

# COUNTY OF ESSEX EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK



## **DISCLAIMER**

**This Handbook does not contain any promise of any kind.**

**Rather, this Handbook is intended solely for the purpose of providing general information about the County of Essex and its policies.**

**Notwithstanding any contrary verbal comments, or statements which may appear in this Handbook, the County of Essex remains free to change all wages, benefits, working conditions and conditions of employment, at any time, with or without notice, and with or without consultation or agreement of anyone.**

**Any employee who is not permanent civil service in the title in which they are serving are employed by the County of Essex on what is known as an “at-will” basis. In other words, notwithstanding any contrary verbal comments or statements which may appear in this Handbook, the County of Essex has absolute power and authority to terminate or suspend any employee for any reason, with or without good cause, and with or without notice.**

**Under no circumstances are the contents of this Handbook intended to create a guarantee or promise of continued employment between the County of Essex and any of its employees, and shall not be interpreted in such a manner.**

**This Handbook does not guarantee anything to any employee.**

**This disclaimer is not intended to affect terms and conditions of employment which are governed by an applicable collective bargaining agreement. This Handbook expressly replaces any and all previous Handbooks. In addition, this Handbook, and any part or all of it, may be changed or replaced by subsequent Handbooks or memoranda, with or without notice.**

**This disclaimer shall not be changed, modified or altered in substance, scope or application except by written agreement signed by the County Executive.**

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**JOSEPH N. DiVINCENZO JR.  
COUNTY EXECUTIVE**



Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr.  
Essex County Executive

Jacqueline Jones  
Director of Human Resources

## **WELCOME TO THE COUNTY OF ESSEX**

**February 8, 2023**

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to employment with the County of Essex. You are now a member of a working team dedicated to providing quality public service to the Citizens of Essex County.

I hope the information in this handbook is of assistance to you in meeting the challenges of your new position with Essex County. The information in this handbook supersedes any prior handbook.

I wish you the best of luck and success in your position, and hope that your employment with the County of Essex will be a pleasant, productive and rewarding experience.

Cordially yours,

Joseph N. DiVincenzo Jr.  
County Executive

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## **ESSEX COUNTY GOVERNMENT**

Essex County is governed under the County Executive Plan of New Jersey's Optional County Charter Law. Under an Administrative Code, adopted May 1, 1979, pursuant to the Charter law, Essex County Government is divided between Executive and Legislative branches.

The County Executive, elected for a four year term, is the Chief Executive of the County. Under the County Executive, nine departments conduct County government operations and programs. In addition, a number of advisory boards have been created to provide public input and help develop policy.

The County Executive prepares and submits to the Board of County Commissioners an annual operating budget and capital budget. He acts as appointing authority for all County administrative departments, and approves each ordinance of the Board of County Commissioners. The County Executive reports annually on the state of the County, and recommends whatever action or programs he deems necessary for the improvement of the County and the welfare of its residents. He enforces the County Charter, the County's laws, and supervises the care and custody of all County property, institutions and agencies placed under his control.

The Board of County Commissioners functions as a Legislative body, with five of the Commissioners elected from districts, and four elected at-large. The Commissioners are elected for a three year term.

The Board of County Commissioners consents to appointments of all Department and Division Directors and passes ordinances and resolutions it deems necessary for the good of County government. The Board of County Commissioners approves the annual operating budget and capital budget by resolution and appoints an accountant to perform an independent audit of the County's finances. They conduct public meetings which discuss the state of the County and adopt ordinances and resolutions for the welfare of County residents and employees.

The constitutional and statutory offices of the County - Prosecutor, Sheriff, Clerk, Surrogates, Register of Deeds and Mortgages, Board of Elections, Board of Taxation, Commissioner of Registration/Superintendent of Elections and Superintendent of Schools are also part of the Essex County Government system.

Essex County is an efficient, centrally managed and professionally supervised form of government. The final measure of accountability is to the voters and the people of Essex County.

## **WHAT THE COUNTY OF ESSEX EXPECTS OF YOU**

The primary function of any government agency is to provide service to the public. Your job was created to provide a specific service for the citizens of Essex County. You are expected to give this service to the best of your ability and to perform your job with a spirit of courtesy, willing assistance, and appreciation for the responsibility inherent in your job. You are a very important person to the citizens who will be the recipients of the services that you can provide. More and more, the effectiveness of County government is dependent on each employee. The integration of all our individual efforts will result in a well run, efficient County government.

Whether your job demands enforcement of laws or ordinances, paving streets, filing cards, or answering inquiries from the public, it is extremely important that your contact with the public be fair and courteous. Treat all inquiries as if you were on the receiving end of the information or assistance. Just as County government believes each County employee is an important individual, the individual rights of the citizen should be respected. It is essential that every citizen and fellow employee be treated with dignity and consideration. The public will judge your department and all County of Essex government by your attitude and efficiency.



## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **MANAGEMENT RIGHTS**

The County of Essex reserves all power, rights, authority, duties and responsibilities conferred upon and vested in it by law and the Constitutions of the United States and the State of New Jersey, including, but not limited to the following:

1. To manage and control the County of Essex and its properties and facilities, the operation of its departments, and the activity of its employees.
2. To hire all employees and, to determine:
  - a. their qualifications.
  - b. standards of performance; and
  - c. conditions for continued employment or assignment, promotion, and transfer of employees.
3. To layoff, suspend, demote, discharge or take disciplinary action; and
4. To formulate and enforce rules, regulations, policies and procedures to effect the orderly and effective administration of the human resource system of the County

### **EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY**

It is the policy of the County of Essex to ensure that human resource regulations are in place which aid in assuring equitable and fair treatment of applicants and employees in selection and promotion without regard to race, color, national origin, ancestry, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, military status, political affiliation, religion, physical or mental handicap that with reasonable accommodation does not significantly interfere with the ability to perform the essential functions of the job, status as a Vietnam-era or special disabled veteran, or atypical cellular or blood trait.

This policy of non-discrimination shall be applied to all phases of employment, such as recruitment, selection, appointment, placement, promotion, demotion, transfer, training, wages, benefits, working conditions, and such human resource actions as layoffs, recall, discharge, disciplinary actions and performance evaluation.

