

# **EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK COUNTY OF MERCER**



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## **BOARD OF CHOSEN FREEHOLDERS**

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**2008 PERSONNEL HANDBOOK  
PREPARED BY THE OFFICE OF PERSONNEL**

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TO ALL MERCER COUNTY EMPLOYEES:

Here in Mercer County, we strive to create an exemplary work environment for our employees. To ensure that everyone is treated fairly and observes the needed rules, this Mercer County Employee Handbook is a critical tool.

The Handbook provides information on the rights and responsibilities of employees and seeks to provide all relevant information needed to complete your duties.

Working together, we are making Mercer County a better place to live and work. By observing these simple rules, we make that process much easier. Please take the time to review this information and if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our Department of Personnel.

Thank you for your cooperation and dedicated service to Mercer County's residents.

Sincerely,

Brian M. Hughes  
County Executive

## ***I. ABOUT YOUR COUNTY GOVERNMENT***

### **1.1 HISTORY OF COUNTY GOVERNMENT**

The youngest of New Jersey's twenty-one counties, Mercer County was pieced together in 1838 from parts of Burlington, Hunterdon, Monmouth, and Somerset Counties. Consisting of 13 municipalities, Mercer County is home to several outstanding colleges and universities, numerous cultural facilities, pristine farmland and the rich diversity of the State Capital.

In 1976 Mercer County adopted the "Optional County Charter", which provided for a County Executive form of government. Previously, both the Executive and Legislative functions of government were vested in the Board of Chosen Freeholders. Under the present system, the Board and the Executive represent two distinct and co-equal branches of government.

In addition to the County Executive and the Board of Chosen Freeholders, the people of Mercer elect the County Clerk, the Sheriff, and the Surrogate. The County Administrator and Chief of Staff are appointed by the County Executive, and serve at his/her pleasure.

## ***II. POLICY AND PROCEDURES***

### **2.1 EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION**

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The County of Mercer is committed to its role as an equal opportunity / Affirmative Action employer. The County will not discriminate against any applicant or employee on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual preference, or any perceived physical and mental handicap or disability, in any employment practice.

The passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Employment Act of 1972, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 have laid the cornerstone for Mercer County's commitment to offer equal opportunity employment practices and to take steps to avoid discrimination in the workplace.

This policy applies, but is not limited to:

- All places of employment including recruitment, upgrades, demotions, transfers or terminations;
- Rates of pay or other forms of compensation;
- Selection for training;
- The use of all County facilities;
- The participation in all County sponsored or affiliated employee activities.

A copy of this policy is available in the County's Office of Economic Opportunity/Affirmative Action.

## **2.2 AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT**

On January 26, 1992, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) took effect. This law contains civil rights protection to individuals with or without disabilities and without regard to race, sex, national origin and religion. The ADA guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in the areas of employment, services and programs sponsored by a State or local government, public transportation and telephone services offered to the public. The ADA provides comprehensive civil rights protection for qualified individuals with disabilities. An individual with a disability is a person who:

- has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity;
- has a record of such an impairment; or
- is regarded as having such an impairment.

Under Title I (Employment), the ADA requires the County to guarantee that individuals with disabilities be given the same consideration for employment that individuals without disabilities are given. An individual who is qualified to work cannot be denied that opportunity because of the fact the individual is disabled. The individual is also entitled to a reasonable accommodation in the performance of job-related responsibilities. This applies to both current and prospective employees.

Under Title II (State and local governments), the ADA requires the County to guarantee that all activities, services and programs provided to the public are accessible. This includes open meetings, public hearings, the Legislative and Executive branches of County government, courts, police, fire and emergency services, school districts, polling places, and employment. Mercer County must provide auxiliary aids, such as interpreters for the deaf and hard of hearing, large print, Braille materials and other alternative formats and methods of communication to visitors with disabilities that have requested these aids.

For further information regarding the County's ADA plan and procedures, please contact the County's Office of Economic Opportunity/Affirmative Action at 609-989-6418 or the Office of the Disabled at 609-989-6719.

