated by your supervisor.

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## ***Sick Leave for Teammate Illness or Injury***

You may use paid sick leave for authorized absences due to your own illness, injury or medical appointments. Knox County encourages teammates to go home or stay home if they are feeling ill or exhibiting symptoms of an illness. If you are absent for less than three consecutive working days, your supervisor may or may not require that you provide a healthcare provider's statement.

To be eligible for sick leave with pay during a continuous period of more than three working days, you must provide a healthcare provider's statement and expected date of return to work, or some written statement of the facts concerning the illness or injury that is acceptable to your supervisor.

If you are out on sick leave for more than three consecutive working days and qualify for protection under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), your supervisor is responsible for notifying you and ensuring that all FMLA guidelines are followed (see FMLA section for more information). Contact Human Resources with any questions.

## ***Sick Leave for Family Illness or Injury***

With proper documentation, you may be permitted to use no more than 20 working days of accrued sick leave in any calendar year to attend to or provide care for certain family members who are ill or injured. If applicable, this leave runs concurrent to FMLA.

Those family members include:

- Spouse
- Parent
- Son or daughter
- Brother or sister
- Grandparent
- Grandchild
- Step-relatives of the above categories
- In-laws of the above categories
- Any person residing in your household

This list is broader than the list of relatives covered in FMLA. If you are out on sick leave for more than three consecutive working days due to family illness that qualifies for protection under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), your supervisor is responsible for notifying you and ensuring that all FMLA guidelines are followed (see the FMLA section for more information). Contact Human Resources with any questions.

In all cases of absence for more than three consecutive days because of family illness (whether FMLA or not), you must provide a healthcare provider's statement certifying that you are needed to provide care for the family member.

The Senior Director of Human Resources & Benefits or his/her designee, in consultation with the department director, may authorize exceptions beyond the 20-working day limit, including the exhaustion of all sick leave in the event of catastrophic illness in your family or household.

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## ***Sick Leave for Medical Appointment***

You may use your accrued sick leave for medical appointments such as doctor, dental, or optical appointments (sick visits, preventive care, assessments or treatments prescribed by your healthcare provider). This includes medical appointments for your family members as described in the previous section on “*Sick Leave for Family Illness.*” In order to minimize disruptions during the workday, it is recommended teammates try to schedule appointments for early morning or late afternoon.

## ***Sick Leave Accounting***

Sick leave may be taken in 15-minute increments. You may not consider authorized days off for sick leave as time worked for calculating weekly overtime compensation. You may use your accrued Sick Leave for your own illness or injury, family illness or injury (specified family members only), medical appointments for self or family, or death of persons not in your immediate family.

## ***Sick Leave Donation Between Teammates***

The intent of allowing teammates to donate sick leave is to assist teammates who because of a long-term personal injury or illness, or the long-term injury or illness of a covered family member under the FMLA., have exhausted their leave benefits and would otherwise be subject to a severe loss of income during a continued absence from work.

The **donor** must meet the following conditions in order to donate sick leave:

- The donor must have a remaining balance of 300 hours **after** the donation;
- The donor can only donate a maximum of one hundred and sixty hours (160) per calendar year, with a maximum of eighty (80) hours donated to a single recipient;
- The donor must complete the transfer form and acknowledge their willingness to donate sick leave to the recipient. Your supervisor or Human Resources has this form available.
- Retiring or resigning teammates will not be eligible to donate sick leave.

The **recipient** must meet the following conditions in order to receive sick leave:

- The recipient must have exhausted all their accumulated sick, annual, and compensatory time, have a diagnosed long-term injury/illness for themselves or FMLA covered family members, the treatment of which requires the recipient to be absent from work more than their accumulated leave time would allow. Absences for normal appointments, routine or elective surgery, common illness and injury, routine births are excluded;
- The recipient must not receive any other form of compensation including Social Security Disability Benefits or other disability-related income replacement;
- A recipient may make their need for leave donations known to other teammates. Such requests should be informal, brief and without pressure;
- A recipient may not offer an incentive to anyone in exchange for donated sick leave;
- Directors, managers and supervisors may not **receive** leave from teammates they supervise;
- A recipient is limited to a maximum of 240 hours of donated sick leave within a 12-month period;
- Donations are not retroactive and will be applied to the pay period following the approval of the donation;
- Donations are applied to the recipient’s balance on an as needed basis; and
- Retiring or resigning teammates will not be eligible to donate sick leave.