Age or sex shall be a factor for employment only where they are bona fide occupational qualifications as provided by law.

If you have any questions or concerns about this policy, contact the Affirmative Action Officer at 973-621-2010 or the Office of Human Resources at 973-621-4977.

## **UNION PARTICIPATION**

As a public employee, you have the right to join or refrain from joining a union recognized under the Employer/Employee Relations Act. If an employee chooses not to become a member of the bargaining unit that represents his or her title, he or she may be required to pay a "representation fee" which is usually 85% of union dues. The payment of this fee and its amount is governed by the applicable collective bargaining agreement. For a listing of the various unions serving County employees, contact the Office of Labor Relations - Hall of Records.

## **IMMIGRATION REFORM ACT OF 1986**

This Act requires the County of Essex to verify that job applicants may legally work in the United States. A number of documents may be used for verification of identity including, but not limited to, drivers' license and Social Security card.

## **RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT**

Unless otherwise provided by law, pursuant to Ordinance No. 0-96-003, adopted by the Board of County Commissioners on April 24, 1996, employees hired by the County of Essex on or after January 4, 1996, shall be bona fide residents of Essex County. All applicants and new employees must complete an Affidavit of Residency and provide documentation supporting their address of record. Non residents appointed to positions of employment in the County of Essex shall become bona fide residents of Essex County within one year of their date of hire. Failure to establish and maintain a bona fide residence within the County shall be cause for removal or discharge from service.

## **NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL**

The New Jersey Department of Personnel (NJDP) was created by the State Legislature to regulate employment of State, County, and Municipal government employees through the merit system. County of Essex employees, through public referendum, are subject to the Rules and Regulations of the New Jersey Department of Personnel. The NJDP is empowered to make rules to promote efficiency in public employment. The NJDP must also make certain that the decision to hire, promote and/or retain an employee is based on the merit and fitness of that employee as defined by the Rules and Regulations of the NJDP.

## CLASSIFICATION OF EMPLOYEES

Pursuant to N.J. Statute 11A, County employees are divided into two service classifications: Unclassified and Career.

Unclassified service includes elected and appointed positions, and other positions specifically designated by the New Jersey Department of Personnel or State Legislation. Employees in this service are not considered temporary, provisional, or permanent employees. The New Jersey Department of Personnel does not grant these employees any rights or privileges. These employees are at will employees.

The majority of County employees are considered Career Service, and are governed by the New Jersey Department of Personnel Rules and Regulations. Career Service is divided into competitive and non-competitive divisions.

The competitive division includes all positions which the New Jersey Department of Personnel believes should be tested in order to judge merit and fitness. The non-competitive division includes all positions for which no test is held. Some examples of these types of positions are Laborer, Graduate and Practical Nurses. Employees in these positions are entitled to the rights and privileges of the New Jersey Department of Personnel after successfully completing the appropriate working test period.

Persons appointed to positions in the Career Service are categorized as follows:

**PERMANENT** - An employee who has either been appointed to a non-competitive position or has passed a New Jersey Department of Personnel open competitive or promotional examination, received certification for that title, and has satisfactorily completed a working test period.

**PROVISIONAL** - An employee whose appointment to a County position has been allowed, pending the establishment of an eligibility list through a New Jersey Department of Personnel examination procedure for the position. This type of appointment does not automatically lead to a permanent appointment.

**TEMPORARY** - An employee hired for a period of limited duration not to exceed an aggregate of six months in a 12 month period. Temporary employees are not eligible for benefits.

**INTERIM** - An employee hired to replace a permanent employee for the period of time in which that

permanent employee has taken a leave of absence without pay from his or her position. Full time interim employees are eligible for benefits in accordance with the benefits policy.

**GRANT** - An employee hired by the County of Essex whose salary is funded through a grant by an outside agency, and whose duration of employment is determined by the length and conditions of the grant. Full time grant funded employees are eligible for benefits, in accordance with the benefits policy.

## **GRANT PROGRAMS**

While there are some Rules and Regulations which are unique to grant programs based on their funding guidelines, their human resource practices generally conform to the Rules and Regulations of the New Jersey Department of Personnel and the County of Essex. However, all positions funded under the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) are outside of the jurisdiction of the New Jersey Department of Personnel. Employees in this category will be advised by their program director of any rules and regulations different from those contained in this booklet.

## **NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL EXAMINATIONS**

New Jersey Department of Personnel examinations are held from time to time to establish employment lists for various positions in the Career Service. Promotional examination announcements are usually posted in work facilities when received from the New Jersey Department of Personnel.

Employees should check these announcements to see if they meet the requirements for admission to such examinations. Examinations are generally written, oral, or performance tests.

If you wish to review your written examination papers, you may do so in accordance with New Jersey Department of Personnel Rules and Regulations. Matters pertaining to an examination may be appealed to the New Jersey Department of Personnel Merit System Board within the limits as specified in the New Jersey Department of Personnel Rules and Regulations.

If you pass an examination, your name will be placed on the eligibility list for that examination. Persons on the eligibility list are certified in order of the rank of their examination score (this rank may have been adjusted because of veterans' preference). The eligibility list is generally retained for three years, at which time the list becomes invalid and a new examination may be called.

## **PROCESS FOR OBTAINING PERMANENT STATUS**

Generally, the following steps are followed in order to obtain permanent status:

1. Vacancies for permanent positions are announced by the New Jersey Department of Personnel through electronic announcements, online job bank access, the Automated Labor Exchange (ALEX), and Career America.

Information on applications for vacancies, which vary depending on the means by which announcements are made, can be found at your local library, and ALEX can be accessed at any of the 38 Employment Services Offices, or at Essex County College.

2. The New Jersey Department of Personnel will process your application and notify you of your eligibility.
3. Eligible applicants take the examination.
4. If you pass the examination, you will be placed on a New Jersey Department of Personnel eligibility list according to your rank (this rank may be adjusted for veterans' preference).
5. All applicants who pass the examination will be eligible for certification if they are interested in the position, and the position may be offered, according to rank, after an interview.
6. If you accept appointment, you must satisfactorily complete a three-calendar month working test period (Police Officers, Correction Officers, Sheriff's Officers, Juvenile Detention Officers and Firefighters must satisfactorily complete a one year working test period).
7. If you satisfactorily complete the working test period, you become a permanent employee. As a permanent employee, you must join the pension plan appropriate to your title.