## **2.3 CODE OF ETHICS POLICY**

Rules of conduct recognize that under a democratic form of government, public officials and employees who serve in government cannot and should not be expected to be without any personal interest in the decisions and policies of government. Government officials and employees have a right to private interests of a personal, financial, and economic nature, and standards of conduct should separate those conflicts of interest which are substantial and material, or which would shed a negative light on the County of Mercer. It is essential that the conduct of public officials and employees shall hold

the respect and confidence of the people.

Officials or employees should not:

- Have any interest, financial or otherwise, direct or indirect, or engage in any business or transaction or professional activity, which is in substantial conflict with the proper discharge of their duties in the public interest. Use or attempt to use their official position(s) to secure unwarranted privileges or advantages for themselves or others.
- Act in an official capacity in any matter wherein they have a direct or indirect personal financial interest that might reasonably be expected to impair objectivity or independence of judgment.
- Undertake any employment or service, whether compensated or not, which might reasonably be expected to impair objectivity and independence of judgment in the exercise of official duties.
- Accept or offer any gift, favor, service or other thing of value under circumstances from which it might be reasonably inferred that such gift, service, or other thing of value was given or offered for the purpose of influencing the discharge of official duties.
- Knowingly act in any way that might reasonably be expected to create any impression of suspicion among the public having knowledge of those acts that they may be engaged in conduct volatile of their trust as an official or employee.
- Use or allow the use of County property, personnel and/or persons in the custody of the County for other than officially approved activities. Use or allow the use of official information gained through employment, which has not been made available to the general public, for furthering a private interest.

A copy of this policy may be obtained in the County's Office of Personnel.

## **2.4 DRUG AND ALCOHOL FREE WORKPLACE PROGRAM**

The County of Mercer is committed to maintaining a drug and alcohol free workplace in order to protect the health and safety of County employees and the public. This policy is in compliance with Federal Law and State guidelines establishing drug and alcohol free workplace policies in government.

The Mercer County Drug and Alcohol Free Workplace Program will involve drug and alcohol testing.

Drug testing will be utilized under the following circumstances:

- New employee testing
- All employees entering a law enforcement field.
- Reasonable suspicion and/or probable cause testing.
- Voluntary testing.
- Follow-up testing.

All testing as required under the Federal guidelines with respect to drug and alcohol testing for all employees holding the commercial drivers license (C.D.L.

The drugs for which individuals will be tested are: Cannabinoids (marijuana, cocaine, amphetamines, phencyclidine (P.C.P.), and opiates. Drug testing is to be done by urinalysis.

## **2.5 RANDOM DRUG TESTING**

This policy applies to the following employees as covered under the negotiated terms of their Union contracts and/or their administrative status at the County's Correction Center, Youth Detention Center, and/or Geriatric Center.

1. Correction Officers - PBA Local 167
2. Superior Correction Officers - PBA 167
3. All administrative personnel at the Correction Center

All nurses at the Correction Center, Youth Detention Center, and Geriatric Center - covered by Teamsters Local 35

1. All employees at the Youth Detention Center covered by Teamsters Local 102 - Public Safety Professional Unit
2. All administrative personnel at the Youth Detention Center, including these covered under the Senior JDO Contract
3. All administrative personnel at the Geriatric Center

These random drug testing guidelines are pursuant to the drug testing policy guidelines established by the Attorney General of the State of New Jersey revised September 1998.

For employees covered by the PBA at the Correction Center under 1 and 2 above, there will be approximately 130 random drug tests and/or 50% of the covered PBA personnel throughout the year. Approximately 10% or 13 employees will be selected each time a random selection takes place. The actual number per test throughout the year may vary.

There will be approximately 125 random drug tests, or 50% of the covered personnel as cited in 3-7 above, throughout the year.

A copy of the Random Drug Testing Policy can be obtained at the Office of Personnel.