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The Payroll Director will transfer the donation from the donor's account to the recipient, subject to the following conditions:

- After receiving a completed form including the signatures of the donor, recipient, Senior Department Director, and the Human Resources Director or his/her designee;
- Donated hours are paid at the recipient's rate of pay, not the donor and once leave has been transferred to the account of the recipient, it may not be returned to the donor.

### ***Bereavement Leave/Funeral Leave***

Death of an immediate family member: You are entitled to a period of bereavement up to five (5) days for each event at regular pay (not including overtime) with no deduction from your leave balances due to the death of any of the following family members:

- Spouse
- Parent
- Son or daughter
- Brother or sister
- Grandparent
- Grandchild
- Step-relatives of the above categories
- In-laws of the above categories
- Any person residing in your household

Bereavement leave does not need to be taken concurrently. You must notify your supervisor as soon as possible. In addition, you may use sick leave if more time is needed. Your supervisor, in coordination with the Human Resources Director, will make the final decision on the number of approved days for bereavement leave based on factors such as required travel and level of involvement in funeral arrangements. Other factors may also be considered. Documentation may be required.

Death of any other person: You may use up to three days of sick leave for the bereavement of other persons not listed above. This leave will be deducted from your sick leave balance. If no sick leave remains, you must use compensatory time or take annual leave. If no accrued leave remains, you must take unpaid leave and the absence will be considered excused.

As stated above, your supervisor will make the final decision on the number of days approved for this leave. Your supervisor must approve any bereavement period that is expected to exceed the three-day limit and you must use annual leave for those additional days. Documentation may be required.

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## Holidays

Knox County observes the holidays listed below. You are eligible to be paid for these holidays if you work at least 18.5 hours per week on a regular basis and are employed before and after the holiday. The County Mayor will announce any additional holidays. Offices may be closed without further notice on the following days:

1. New Year's Day
2. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
3. Presidents Day
4. Good Friday
5. Memorial Day
6. Juneteenth Independence Day
7. Independence Day
8. Labor Day
9. Veterans Day
10. Thanksgiving Day
11. Day after Thanksgiving
12. & 13. Christmas Holiday (Two-day holiday: Dec. 25 and one other day to be announced by the Mayor.)

If a holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday, the County Mayor will determine the day to be taken. If you are eligible for holidays, you will receive pay for each holiday – whether or not you are scheduled to work on those dates. The amount of pay is prorated to the number of hours you work each week, not the hours in a day. This means you will receive the same amount of pay for each holiday.

The chart listed below indicates the amount of holiday credit received based on the number of hours in your work week. If the holiday falls on a day when you are scheduled to work fewer hours than the holiday credit hours you receive, you will take the remaining hours another day.

***Example:** The chart says you will receive five hours of holiday credit, but on the day of the holiday you are only supposed to work three hours. You are still “owed” two hours and you need to take them on another day within the same pay period.*

If the holiday falls on a day when you are scheduled to work more hours than the holiday credit you will receive, you need to “make up” those hours.

**Example:** The chart says you will receive five hours of holiday credit, but on the day of the holiday you are supposed to work six hours. For that day you are paid for five hours, but you missed six hours of work. You will need to work the hour you missed. You may either work an additional hour on another day in the same pay period, or you may choose to use annual leave for that hour.

**Paid Holiday Credit  
Based on Hours in the Regularly Scheduled Work Week**

Hours per Week	Holiday Credit
40	8.00
39	7.75
38	7.50
37	7.50
36	7.25
35	7.00
34	6.75
33	6.50
32	6.50
31	6.25
30	6.00
29	5.75
28	5.50
27	5.50
26	5.25
25	5.00
24	4.75
23	4.50
22	4.50
21	4.25
20	4.00
19	3.75
18.5	3.75

You will need to arrange any schedule changes with your supervisor and receive advanced approval. If you wish to observe a religious holiday, contact your supervisor to make arrangements. Annual leave will be used for time off taken for religious holidays. If you have no accrued annual leave, you must use available compensatory time, sick leave, or leave without pay, in that order.



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## Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

Knox County offers leave under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) for eligible teammates.

**Eligibility:** If you have worked for at least one year and for 1,250 hours in the preceding 12 months, you are eligible to take up to 12 weeks of **unpaid** leave annually when the absence is necessitated by any of the following circumstances:

- The birth or placement for adoption or foster care of a child;
- Your own serious health condition that prevents you from performing the essential functions of your job; or
- The serious health conditions of a child, parent, or spouse if you are needed to help provide care.