## **WORKING TEST PERIOD**

All employees appointed to a permanent position in the Career Service must satisfactorily complete a working test period of three calendar months (Police Officers, Correction Officers, Sheriff's Officers, Juvenile Detention Officers, and Firefighters must satisfactorily complete a one year working test period) before they can attain permanent status. At the end of each working test period, your supervisor will evaluate your job performance, and recommend whether you should be retained permanently. If an employee's work performance during the working test period is unsatisfactory, he or she may be discharged at the end of the working test period, with the right, to appeal to the New Jersey Department of Personnel Merit System Board.

The working test period is the time to develop productive work habits which will continue throughout your career; it is the time to get started on “the right foot”.

When promoted to a new classification, you must successfully serve a new working test period in order to gain permanent status in the new position.

## **PERFORMANCE EVALUATION PROGRAM**

Performance evaluation is a vital part of Human Resource Management.

The evaluation measures your job performance and attendance and are based on criteria agreed upon by you and your supervisor. It is used to improve an employee’s work through the fair appraisal of his or her performance and the discussions which occur during the course of reviewing job performance. Standardized forms are used, and you are encouraged to use the employee comment section for your ideas and comments.

## **POLITICAL ACTIVITY**

The New Jersey Department of Personnel Rules and Regulations place limitations on the political activity of all County employees.

No contribution or service for political purposes can be expected of you as a condition of your employment. No one has the right to promise or threaten to change your job in any way for giving or withholding any service or contribution for political purposes; nor can you use your job or political influence to control the extra advantages for yourself. You may not engage in any political activity during your working hours. You are, however, urged to exercise your right to vote.

## **EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION**

### **PRE-EMPLOYMENT MEDICAL EXAMINATION**

New employees must successfully complete a pre-employment medical examination conducted by a County Physician, prior to the employee commencing work.

### **NEW EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION PROGRAM**

On the first day of employment, representatives from the department you will be reporting to will greet and welcome you to the County of Essex. Once the New Hire Orientation is scheduled you will be notified by your Personnel Liaison with date, time, and location. The orientation acquaints new employees with County policies, procedures and benefits, and answers questions concerning these matters.

### **RECORDKEEPING AND CHANGE OF EMPLOYEE INFORMATION**

Personnel records are maintained by the Office of Human Resources for all employees. It is important that you keep your Department and the Office of Human Resources informed of your correct address, telephone number, dependent status, insurance beneficiary, or health insurance changes and changes in any other personal data. You must notify the Office of Human Resources and your Department in writing of any change of personal status. If you wish to review your personnel folder, you must make an appointment with the Office of Human Resources through your Personnel Liaison.

### **AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990**

It is the policy of the County of Essex to comply with all pertinent aspects of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). The ADA makes it unlawful to discriminate in employment against qualified individuals. If you require an accommodation to perform the essential functions of your job, please notify your Department Director and the Office of Human Resources in writing.

### **PROMOTION**

A promotion is defined as advancement to a title having a higher level of duties and responsibilities and/or a salary range having a greater salary range maximum. The New Jersey Department of Personnel conducts promotional examinations which are open to permanent (career) employees who meet the requirements established by the New Jersey Department of Personnel. All salary increases or utilization of the promotional formula are subject to budgetary constraints and are not mandatory or automatic.

## **TRANSFER**

A transfer is the assignment of a permanent employee in the same title to a position at the same grade level at the same pay from one Department to another. Transfers require the approval of the Department Directors and the affected employee. The services of an employee who is transferred to another Department within the County of Essex will be considered continuous for the purpose of seniority and fringe benefits.

## **EMPLOYEE IDENTIFICATION CARDS**

Employee identification cards and parking access cards are issued to new hires at the location in which they are assigned. These cards must always be carried and presented upon entering any County facility. Employees who require a replacement card shall contact their Personnel Liaison for assistance. Security access identification cards for use at the employee entrances in the Hall of Records and Courthouse Complex are issued by the Sheriff's Office, by appointment only, as scheduled by the Office of Human Resources or your Personnel Liaison.

## **PAYCHECKS**

Paychecks are issued via direct deposit biweekly on Fridays. There is a one-week deferment in pay. If payday falls on a holiday, that payday will be the preceding workday.

Paycheck deductions include, but are not limited to, the following: Federal and N.J. State Withholding Taxes, Social Security (F.I.C.A.) and Medicare and Unemployment Insurance. Deductions may also include, when applicable, pension deductions, union dues, and health insurance premium contributions. You may also choose other optional deductions be withheld from your check such as pension loans, federal savings bonds, credit union, charitable deductions, elected supplemental insurance and deferred compensation (If you would like to stop these optional payments, be sure to inform your Personnel Liaison in writing).

## **HOURS OF WORK**

The work schedule is set by your Department Director, in accordance with office needs and any applicable negotiated contract. While many employees work Monday through Friday, some employees work shift schedules and weekends, in accordance with negotiated contracts. Consult with your supervisor for further details.



## OVERTIME

Overtime is scheduled and authorized by your supervisor when work cannot be completed during the normal workday. If you are required to work overtime, you may be compensated by pay or by compensatory time, in accordance with your bargaining unit contract and applicable statutes. All scheduled overtime must be approved in writing, in advance of the earning of time, by the employee's Department Director or designee.

## ATTENDANCE

The following are examples of unsatisfactory attendance:

1. Abuse of sick leave;
2. Absences that precede or follow scheduled days off or holidays;
3. Excessive absences;
4. Routine tardiness; and
5. Any tardiness or absence that is a pattern.

Any of these behaviors can result in disciplinary action. All unauthorized and unreported absences shall be considered absence without approval, and deduction of pay shall be made for such periods of absence. Punctuality is an important part of being a valuable employee, and you are expected to be on time reporting for work and returning from lunch. Chronic tardiness will be reported to your Department Director and may result in disciplinary action.

## OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT

You may hold a job outside of County employment as long as it does not interfere with your job performance and your ability to work scheduled overtime and does not result in a conflict of interest. All outside employment must be reported to your Department and the Office of Human Resources. This information will be placed in your personnel file located in Human Resources.

## SUSPENSION

**A permanent employee may be suspended without pay because of inefficiency, incompetency, misconduct, negligence, insubordination, or any sufficient cause, in accordance with New Jersey Department of Personnel Rules and Regulations.** Among approved causes for immediate suspension without pay is an arrest for a criminal act which may jeopardize the integrity of the work unit. A permanent employee who is suspended or fined more than three times in one year or

suspended or fined more than five days at one time, or suspended or fined more than 15 days in the aggregate in any calendar year, may appeal these actions to the New Jersey Department of Personnel Merit System Board. An employee has no right to a hearing under the provisions of the New Jersey Department of Personnel Merit System Board unless the proposed penalty exceeds five days. Detailed information regarding disciplinary questions can be answered by your union.

## **LAYOFF AND/OR DEMOTION**

A permanent employee may be laid off or demoted for reasons of efficiency and/or economy pursuant to the New Jersey Department of Personnel Rules and Regulations. A permanent employee must be given 45 days written notice of any proposed layoff or demotion. The New Jersey Department of Personnel will decide within this 45 day period what reemployment and/or demotion rights, if any, the employee has. All layoffs and/or demotions of permanent employees may be appealed to the New Jersey Department of Personnel within 20 days after the final action. Employees with provisional status in the affected titles are terminated first. Permanent employees are laid off in order of seniority based on their continuous service in any permanent title, or are demoted in lieu of layoff.

## **DISMISSAL**

A permanent employee may only be discharged for "cause" as defined by the New Jersey Department of Personnel Merit System Board. The Department Director will supply written descriptions of the charges against the employee to the Office of the County Counsel. The Office of the County Counsel will write the charges and the Department will serve the employee with the notice of charges. A hearing will be held and a written recommended decision is rendered by a Hearing Officer. If the Department and County Administrator agree with the recommendation, the employee is served with a Final Notice of Disciplinary Action indicating the date of termination from employment. A permanent employee has the right of appeal to the New Jersey Department of Personnel if he or she requests it within 20 days after the final notice of removal.

Unclassified, provisional, interim, grant and temporary employees may be dismissed at any time, with or without cause, with or without notice, unless there is an applicable bargaining unit provision to the contrary, but they have no right of appeal to the New Jersey Department of Personnel Merit System Board.

## **RESIGNATION**

If you wish to resign from your position, you must give your supervisor at least 21 days written notice prior to your last day of work. An employee who resigns shall have annual vacation, sick and personal leave prorated for that year and any employee who has used more than the allotted prorated amount of time for that year shall have the unearned time deducted from his or her final paycheck. A permanent employee who is absent from his or her job for five consecutive days without notice shall be considered as having resigned not in good standing and shall be brought up on disciplinary charges.

## **BENEFITS YOU MAY RECEIVE**

### **VACATION**

Generally, full time employees are entitled to annual vacation with pay as follows for continuous service:

#### **YEARS OF SERVICE**

#### **VACATION DAYS**

During the first partial  
calendar year

1 day credited for each  
month worked



Complete calendar  
year 1 - 4

12 days credited on the first  
of the year

Complete calendar  
year 5 - 14

15 days credited on the first  
of the year



Complete calendar  
year 15 - 19

20 days credited on the first  
of the year

Complete calendar  
year 20+

25 days credited of the first  
of the year

This schedule is subject to modifications by labor agreements. Vacation should be taken during the year it is earned; with your Department Director's approval, it may be carried over to the next year only. It must then be used or forfeited. Upon resignation or termination, vacation time is prorated for that calendar year.

Unclassified employees are entitled to 20 days per year. For new employees who are unclassified, vacation days will be prorated from the date of hire through December 31st of that year.

Vacation leave must be scheduled and approved 21 days in advance so the work load of the agency may be properly scheduled. Vacation days may be scheduled in units of one fourth, one half, three quarters, and full days. Part-time employees who work 20 or more hours a week and earn at least \$3,225 per year are entitled to receive vacation days on a prorated basis. Part-time employees who work less than 20 hours per week and earn less than \$3,225, temporary and seasonal employees are not eligible for any vacation benefits.

## **SICK TIME**

Sick leave is an employee benefit provided for the purpose of insuring your income during the periods when you are ill and unable to work. You may only use sick leave because of personal illness, non-work related accident, exposure to contagious disease, serious illness or death in the immediate family. Immediate family consists of parents, step-parents, spouse, children, step-children, foster children, brother or sister, grandparents, mother-in-law, father-in-law, or any relative of the employee who resides in the employee's household.

Full-time employees receive 1.25 days of sick leave for each completed month of service after his or her date of hire until December 31st of that year. Thereafter, an employee receives 15 sick days per year if he or she works the entire year. The 15 days are credited on January 1st of each year. Part-time employees who work 20 or more hours a week and earn at least \$3,225 per year are eligible for sick time on a prorated basis. Unused sick leave accumulates from year to year, to be used if needed.

Upon retirement, a portion of the accumulated sick leave may be eligible for conversion into a cash payment, if funds are available.

Employees shall notify their immediate supervisor or designee of the intended absence due to illness no later than 15 minutes after the employee's scheduled starting time, unless the Department Director or collective bargaining agreement requires shorter or longer notice, or except in those work situations where notice must be made prior to the employee's starting time. If an employee will be absent due to illness or injury for more than three consecutive working days, the Department/Division Director may waive the obligation of daily notice. Failure to notify of intended absence may cause the denial of sick leave, and may constitute cause for disciplinary action.

An employee who is absent for five consecutive days without properly notifying his or her supervisor is subject to disciplinary action, including dismissal. If you are out sick for five or more working days with proper notification, you must bring a medical certificate to your supervisor stating the nature of your illness, and that you are able to return to work and assume your normal work duties.

A supervisor may request a medical certificate from any employee to verify absences before or after a holiday, on a severe weather day, or if the supervisor believes the employee is abusing sick leave. Sick days may be taken in one fourth, one half, three quarters, or full day increments.