## **2.6 RETURN TO WORK (30 DAY POLICY)**

Effective October 1, 1998 all employees who are absent from work for more than (30 calendar days with or without pay due to disability reasons or workers compensation must submit to a drug test and physical prior to their return to work.

All positions in County Government shall be covered by this policy. Employees may pick up a detailed booklet concerning this policy in the Office of Personnel.

## **2.7 POLICY ON DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, OR HOSTILE WORK ENVIRONMENTS**

The County of Mercer is committed to providing every employee with a workplace free from unlawful discrimination. All forms of unlawful employment discrimination including, but not limited to, those based on race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, age, sex, marital status, familial status, affectional or sexual orientation, atypical hereditary cellular or blood trait, genetic information, liability for service in the Armed Services or the United States, whistle blowing, or disability are prohibited and will not be tolerated. Sexual harassment is a form of unlawful gender discrimination and, therefore, will not be tolerated.

This policy also applies to third party harassment. Third party harassment is unwelcome behavior of a sexual, racial, or derogatory nature regarding any protected category, that is directed at an individual but is a part of that individual's work environment. Third party harassment based on any of the aforementioned protected categories is prohibited by the policy.

This policy pertains to all employment practices such as recruitment, selection, hiring, training, promotion, demotion, transfer, assignment, layoff, return from layoff, termination, compensation, fringe benefits, working conditions, and career development.

The County of Mercer is committed to the principle that sexual harassment of employees is an abuse of authority and constitutes prohibited, unprofessional and unacceptable conduct.

Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- Submission to such conduct is explicitly or implicitly made a term or condition of an individual's employment, or
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of interfering unreasonably with an individual's performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment.

The County of Mercer is committed to maintaining a working environment that does not condone acts of sexual harassment. Immediate and corrective action will be taken when cases of sexual harassment are identified in the workplace. All employees will be made aware of this policy against sexual harassment and of the procedures for filing complaints with the County's Office of Affirmative Action, when sexual harassment has allegedly occurred in the workplace.

An employee must file a complaint within 180 days of the act of discrimination. A copy of this policy may be obtained from the County's Office of Personnel.

## **2.8 POLICY ON HIV / AIDS**

The County of Mercer does not discriminate on the basis of HIV / AIDS. Mercer County will not consider HIV / AIDS status when making determinations regarding hiring or terminating employees, unless HIV / AIDS results in illness so severe as to preclude an individual's regular participation in the workplace or fulfillment of job responsibilities after reasonable accommodations have been made. The County of Mercer will not question potential and current employees regarding their HIV / AIDS status.

## **2.9 VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE POLICY**

Violence, or the threat of violence, has no place in any of Mercer County's work locations. It is the goal of the County to rid work sites of violent behavior or the threat of such behavior.

It is the shared obligation of all employees, law enforcement agencies, and employee organizations to individually and jointly act to prevent or defuse actual or implied violent behavior at work.

Violence, or the threat of violence, by or against any employee of Mercer County or other person is unacceptable and contrary to County policy, and will subject the perpetrator to serious disciplinary action and possible criminal charges. The County will work with law enforcement agencies to aid in the prosecution of anyone outside of the organization who commits violent acts against employees. Possession, use, or threat of use of a deadly weapon, including all firearms is not permitted at work or on County property, including in a County vehicle, unless such possession or use of weapon is a necessary and approved requirement of the job.

No employee acting in good faith, who reports real or implied violent behavior will be subject to retaliation or harassment based upon their report.

Employees may pick up a copy of this policy in the Office of Personnel.

## **2.10 COMMERCIAL DRIVERS LICENSE TESTING (CDL)**

The County of Mercer has instituted the Federally mandated Drug and Alcohol Testing Program effective January 1, 1995. This policy calls for training and mandatory random testing of employees who possess a commercial driver's license.

Violation of this policy will result in immediate suspension or demotion to a non-safety sensitive position.

Employees may pick up a copy of this policy in the Office of Personnel.

## **2.11 POLICY ON OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT**

All full-time employees of the County of Mercer must consider the County of Mercer as their primary employer. As such, they must be available and able to perform all of the



duties of their position as required by the County of Mercer.