**Certification:** If you request leave for your own serious health condition, or to care for the serious condition of a child, parent or spouse, you must provide Knox County with certification from a treating healthcare provider. Healthcare Provider Certification Forms are available from the Human Resources Department.

**Measuring 12 Month Periods:** Knox County has chosen the “measured forward” method that entitles you to 12 weeks of leave during the year beginning on the first date the FMLA leave is taken after the previous 12-month period ends.

*Example: The 12-month period begins Sept. 1, 2022 if that is the first day of FMLA leave. If you exhaust all of your FMLA leave, the next date when you could again take FMLA leave would be Sept. 1, 2023.*

**Intermittent or Reduced-Time Leave:** FMLA leave can be taken on an intermittent or reduced-time basis under certain circumstances. You may request intermittent or reduced leave for the following reasons:

- When medically necessary to care for a seriously ill family member, or because of your own serious health condition; or
- For the birth or placement of a child for adoption or foster care. Intermittent or reduced time leave shall not exceed 12 weeks combined if both spouses are employed by the County.

Only the amount of leave actually taken while on intermittent/reduced schedule leave may be charged as FMLA leave. If you need intermittent/reduced schedule leave for planned medical treatment, you must work with your supervisor to schedule the leave, so it does not unduly disrupt the department’s operations, subject to the approval of your healthcare provider. Recertification of intermittent or reduce-time leave under FMLA will occur every six (6) months, unless otherwise specified.

The County may, in its sole discretion, temporarily transfer a teammate on intermittent leave to an alternative job with equivalent pay and benefits that accommodates recurring periods of leave better than the teammate’s regular job.

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Maternity/Paternity Leave: Maternity/paternity leave is granted to teammates for a maximum of 16 weeks, with the first 12 weeks of leave falling under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and the remaining four weeks as maternity leave under the Tennessee Maternity and Adoption Care Leave Law.

Eligible Knox County teammates will be compensated up to eight (8) weeks at their full, regular rate of pay. This leave will **NOT** pull from existing leave balances and will be utilized first before the concurrent usage of accrued leave, per the FMLA policy. The purpose of this is to allow time for new parent's post-childbirth to nurse, bond with the infant, or bond with the adopted or placed foster child while minimizing the financial impact. Maternity/Paternity leave starts on the date of birth or adoption/placement and can be taken continuously or intermittently. If both parents are Knox County teammates, the paid leave amount will not exceed eight (8) weeks.

Serious Health Condition:

"Serious health condition" means an illness, injury, impairment, physical or mental condition that involves:

- Any period of incapacity or treatment connected with inpatient care (i.e., an overnight stay) in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical care facility;
- A period of incapacity requiring absence of more than three calendar days from work that also involves continuing treatment by (or under the supervision of) a healthcare provider;
- Any period of incapacity due to pregnancy, or for prenatal care;
- Any period of incapacity (or resulting treatment) due to a chronic serious health condition, (e.g., asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, etc.);
- A period of incapacity that is permanent or long-term due to a condition for which treatment may not be effective (e.g., Alzheimer's, stroke, terminal diseases, dialysis, etc.); or
- Any absences to receive multiple treatments (including any period of recovery) by, or on referral by, a healthcare provider for a condition that likely would result in incapacity of more than three consecutive days if left untreated (e.g., chemotherapy, physical therapy, dialysis, etc.).

Military Caregiver Leave under FMLA: Eligible teammates may take up to 26 weeks of job-protected "military caregiver leave" during a single 12-month period. This leave must be used to care for a covered family member with a serious illness or injury that was incurred in the line of duty while on active duty in the regular armed forces, National Guard or Reserves. In this context, a "covered family member" means a spouse, child, parent or next of kin who is a "covered service member".

A covered service member is a person who is a member of the regular armed forces, National Guard or Reserves and is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy, is otherwise in outpatient status, or is otherwise on the temporary disability retired list, for a serious injury or illness incurred in the line of duty on active duty that may render the service member medically unfit to perform the duties of the service member's office, grade, rank, or rating.

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A covered service member also includes a veteran who is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy, for a serious injury or illness and who was a member of the Armed Forces (including a member of the National Guard or Reserves) at any time during the period of five years preceding the date on which the veteran undergoes that medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy. Knox County may, at its discretion, request that a teammate seeking to take military caregiver leave provide a certification from the U.S. Department of Defense that the covered service member's serious injury or illness was incurred in the line of duty while on active duty.