## **DISABILITY BENEFITS**

The County of Essex does not participate in the State of New Jersey Disability Plan, and does not provide any other disability insurance.

## PERSONAL DAYS

Most full-time employees are entitled to three personal days per year with pay. For new employees, personal days will be credited as follows:

DATE OF EMPLOYMENT	DAYS FOR FIRST YEAR
From January 1 through February 29	3 Personal Days
From March 1 through June 30	2 Personal Days
From July 1 through October 31	1 Personal Day
From November 1 through December 31	0 Personal Days

Starting from January 1st of an employee's first complete calendar year of service, three personal days are granted each year if an employee works the entire year. They are credited on January 1st of each year.

Part-time permanent employees who work 20 or more hours a week and receive a minimum of \$3,225 a year will receive personal days on a prorated basis.

Request for personal days should be made, in writing, to the employee's immediate supervisor, at least three days in advance of the requested personal day(s). Approval of the request will be granted if it does not unduly conflict with scheduling requirements or the needs of the County.

Personal or multiples thereof, and can be taken in conjunction with approved vacation and sick leave. Personal days may not be used instead of sick leave unless approval to do so is specifically requested and received. Personal days may be scheduled in units of one fourth, one half, three quarters, or full days.

## HOLIDAYS

Paid holidays are granted to most full-time employees in accordance with the schedule adopted by the Board of Chosen Freeholders. The holidays generally observed by the County are:

- New Years' Day
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- Lincoln's Birthday
- Washington's Birthday
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Columbus Day
- Veterans Day
- Election Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Friday after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Day

Holidays that occur on Saturday will be celebrated on the Friday immediately preceding and holidays that occur on Sunday will be celebrated on the Monday immediately following. Holidays falling within a scheduled vacation period shall not be lost by an employee.

To qualify for holiday pay, an employee must have worked the scheduled day before and the scheduled day following the holiday unless such failure to work is caused by:

1. Jury duty
2. Death in the immediate family;
3. Union business;
4. Verifiable sick day (may require a medical certificate);
5. Incapacitating injury, workers' compensation, but not illness.



## HEALTH INSURANCE AND LIFE INSURANCE PROGRAMS

When you are ill and need medical care, after two complete months of employment you will be covered by one of the several Health Benefits plans available. Employees who work 25 or more hours a week may choose from the County's self-funded, reinsured plan or a Health Maintenance Organization (HMO). Under the County's self-funded, reinsured plan, basic hospitalization, medical surgical, and major medical coverage are provided to the employee, their spouse, and eligible

children under the age of 26. **Based upon the County's policies and underlying language in the health insurance policy, the county is not obligated to submit the names of stepchildren.**

The various HMO plans provide a more comprehensive medical coverage program and may require a payroll deduction. Employees may change their health plans only during an annual "open enrollment period." Dependent coverage may also require a payroll deduction.

A prescription drug plan is available to all County employees working 25 or more hours a week. The coverage is also provided to the employee's eligible dependents.

Except for the Division of Welfare, all employees working 25 hours or more a week receive a \$4,000 life insurance policy. If you have any questions concerning your coverage, please contact the Office of Human Resources - Employees Benefits Section, for assistance.

All employees looking to enroll in health and life insurance coverage must submit an application to the Office of Human Resources.

Appropriate literature explaining the benefits to which the employee is entitled will be distributed when you apply.

Please remember, enrollment for health benefits coverage is not automatic. You must apply, and you must notify the Office of Human Resources if your family size changes or if you plan to cancel, or in any way alter your coverage. Likewise, you are responsible for deleting dependents who become ineligible because of divorce, marriage, age, or for other reason. Please contact the Office of Human Resources as soon as your dependents become ineligible to avoid excessive premium costs to the County, and possible disciplinary charges against you!

## **CONTINUATION OF BENEFITS (COBRA)**

The Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) allows you to continue your medical and prescription drug coverage under the County's group health plan. If you lose coverage because of termination of employment, for other than gross misconduct, you may continue coverage for you, your spouse, and dependent children for up to 18 months. The 18 months COBRA continuation period will be extended for an additional 11 months for qualified beneficiaries who are considered disabled under the Social Security Act any time during the first 60 days of COBRA coverage.

Coverage may continue for up to 36 months if coverage is lost due to death of the employee, divorce or legal separation of employee and spouse, if the employee becomes eligible for Medicare, or if a dependent child is no longer defined as a dependent. If you continue your coverage, you must pay

the full cost of coverage each month, plus a 2% surcharge.

The County will continue benefits coverage for a period not to exceed three months whenever an employee is placed on a sick, family or maternity leave. Thereafter, the employee may be able to continue group coverage at his or her own expense under COBRA rules.

## **PENSION PLANS**

All permanent and unclassified employees are required to enroll in the Public Employees Retirement System of New Jersey (PERS), or if applicable, the Police and Firemen's Retirement System (PFRS). Employees, who are provisional for one full year and are in an eligible Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) title, are enrolled in the pension system as a provisional employee. Contributions to the retirement systems are made by both the County of Essex and the employee. Retirement eligibility and benefits are based on age and years of service, and are determined by the State of New Jersey.

If you leave the County prior to being vested under the terms of your pension (normally, ten years in the system), all of your contributions are refunded. If you are vested, you have the option of leaving your contributions in the system and receiving a future retirement benefit or requesting a refund of your contributions. Inquiries concerning pension enrollment, retirement, or a loan against your pension contribution should be directed to the Office of Human Resources - Employee Benefits Section.

## **PRE-RETIREMENT COUNSELING PROGRAM**

The Office of Human Resources conducts seminars for employees who will be retiring from County employment. These seminars include presentations concerning social security, pension plans and filing procedures, and pre-retirement counseling. Employees who are considering retirement should contact the Office of Human Resources at least six months prior to their expected retirement date to schedule an individual counseling session, where their options can be explained.

## **UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION INSURANCE**

All employees are covered by and are eligible for benefits under the New Jersey Unemployment Compensation Law.