Outside employment must not:

- occur at a time when an employee is expected to perform his/her assigned duties,
- diminish an employee's efficiency in performing his/her work obligation to the County of Mercer, and/or,
- compromise his/her County position through a conflict of interest.

Prior to accepting outside employment, employees shall be required to fill out the outside employment form in writing for approval of this employment. Said request shall include the place of their outside employment, type of employment, day/dates to be worked and their hours of work. Requests shall be forwarded to the Division Chief, Department Head, County Administrator and Chief of Staff for approval. Approvals shall not be unreasonably denied.

The County prohibits outside employment while on approved leaves of absence, unless such written permission is given to the employee by the Agency Head with the concurrence of the Chief of Employee Relations and the County Administrator. Employees may pick up outside employment forms and a copy of this policy in the Office of Personnel.

## **2.12 POLICY ON SMOKING**

Public Law #548, Chapter 381 of the Laws of New Jersey of 1985 requires that employers adopt a smoking policy. In addition, the Surgeon General of the United States has determined that smoking and tobacco is dangerous to your health.

The County recognizes the right of individuals working or visiting County offices to work or visit in an environment reasonably free of dangerous or harmful atmosphere.

Therefore, by Executive Order 94-1 signed January 13, 1994, smoking of all cigarettes, cigars, pipes, etc. is hereby prohibited in all Mercer County facilities except for Geriatric Center patients who may continue to smoke on a supervised basis in the facility's day rooms and Correction inmates who may continue to smoke their living units.

A copy of this policy may be obtained from the Office of Personnel.

## **2.13 E-MAIL, INTERNET, AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS**

Please be advised that the uses of fax machines are for County business only.

All activity on County funded Internet or Intranet is considered County activity and shall not be utilized for personal business. This includes E-mail, web browsing, and any other related activity.

If a Department or Agency Head believes any employee is exploiting their Internet or

E-mail privileges, they must inform the employee of their concerns. If the situation continues, the Internet and E-mail privileges will be revoked for that employee and disciplinary action may be taken.

## **2.14 DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES**

The County of Mercer has instituted guidelines, which are meant to correct employee performance. These guidelines include specific corrective measures to be taken should there be a violation of County rules or regulations. In addition to these guidelines, employees may have specific language cited in their respective contracts.

In accordance with the Drug and Alcohol Workplace Program established in 1995, any employee charged with or arrested for possession, distribution or use of a controlled dangerous substance will be immediately suspended without pay pending the outcome of the charges. A departmental hearing will be held when the civil court charges are sustained against the employee.

## **2.15 POLICY ON POLITICAL ACTIVITY**

No employee shall directly or indirectly use or seek to use his or her position to control or affect the political action of another person or engage in political activity during working hours or on County property. This includes directly or indirectly coercing contributions from County employees/vendors in support of a political party or candidate, as covered under the Federal Hatch Act Guidelines.

## **2.16 USE OF COUNTY VEHICLES**

County vehicles are assigned to employees for use during the performance of official County business only. Employees must present a valid driver's license on a daily basis in order to secure a vehicle.

Any County employee who operates a County vehicle without a valid driver's license or the required endorsements to operate certain vehicles may be subject to disciplinary action.

Employees who are assigned a car on a 24-hour basis are not allowed to transport relatives or other members of the general public except in the performance of their duties. Only County employees are authorized to operate their assigned vehicles and must comply with applicable State, County and Municipal traffic or parking laws. All occupants of County vehicles must use their seat belts. Assigned drivers are responsible for payment of traffic and parking tickets.

Proper Procedure for reporting Auto Accidents involving County-owned/leased vehicles is as follows.

- Police must be called to the scene of the accident and copy of the police report must be obtained and forwarded to the Mercer County Insurance and Property Management Office with the Accident Report.