Qualifying Exigency Leave under the FMLA: Eligible teammates may take up to 12 weeks of job-protected leave for a "qualifying exigency" arising out of the fact that the teammate's spouse, child, or parent is on active duty in the Armed Forces and deployed to a foreign country or has been notified of an impending call or order to active duty. There are eight (8) situations when qualifying exigency leave may be taken:

1. in "short-notice deployment" situations, where a covered military member is notified of an impending call or order to active duty or foreign deployment seven (7) or fewer days from the date of deployment, in which case an eligible teammate may take military exigency leave for a period of seven (7) days beginning on the date when the covered military member is notified of the impending deployment;
2. to attend military events, ceremonies, or programs sponsored by the military that are related to the active duty or the call to active duty of a covered military member, or to attend similarly related family support or assistance programs or informational briefings sponsored or promoted by the military;
3. for certain childcare and school activities necessitated by active duty or the call to active duty of a covered military member, including to arrange for alternative childcare, to provide childcare on an urgent, emergency need (but not routine, regular, or everyday) basis, to enroll or transfer a child in a new school or day care facility, or to attend meetings with school or day care staff;
4. to make or update financial or legal arrangements to address a covered military member's absence while on active duty;
5. to attend certain counseling arising from active duty or the call to active duty status of a covered military member;
6. to spend time with a covered military member who is on a short-term, temporary rest and recuperation leave during a period of deployment;
7. to attend certain post-deployment activities, such as arrival ceremonies and reintegration briefings, and to address issues arising from the death of a covered military member while on active duty status; and
8. for certain additional activities arising out of a covered military member's active duty or call to active duty where the employer and teammate both agree on the timing and duration of the leave.

Qualifying exigency military leave is not available to family members of service members in the regular armed forces, or in cases where the call to active duty comes from a state rather than the federal government.

Health Insurance Premiums: During unpaid FMLA leave, the County will continue to pay its portion of health insurance premiums, and you must continue to pay your portion of the premium. **Your** contribution of health insurance premiums should be paid continually according to your pay periods (e.g., weekly, bi-weekly, monthly).

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**If you do not return to work at the end of FMLA leave, you will be required to reimburse the County for payment of health insurance premiums, unless you do not return because of the presence of a serious health condition which prevents you from performing your job or circumstances beyond your control.** You may then choose to elect COBRA coverage. Sufficient notice will be given to you at the end of FMLA when, and if, this event occurs. You will be responsible for any other elected benefit contributions while out on FMLA.

**Accrued Leave: You are required to use your leave balances during FMLA leave. Accrued leave and FMLA leave are used at the same time. You do not take your accrued leave first and then take FMLA.**

A teammate must use paid annual and/or sick leave during a family medical leave of absence in accordance with the County's policies regarding annual and sick time. Once available leave is used, the remainder of FMLA leave will be unpaid. During **unpaid** FMLA leave, you will **not** accrue annual leave pay, sick leave pay, pension, or any other additional benefit. Anything accrued up to the day on which the family leave of absence begins will not be lost.

**Return to Work:** If you return to work from FMLA leave before or on the business day following the expiration of the 12 weeks, you are entitled to return to your job or an equivalent position without loss of benefits or pay.

**Applications:** You are encouraged to discuss the FMLA process with Human Resources when applying for FMLA leave. Applications must be submitted in writing and should be submitted at least 30 days before the leave is to start, or as soon as possible if leave is not foreseeable. You should provide the County with an appropriate medical certification when you request FMLA. When you are on leave, you must periodically report (if possible) to Human Resources and indicate when you intend to return to work. Appropriate forms must be submitted to Human Resources to initiate family leave or to return the teammate to active status.

While on continuous FMLA leave, a teammate may not work in any form of secondary employment. Should Knox County discover that a teammate has worked or is working in any form of secondary employment while on continuous FMLA leave, the teammate will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

## ***Military Leave***

If you are a member of the United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, Army Reserve, Naval Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Air Force Reserve, Coast Guard Reserve, Army National Guard, Air National Guard, State Guard or the commissioned corps of the Public Health Service, you are eligible for military leave for active-duty training, inactive duty training, full-time National Guard duty, or absence to determine your fitness to serve in the Armed Forces. There is no waiting period to be eligible for military leave.