## WORKERS' COMPENSATION

In the event you are injured while on the job, you must report the injury to your supervisor immediately. The supervisor shall notify the designated authorized personnel at the time of the injury/illness, who shall then contact the Immediate Claims Reporting System, located in the Office of Workers' Compensation. The Immediate Claims Reporting System shall notify the employee of the appropriate procedure for seeking medical care. If you have any questions concerning Workers' Compensation, consult your supervisor, Personnel Liaison, or the Workers' Compensation Office.

## EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The County understands that individuals with problems are often placed under emotional stress which affects their job duties. Therefore, the County realizes the dual responsibilities of the employer-employee relationship, and it has undertaken to provide a service whereby troubled employees might best utilize those agencies in the community which can help them. The Employee Assistance Program provides counseling and treatment to any employee (or a member of his or her family) who is experiencing personal problems. Problems such as financial, marital, emotional stress, alcoholism, gambling and drug dependency, which affects an employee's job performance, can often be helped by a professional counselor. For further information, call the Essex County Employee Assistance Program, 973-395-8470. All telephone calls are confidential.

## EMPLOYEE NEWSLETTERS

**Personally Speaking**, an Employee Newsletter, is published quarterly by the Office of Human Resources to provide a line of communication between the County and its employees. **Personnel Best**, the Supervisory Newsletter, is published bi-monthly to provide information and articles of interest to supervisors. **Healthy Life Styles**, the Employee Health Benefits Newsletter, is published quarterly and will provide information to employees concerning health benefits, exercise and nutrition. Any contributions regarding employees or department activities are welcome and should be submitted to the Office of Human Resources.

## **DEFERRED COMPENSATION §**

The County of Essex offers a Deferred Compensation Plan that makes it possible for employees to defer income and the payment of taxes on those deferred earnings until retirement. Information about this program can be obtained in the Office of Human Resources.

## **FEDERAL CREDIT UNION**

Financial services and savings programs are available through the Federal Credit Union. A payroll deduction plan is available for your convenience. For information, you must apply in person. Although it is not a County agency, the Credit Union is in the Hall of Records, 2nd floor, Room 221.

## **EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING**

The County of Essex recognizes the importance of staff development and training and encourages its employees to attend appropriate in-service and other available training programs. In-service training programs, developed by the Office of Human Resources - Employee Development Section, are designed to assist supervisors and employees to better perform their jobs and improve the services provided. Classes developed and conducted include, but are not limited to, Preventing Sexual Harassment at the Workplace, How to Conduct a Performance Evaluation, Business Writing, Telephone Techniques, Supervisory Skills, and Interviewing Techniques. Information regarding training opportunities is forwarded by the Office of Human Resources to all departments through our Personnel Liaisons. Contact your Personnel Liaison for further details.

## **EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AND AWARDS PROGRAMS**

Outstanding job performance may be recognized through the Executive Recognition Awards Program. An employee who has demonstrated initiative or an innovative idea that has contributed a cost savings to a department can be nominated for an award by the Department Director.

Employees with Perfect Attendance for one calendar year are recognized with a certificate and awards ceremony.

Years of Service Awards for employees who reach their 25, 35 or 50 year anniversary with the County of Essex, is recognized with a certificate and awards ceremony.

## **Severe Weather Days**

As a public employee, you are expected to be available to serve the public under any condition. If you have been designated as an Essential Personnel employee, you are to report to work during inclement weather/related emergencies. With respect to non-essential employees, if inclement weather prevents you from reporting to work, expect your absence to be charged to accumulated vacation or personal leave. If you call in sick for the day, you will be expected to provide a medical certificate for the absence. Only the **County Executive** can authorize the closing of a County function, facility or office due to severe weather conditions.

## **JOB CLASSIFICATION**

All County employees' jobs, except those in the Unclassified service, are subject to the rules and regulations of the New Jersey Department of Personnel. Job titles are assigned and designated according to the standards established by the State of New Jersey Department of Personnel. Classification functions as the basis for determining what requirements are essential for performance of the job.

The Classification Division of the New Jersey Department of Personnel classifies new jobs as they are created, analyzes currently existing jobs to determine if their duties have changed, and does maintenance studies on whole groups of related job titles. Job specifications for each title describes the duties of the title class, the knowledge necessary to perform the job, and the minimum requirements necessary to apply. These specifications are available from the Essex County Office of Human Resources, or the New Jersey Department of Personnel.

## **PROMOTIONAL EXAMINATIONS**

Promotional examinations are developed and administered by the New Jersey Department of Personnel. Promotional examinations consist of written, oral, or performance tests, as well as ratings on past performance and seniority. You are urged to explore the possibilities of promotion, and to read all posted announcements concerning promotional opportunities.

Generally, persons who have completed one year of permanent service in a grade are eligible for promotional examinations. Promotional examinations result in 3 year eligibility lists.


## **VETERANS' PREFERENCE**

A veteran is a person who has served in and has been honorably discharged from the Armed Forces of the United States during specified periods of time as outlined in the rules and regulations of the New Jersey Department of Personnel. Veterans who receive a passing grade on an open-competitive examination are given first hiring preference. Veterans' status also affects promotional eligibility lists to the extent that, although the veteran does not go to the top of the list, he or she may not be bypassed for appointment by someone with a lower rank. A surviving spouse or current spouse of a disabled veteran can also receive hiring preference in many cases, in accordance with New Jersey Department of Personnel Rules and Regulations.

## **LEAVES OF ABSENCE WITHOUT PAY**

The County of Essex may grant leaves of absence without pay to permanent employees for a period not to exceed 3 months. A leave of absence may subsequently be renewed for sick, military, education and maternity/disability leave only for successive additional 3 month period, provided that all leaves do not exceed one year. A leave of absence to accept another County position may be renewed for up to one year. All leaves of absence shall be in accordance with New Jersey Department of Personnel Rules and Regulations.

An employee does not accrue vacation, sick or personal days while on a leave of absence without pay. Time during which an employee is on leave of absence without pay shall be deducted from total time toward seniority.

 A written request for a leave of absence without pay shall be presented to the employee's supervisor at least two months in advance of the anticipated leave. You must receive notification of the approval of your requested leave of absence. Until you are notified of approval, your leave has not been approved.

The following are examples of Leaves of Absence without Pay:

### **1. ILLNESS**

When all available sick leave has been exhausted, a leave of absence without pay may be granted to a permanent employee in accordance with the rules and regulations of the New Jersey Department of Personnel. A medical certificate, outlining the nature of the illness and expected date of return, must be included in the leave request.