As a result of your membership in any of the named military reserve organizations, you are allowed to receive up to 30 working days per calendar year of paid military leave when you are absent from work because of performance of duty or training in the military reserve. You will receive your regular salary during this leave period. You must provide copies of military orders when requesting such leave. If you are requesting more than 10 days off, you must make the request in writing no less than two weeks in advance.

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## Leave of Absence

If you exhaust all your accrued leave and job protected leave and still need time off for personal or health reasons, you may apply for an unpaid leave of absence for a period of up to three (3) months if you are a full-time teammate. The written request for leave must be given to your supervisor and your department director at least 30 days prior to the start of the requested leave unless the leave is an emergency.

Regardless of the reason for the leave, it is essential that the teammate contact the following departments to ensure benefits are properly administered:

- Human Resources & Benefits Department
- Retirement and Pension Board
- Payroll Department

Your supervisor (or department director) may or may not approve your request for a leave of absence. The decision is at his/her discretion, unless the leave qualifies under the Family Medical Leave Act or other applicable laws. Some of the matters considered in approving the request are your length of service, employment record and the reason for the absence. **You do not accrue sick and annual leave while you are on an approved unpaid leave of absence.**

You must notify your supervisor and Human Resources of the anticipated date of your return to work prior to that date. Your supervisor is responsible for immediately notifying the Benefits Department, the Retirement and Pension Board, and the Payroll Department.

When you return from an unpaid leave of absence, you will be placed in your previous position or a similar position, if available. If the same or similar position is not available, you will receive preference for employment in any available position for which you are qualified. If you fail to return to work at the conclusion of your leave of absence, you will be terminated from employment.

Knox County is an at-will employer and as such there is no specific length or guarantee of continued employment. Either you or the County may terminate your employment at-will, without cause or prior notice, at any time.

If you are on or move to an unpaid leave of absence not designated as a FMLA/military leave, you will be responsible for paying the full cost of your health benefits (employee AND employer portions). You may be required to make monthly premium payments and should work with the Benefits Department to set up a payment plan. Failure to make timely payments of premiums could result in coverage being canceled retroactive to the last day benefits were paid.

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## ***Jury Duty or Court Appearance***

If you are required to appear as a witness in court due to job-related business or summoned to report for jury duty, leave with pay will be granted in accordance with the following provisions:

- Upon receiving a summons to report for jury duty, you shall notify your immediate supervisor on the next working day. You will then be excused from work with pay for the time required while serving as a juror in any court of the United States. You are required to turn in to the Payroll Department any pay you receive from the courts for jury duty. This does not include witness fees and expenses paid from other sources. If you complete your jury duty during regular work hours, you are expected to return to work immediately after.
- Upon receiving a subpoena to testify as a witness due to job-related business, you shall notify your immediate supervisor on the next working day. You will be excused with pay for the time required while attending court as a witness. If you complete your witness duty during regular work hours, you are expected to return to work immediately after.

Any teammate who must appear in court for reasons not associated with job-related business or on behalf of Knox County Government will be required to arrange time off with their immediate supervisor and use annual or compensatory leave for time away.

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## ***Voting Leave/Elections***

In accordance with Tennessee State Law, if you are entitled to vote in an election held in this state, you may be absent from work on the day of the election for a reasonable amount of time, not to exceed three hours. If your shift begins three or more hours after the opening of the polls or ends three or more hours before the polls close in the county in which you live, this leave does not apply to you. If you need to take leave for voting, the leave must be arranged with your direct supervisor before noon of the day before the election. The supervisor may select the hours during which you may be absent for voting.

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# Teammate Benefits

## *Plan Documents*

Copies of the plan documents and important legal notices for benefits administered by the Benefits Department are available at [knoxcounty.org/benefits](https://knoxcounty.org/benefits) or by contacting the Benefits Department (free paper copies available upon request). Should any questions or conflicts arise, the plan documents will be the final authority in determining your benefits. Knox County reserves the right to modify or discontinue a benefit at any time.

## *Other Benefit Communications*

The Benefits Department issues an updated copy of the Benefits Guide each year. This document is intended to be an overview of the benefits administered. It contains information about insurance premiums, how to enroll in benefits and simplified information about coverage. It is not a contract or an official interpretation of the benefit plans.