## **2. MATERNITY/DISABILITY SICK LEAVE**

Leave with pay may be taken by a permanent employee up to the number of accumulated sick days available, provided the employee is medically unable to work. Once this time is exhausted, accumulated available vacation, compensatory and personal time may be used.

Once this time is used, an employee who is medically unable to return to work may be granted a leave of absence without pay. A medical certificate outlining the need for such a leave and expected date of return shall be included in the leave request.

## **3. FAMILY LEAVE**

Pursuant to Federal and State laws known as the Family Leave Act, eligible employees who have been on the County payroll for at least one year are entitled to take up to 12 weeks of leave (utilizing either accumulated sick time, unpaid leave, or a combination of both) to provide care in the event of the birth or adoption of a child or the serious health condition of the employee or of a family member. An eligible employee may take advantage of the Act's benefits for more than one family member, so long as the total amount of the leave does not exceed 12 weeks in any 12-month period. A medical certificate outlining the nature of the illness and expected date of return shall be included in the leave request. A birth certificate or adoption documentation will be required if the leave is for the birth or adoption of a child.

## **4. PERSONAL LEAVE**

A personal leave of absence without pay may be granted to a permanent employee in accordance with the rules and regulations of the New Jersey Department of Personnel, if the employee has a compelling reason to request such leave. An eligible employee who wishes to request a leave of absence without pay should consult with his or her supervisor.

## **5. EDUCATIONAL LEAVE**

Educational leave without pay is available for permanent employees to pursue special job-related work or training intended to improve his or her abilities. An employee must sign an agreement to remain in County service for a period of one year upon his or her return from an educational leave in exchange for the ability to take such a leave.

## **6. MILITARY LEAVE**

Any permanent employee who enters active military service is entitled to a leave without pay and reinstatement to his or her position when he or she returns within 90 days after discharge. A leave of absence with pay will be granted to eligible employees for National Guard or Reserve for required annual field training based on your orders.

## **7. JURY DUTY**

An employee required to serve jury duty shall be paid the regular rate of pay. Any compensation the employee receives as a juror shall be returned to the County of Essex.

An employee, who is subpoenaed as a witness in a civil or criminal case, not in the capacity of a County of Essex employee, may be granted paid court leave for that period of time in which he or she is officially involved with the court. However, when an employee attends court for personal business, time away from work is chargeable to personal or vacation day.

## **8. NO PAY DUE**

An employee, who has not been placed on an unpaid leave of absence but has exhausted all his or her benefit time, may be placed on No Pay Due Status for up to two pay periods and is subject to proration of time due.

## **RETURN FROM LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

All leaves of absence are granted for a specific 3 month period of time. An employee who is returning from a leave of absence shall contact his or her Department Director at least three weeks prior to their expected date of return, notifying them of their intent to return. An employee on a sick or maternity leave shall present a medical certificate verifying their ability to perform their normal job functions. An employee who wishes to return prior to their expected date of return shall contact their Department four weeks prior to the desired date of return along with a medical release.

## **DISCIPLINARY ACTION**

The County encourages managers to provide feedback to employees about their job performance. When problems are noted, the County generally follows a system of progressive discipline. This applies only to permanent civil service employees. The level of action taken depends on the facts of the situation. Generally, warning notices or other lower levels of disciplinary action are taken before discharging any employee. However, in cases of severe misconduct, the County reserves the right to suspend and/or dismiss an employee without prior warning.

Incompetence, unsatisfactory performance, or inappropriate job-related behavior will result in disciplinary action which may include suspension, demotion, or dismissal.

The following examples of misconduct are causes for disciplinary action as prescribed by the New Jersey Department of Personnel Rules and Regulations:

1. Incompetency, inefficiency or failure to perform duties;

2. Insubordination;
3. Inability to perform duties;
4. Chronic or excessive absenteeism or lateness;
5. Conviction of a crime;
6. Conduct unbecoming a public employee;
7. Neglect of duty; and
8. Other sufficient cause.

NOTE: The above are examples of misconduct and are not intended to be all inclusive.

You should make it your business to learn the various rules and regulations governing your conduct as a County employee. Some of these rules are based upon time-honored principles which apply to every working organization. You have probably been observing them on other jobs for many years.

If your work falls below performance standards or if you violate any of the above rules, you may be subject to disciplinary action.

## **GRIEVANCES**

A grievance is any complaint an employee has regarding the terms and conditions of his or her employment. If you believe that you have a problem in connection with your employment, you should promptly discuss it with your immediate supervisor. If the problem cannot be settled by your supervisor, you should set forth your grievance in writing and submit it to your next higher level supervisor or process it in accordance with the provisions of any applicable bargaining unit agreement.

## **DISCRIMINATORY COMPLAINT PROCESS**

A discrimination complaint may arise from any combination of circumstances, actions, policies, or decisions which appear to create a non-job related distinction and differential treatment on the basis of race, color, national origin, ancestry, age, gender, marital status, military status, political affiliation, religion, physical or mental handicap that with reasonable accommodation does not significantly interfere with the ability to perform the essential functions of the job, status as a Vietnam-era or special disabled veteran, or atypical cellular or blood trait. Any employee who feels that he or she has been discriminated against with regard to any phase of his or her employment may present and process a discrimination complaint to their immediate supervisor and the Equal Opportunity Coordinator, in writing, within ten days of the occurrence. Participation in the Discriminatory Complaint Process no way abridges employee rights with regard to union contract grievance procedures or actions by the New Jersey Department of Personnel or the United States Equal Opportunity Commission, or the New Jersey Division of Civil Rights.

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY**

It is County policy that all employees are responsible for assuring that the workplace is free from harassment, including sexual harassment. All employees must avoid any action or conduct which could be viewed as sexual harassment, including:

1. Unwelcome sexual advances;
2. Requests for sexual acts or favors; and
3. Other verbal, written or physical conduct of a bothersome nature based upon the sex or sexual preference of the individual being bothered.

**Employees, who have a complaint of harassment, including sexual harassment, shall bring their complaint to a supervisor, The Office of Human Resources and/or the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity, as soon as possible.**

## **THE NEW JERSEY CONSCIENTIOUS EMPLOYEE PROTECTION ACT (N.J.S.A. 34:19-1)**

It is unlawful for an employer to discharge, suspend, demote or take other action against an employee because they disclose a policy or practice they believe is a violation of law, rule or regulation pursuant to law. This act also includes employees who provide information to a public body conducting an investigation into a violation of such law or rule, or if an employee refuses to participate in any activity which the employee believes is in violation of a law, if fraudulent or criminal, or is against public policy concerning public health, safety or welfare.

## **WORK RULES AND STANDARDS**

### **RIGHT TO KNOW ABOUT HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES**

The County of Essex conducts a training and information program for employees who work with hazardous substances. This program focuses on how substances are identified, what protective equipment for safety procedures are required, and what steps are necessary if exposure occurs. All new employees receive a Right-to-Know brochure as part of their New Employee Orientation Program. If you require additional information or a brochure, please contact the Office of Human Resources.

### **ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES**

Possession and/or consumption of alcoholic beverages while on the job is prohibited and engaging in such activity will subject an employee to disciplinary action. Employees who report to work intoxicated will be removed from the job site by their supervisor so as not to disrupt the work activity or pose a danger to himself/herself or other employees on the job site. Employees so removed will not be paid for the workday or any remaining portion thereof.



## **ILLICIT DRUGS**

The illegal possession and/or consumption of illicit drugs while on the job is prohibited and engaging in such activity will subject an employee to disciplinary action. Employees who report to work under the influence of illicit drugs will be removed from the job site by their supervisor so as not to disrupt the work activity or pose a danger to himself/herself or other employees on the job site. Employees so removed will not be paid for the workday or any remaining portion thereof.

## **GENERAL SAFETY**

It is essential that duties be performed in a safe manner for the protection and welfare of all employees and the public. Uniforms and safety equipment issued to employees must be worn and/or utilized on the job. Failure to do so will result in disciplinary action for an employee and his or her supervisor.

## **SEAT BELTS**

In compliance with New Jersey State Law, it is the County's policy that all occupants utilize seatbelts while operating or riding as a passenger in a County vehicle.

## **PERSONAL TELEPHONE CALLS**

Telephones are to be used for official County business. Personal calls should be avoided except in emergency situations. Employees will be charged for all personal calls billed to the County telephone.

## **OFFICIAL USE OF THE TELEPHONE**

Employees required to use the telephone as part of his or her job shall follow these rules:



1. Be certain that someone is always in the office to answer the telephone;
2. Answer promptly and courteously;
3. Identify your office and yourself;
4. Speak directly into the receiver;
5. Speak clearly and pleasantly;
6. Always be courteous;
7. Make written notes or take a message; and
8. Never leave a caller on hold for more than 30 seconds.

## SMOKING POLICY

In accordance with Essex County Policy, smoking is prohibited in all County facilities. All buildings, offices, and public and private places within the County Facilities are smoke free environments.

## APPEARANCE

Employees are required to present themselves in a neat, orderly, businesslike manner and to dress appropriately for the work they perform. Uniforms must be worn when required in accordance with negotiated union contract agreements. Refusal to wear such uniforms may be cause for disciplinary action. Employees shall not wear shorts, jeans or beachwear during working hours nor when traveling to and from the job site.

## STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

Here are a few tips on what is expected of you in your job with the County of Essex in your relations with the public:

1. **Service to the People.** Remember that your real boss is the public. You are employed for the convenience of the citizens of the County of Essex. They pay the bills. The public knows this...don't be the one to forget.
2. **Courtesy is Contagious.** A smile will go a long way toward soothing over a bad situation. Avoid arguments with the public and with your fellow employees. We all have a job to do, and courtesy will make friends of the people with whom you deal. If a citizen becomes difficult, refer him or her to your supervisor.
3. **Be Considerate.** All of us have faults. Have you ever stopped to think about yours? Think about them for a while, then do your best to be more considerate of other folks. Be helpful; it really pays off.
4. **No Special Favors.** You will only be disappointed if you ask for them. No one likes the idea of the other person getting special treatment.
5. **Be Cheerful.** Remember the good things in life and everything will be nicer for all concerned. If you make a practice of "keeping the sunny side up," you'll feel better and get along better.
6. **How Do We Dress?** Employees are required to present themselves in a neat, orderly and businesslike manner and to dress appropriately for the job they perform.

7. **No Substance Abuse.** Intoxicants and work don't mix. Substance abuse on the job will not be tolerated.
8. **Equal Access for All.** Every employee must abide by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and foster accessibility to the disabled.

Your personal lives are your own, but remember that public employees must be careful when they are in the public eye, even when they are not on the job. **DO NOT LET YOUR PRIVATE OR PUBLIC LIFE REFLECT DISCREDIT ON THE COUNTY.**

## **CONCLUSION**

This Employee Handbook outlines briefly the responsibilities and benefits of your employment. The information contained herein, though current at the time of printing, is subject to continuous revision and modification due to changes in the Human Resource Policies and Procedures of the County, collective bargaining agreements, New Jersey Department of Personnel Rules and Regulations, and State and Federal Statutes and Regulations. To assure the most current position regarding any of the preceding subject areas, or areas not covered in this Handbook, it is suggested that you contact your supervisor or

**It is hoped that through this Handbook you will find your place in the organization a little more easily. No organization can be really sound and productive unless each employee can feel that he or she is an important and necessary member of it. Always remember that you are working for the public and that you are here to serve them. The County of Essex expects that you will maintain respect and dignity at all times.**

Employee's Name\_\_\_\_\_

Title\_\_\_\_\_

Department\_\_\_\_\_

Division\_\_\_\_\_

Date of Hire\_\_\_\_\_

Hours of Work\_\_\_\_\_

Work Telephone\_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor\_\_\_\_\_

Personnel Liaison\_\_\_\_\_

Personnel Liaison's Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

**Jacqueline Jones**

**Director of Human Resources**

**Office of Human Resources 973-621-4977**

**Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr.**  
**County Executive**

**Robert Jackson**  
**County Administrator**

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