Additional information about benefits can be found at [knoxcounty.org/benefits](https://knoxcounty.org/benefits) and the Self-Service link found on that webpage. It is your responsibility to check your professional email account, if one has been issued to you, and to keep your primary email address and home address up to date in the Self Service portal.

## *Insurance Identification Cards*

Insurance identification cards must be used only by you and the legal dependents you have enrolled in a benefit. Typically, insurance cards will be mailed to the home address listed in your Self-Service account. You can update your contact information by visiting the Self-Service link at [knoxcounty.org/benefits](https://knoxcounty.org/benefits). Some benefits may not issue cards. See the current year Benefits Guide for more information.

## *Benefits Eligibility*

This section applies to health, dental, vision, flexible spending and life insurance coverage.

### **Teammate Eligibility**

You are eligible for benefits when you work a minimum of 30 hours per week. These benefits include medical coverage, dental coverage, vision coverage, and flexible benefit options. If your hours drop below 30 hours per week on a regular basis you will lose eligibility for health insurance. You and all eligible covered dependents will be offered COBRA. New teammates have 30 days from their date of hire to enroll in benefits.

### **Dependent Eligibility**

You are responsible for only listing dependents that are eligible for coverage as defined by the plan documents. If a covered dependent becomes ineligible based on the plan documents, it is your responsibility to notify the Benefits Department immediately. Making a misrepresentation of fact or committing fraud against any benefit can have serious ramifications, up to and including termination of coverage and/or employment. Misrepresentation and fraud include, but are not limited to, providing incorrect or misleading information or permitting the improper use of insurance cards.

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### **Eligibility Start Date**

Benefits Department staff will determine the effective date of coverage. Typically, it is the first day of the calendar month following 28 days of continuous employment. If a teammate starts work on the first working day of the month (defined as the first workday that is not Saturday, Sunday or an official Knox County teammate holiday), he or she is eligible for coverage on the first day of the following month. For example: If you were hired on Jan. 18, your coverage would go into effect March 1. If you were hired on February 1, your coverage would also go into effect March 1. In both instances, this means your deductions would not start until March 1.

### **Change in Eligibility Status/Qualifying Events**

In most instances, you have 30 days after an eligibility changing event (“qualifying event”) to notify the Benefits Department and make changes to your elections. Qualifying events include dependent status change, divorce, marriage, birth, adoption, reduction in work hours, or any other change that could affect benefit eligibility. Teammates are encouraged to use the Self-Service portal to report qualifying events.

If you or your dependent loses Medicaid or (Child Health Insurance Program) CHIP eligibility, you have 60 days after the qualifying event to notify the Benefits Department and make changes to your elections.

Some benefits may not require a qualifying event prior to a change. If a qualifying event is required, you will need to provide timely proof of the qualifying event and/or dependent eligibility.

### **Eligibility End Date**

Generally, benefits end the last day of the month in which you actively work. In cases of death or divorce, benefits end on the date of the event. If you do not receive paychecks to cover the entire month (and have premiums deducted), you may be required to submit payment to cover your portion of benefit costs.

### **Continuation of Coverage (COBRA)**

If you lose coverage due to a termination of employment, a reduction in work hours, or other qualifying event, you and your covered dependents may be eligible to continue coverage through COBRA for a limited period of time.

For a full explanation of COBRA terms and eligibility, contact the Human Resources & Benefits Department or refer to the “General COBRA Notice.”

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## ***Annual Enrollment***

Health plans, benefit designs, eligibility rules, and premiums are subject to change each plan year based on the previous year’s enrollment, claims experience and other relevant factors. Announcements concerning changes for the upcoming plan year are made during annual enrollment each fall.

**You are required to review the Benefits Guide, your notices, home mailings and department memos for information about the benefits for the upcoming year.**



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The HR & Benefits Department may conduct help sessions at various locations to accommodate those who need assistance and information regarding benefit changes. Typically, the enrollment period is from mid-October until mid-November. It is your responsibility to stay informed of benefit changes and open enrollment dates.

### ***Benefit Premiums/Payroll Deductions***

You are responsible for reviewing your paycheck to ensure the appropriate benefit deductions have been taken. Deductions from your paycheck will begin the first pay period in the month in which your coverage starts. Your health and flexible spending deductions will be taken out of 26 pay periods per year. Dental, vision, life insurance and gym discount deductions will be taken out 24 pay periods per year.

If you miss a paycheck due to work absence or unpaid time, you are responsible for contacting Benefits at (865) 215-3800 to make payment arrangements.

### ***Health Coverage***

Knox County offers a selection of health insurance plans with various types of coverage. Each plan is priced based on the number and type of dependents covered by the plan, including teammate-only coverage with no dependents. The County pays a significant portion of your insurance premiums as a benefit of your employment, but you are responsible for the teammate portion of the insurance premiums. Temporary teammates, seasonal teammates, and interns are not eligible for health coverage.

### ***Dental and Vision Coverage***

Knox County offers dental and vision insurance plans with various types of coverage. Each plan is priced based on the number of dependents covered by the plan, including teammate-only coverage with no dependents. Temporary teammates, seasonal teammates, and interns are not eligible for dental or vision coverage.

### ***Flexible Spending Accounts***

Flexible spending accounts allow a teammate's medical out-of-pocket expenses and dependent care expenses to be paid with "before tax" dollars. Knox County offers a benefit option that utilizes a debit-type card to access your plan dollars. If you elect this benefit, you choose a dollar level based on your individual or family needs and a portion of this amount is deducted from each paycheck. There are minimum and maximum deduction limits for this benefit. See the current year Benefits Guide for details.

You do not have to be enrolled in Knox County's health insurance plan in order to participate in a flexible spending account.

You may enroll during the annual open enrollment. Re-enrollment is required each year to continue participation.

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## ***Life Insurance***

Knox County provides basic life and accidental death and dismemberment (AD&D) insurance at no cost to you when you work at least 18.5 hours per week on a regular basis. For basic life, the County provides one and one-half (1½) times your salary, up to a maximum benefit of \$50,000. For AD&D, you are eligible to receive an additional benefit according to a schedule of losses such as loss of life, limb or sight due to an accident. This benefit pays up to two times your annual salary, with a maximum of \$100,000.

You may purchase supplemental life insurance for you, your spouse or your child(ren). If you purchase supplemental life insurance, the premium will be deducted from your paycheck. Rates for supplemental coverage are available in the current year's Benefits Guide which can be found by visiting [knoxcounty.org/benefits](http://knoxcounty.org/benefits).

## ***Discounted Gym Memberships***

Knox County strives to promote and support the physical well-being of its teammates and their families. The current year Benefits Guide contains information about discounted gym memberships available to you and qualified dependents. Age limits and dependent relationship to the teammate may affect dependent eligibility.

## ***Health and Wellbeing***

Knox County believes in supporting the health and wellbeing of our teammates. We encourage teammates to maintain active lifestyles, make a habit of healthy eating and take steps to manage stress. Simple activities such as regularly taking a walk during lunch, choosing water instead of soda and fostering work-life balance can help make a difference in your personal health.

As an employer, Knox County continues to work on creating a culture and environment where health and wellbeing is supported as the norm. Departments are encouraged to work with teammates to create strategies specific to their worksite for supporting health and wellbeing. This may include, but is not limited to, allowing alternative schedules to accommodate physical activity, incorporating short physical activity breaks into long meetings, holding walking meetings, creating welcoming environments for teammates to eat lunch, and helping teammates reduce on-the-job stress.

## ***Employee Assistance Program (EAP)***

Knox County strives to promote and support the emotional well-being of its teammates and their families. The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides free and confidential counseling and information to teammates and members of their immediate family/household who are dealing with difficult issues. EAP services may not be appropriate for all needs or ages, and an EAP representative can provide you with a referral to other services upon request. The EAP also provides additional services, such as limited legal and financial counseling, at no cost to you.

Additional information about the EAP can be found in the current year Benefits Guide, at [www.knoxcounty.org/benefits](http://www.knoxcounty.org/benefits) or by contacting the Human Resources & Benefits Department.

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## Nursing Mothers

In accordance with the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, a nursing mother can take up to two paid breaks (15 minutes each) per day to express breast milk for her nursing child for up to one year after the child's birth. The supervisor should work with the teammate to schedule break time that reasonably accommodates both the mother's needs and her work responsibilities. The supervisor is responsible to help the mother identify a place to express milk, other than a bathroom, that is shielded from view and free from intrusion from co-workers and the public.

## Workers' Compensation

You are protected under the State of Tennessee's Workers' Compensation Law for injuries and occupational diseases that "arise primarily out of and in the course of employment." This includes injuries that take place when you are performing tasks you were hired to perform at times and in places where you were hired to work.

If you experience an on-the-job injury or illness you are required to:

- Report the incident to your supervisor;
- Provide written notification of your injury within one working day of the injury;
  - Complete a TN 1st Report of Injury. It is your responsibility to email or fax it to Knox County Law Director Workers' Comp Division, [knox.wcd@knoxcounty.org](mailto:knox.wcd@knoxcounty.org) or (865) 215-3390;
- Choose a physician from the panel of primary physicians provided to you by your supervisor. Workers' Comp will schedule your initial appointment for you;
- Keep all appointments with physicians as scheduled or notify Workers' Comp in order to have the appointment rescheduled for you;
- **Workers' Comp Division must approve all physicians and appointments;**
- Be aware that Knox County has a temporary duty (light duty) program for all teammates;
- Notify Workers' Comp and your supervisor if the physician tells you not to return to work, to work with restrictions, and when he/she releases you to full duty; and
- Give your supervisor a copy of Return to Work forms you receive from the physician.

If you require emergency medical treatment, you should use the emergency room at any local hospital. **Only one visit to the emergency room will be covered by Workers' Compensation.** Notification to Workers' Comp Division should be made immediately.

If there is a follow-up appointment required after the initial visit to the emergency room, you must choose from the panel of primary physicians. The Workers' Comp Division will schedule this appointment for you. You are **not** authorized to return to the emergency room for follow-up treatment (i.e., removal of stitches, change of injury dressings, etc.).

Knox County has contracted with local pharmacies to accept charges for medications for work-related injuries after the following:

- You have notified your supervisor and Workers' Comp Division of your injury;
- Your prescription has been approved for payment by Workers' Comp Division; and
- The pharmacy has contacted Workers' Comp Division for authorization.

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Knox County will pay reasonable and necessary costs related to your on-the-job injury as long as the proper procedures are followed. **If your authorized treating physician releases you to return to work with specific temporary restrictions (i.e., light duty) and Knox County can provide a job within the recommended restrictions, you must return to work and attempt the light duty.**

Your authorized physician determines what light duty work is appropriate. If clarification of light duty restrictions is needed, you should contact the Workers' Comp Division. **Failure to report for light duty may result in termination of disability benefits. You may qualify for benefits if Knox County cannot provide a job within the restrictions given by the authorized physician.**

Medical bills and temporary benefits will not be paid until the Workers' Comp Division has received the appropriate forms and the Division has approved your claim. After your claim has been received in the Workers' Comp Division, it will be reviewed to determine whether it is approved. You will be notified if a problem arises in the process of making that decision. The Workers' Comp Division Office has final authority to determine if a claim is accepted as a Workers' Comp injury or is rejected and should be applied to your medical insurance.

The goal is to process Workers' Compensation claims as quickly and as fairly as possible while providing you with the best medical care possible. The length of time required for approval will vary for each claim. If you have questions regarding a Workers' Compensation issue, please contact the Workers' Comp Division at [knox.wcd@knoxcounty.org](mailto:knox.wcd@knoxcounty.org), (865) 215-4573 or (865) 215-3955.

## ***Retirement and Pension Board***

The Retirement and Pension Board is an independent nine-member board made up of the County Mayor, four County Commissioners, and four teammate-elected representatives. This Board handles the administration of all the retirement plans offered to you. You may contact the Board at its administrative office located in Room 371 of the City County Building, by phone at (865) 215-2323, email [retirement@knoxcounty.org](mailto:retirement@knoxcounty.org), or website: [knoxcounty.org/retirement](http://knoxcounty.org/retirement).

## ***Disability Benefit***

There are two types of disability benefits: in-line of duty and not-in-line of duty.

**In-line of duty:** If you are an active participant in a Knox County retirement plan and become disabled as defined by the plan in-line of duty, you may be eligible to receive a disability benefit subject to all applicable requirements, provided that your disability is a result, directly or indirectly, of an act occurring, a thing done, or a risk taken which, as determined in the discretion of the Board, was required of you in the performance of your duty as a teammate.

**Not-in-line of duty:** If you are an active participant in a Knox County retirement plan, have completed a minimum of five years of service, and become disabled as defined by the plan, you may be eligible to receive a disability benefit subject to all applicable requirements.

Contact the Retirement Board Office at (865) 215-2323, email [retirement@knoxcounty.org](mailto:retirement@knoxcounty.org) or go to the website [knoxcounty.org/retirement](http://knoxcounty.org/retirement).