- The employee must report the accident to his/her Supervisor immediately and the proper reports must be completed in full and forwarded to the County Insurance and Property Management Office. The report forms are entitled "AUTOMOBILE LOSS NOTICE" and "STATEMENT OF DRIVER"
- Two (2) estimates must be obtained to repair the damage to the vehicle. The Insurance and Property Manager may be called at extension 6655 to recommend where you should take the vehicle for the estimates.

A complete copy of this policy and procedure can be obtained at the Office of Personnel.

## **2.17 TELEPHONE USE**

County employees "meet and greet" the public on the telephone each working day. Although people cannot see you, opinions of County government can be formed by the manner in which you handle telephone calls. Always be courteous, speak pleasantly, and keep calls as brief as possible. The use of telephones is important to our daily business operations. Please avoid using them for personal calls or other calls unrelated to County business, except in emergencies.

Toll calls utilized for personal business must be reimbursed by the employee to the County.

## **2.18 IDENTIFICATION CARDS**

A photo identification card will be provided to all employees. Lost or stolen identification cards must be reported immediately to the Division of Employee Relations. Employees are required to display their cards while performing their County duties.

## **2.19 SAFETY MESSAGE**

The County of Mercer believes their employees are their most important asset and recognize that safeguarding their health and safety cannot be overemphasized. The County shall continue to make reasonable provision for the safety and health of its employees during the hours of their employment. The safety program is designed to govern the activities of County employees and all members of the general public. The safety of every employee and the public is both the responsibility of the employee and the immediate chain of supervision.

## **2.20 EMERGENCY / STORM CLOSING**

Employees of Mercer County can obtain information relating to emergency / storm closings by tuning their radio to 101.5 FM.

## **2.21 POLICY ON DRESS CODE**

It is important that employees of the County of Mercer give a positive impression of

themselves and others, as well as having pride in representing the County during working hours.

Employees should be properly attired for the office environment, meetings, and other interactions with the public by maintaining a neat, well-groomed, and professional appearance at all times. It is anticipated the employees will be able to utilize their own discretion in determining suitable clothing for the workplace.

Exceptions to the dress code guidelines are recognized for those employees required to participate in manual or physical labor situation, and for other unique situations, including law enforcement officials.

In situations where guidance is required, the supervisor is responsible for communicating proper standards and to notify his/her employee if their appearance does not meet these standards.

### **III. CIVIL SERVICE INFORMATION**

#### **3.1 DEFINITION OF CIVIL SERVICE**

A commission created to regulate employment of State, County and local government employees through a merit system. The County of Mercer is under the jurisdiction of the New Jersey State Department of Personnel (formerly the Department of Civil Service. As a County employee, you are subject to their rules and regulations.

#### **3.2 EMPLOYEE CLASSIFICATION**

All County employees are separated into two classifications:

1. **Unclassified Service:** Employees elected by the people, described in the 1992 Administrative Code of Mercer County, and/or in specific New Jersey Statutes. Most unclassified Employees serve a fixed term set by resolution or by elections of the people.
2. **Classified Service:** Classified employees are not elected by the people and not described in New Jersey Statutes.

Classified employees are subdivided below.

*PERMANENT* This is an employee who has passed the civil service examination for a particular title, has received civil service certification and has performed his/her duties satisfactorily for the three (3 month probationary period.

*PROVISIONAL* This is an employee assigned by the appointing authority when a list of certified eligible is not available. If there is a certified eligible available for a position occupied by a provisional employee, the provisional employee may be terminated and replaced by the certified eligible, regardless of the provisional

employee's length of service.

*TEMPORARY* This is an employee appointed for a specified length of time, usually six (6 to twelve (12 months or less per year. Temporary employees may be hired to fill a full-time or a part-time position due to an emergency leave of absence or other unusual situation.

*SEASONAL* This is an employee hired on a full or part-time basis to meet periods of peak workload.

### JOB TRAINING AND PARTNERSHIP ACT

This is an employee hired under the federally funded Job Training and Employment Act. JTPA employees are considered temporary employees entitled to all rights and benefits enjoyed by regular permanent employees.

### **3.3 PROBATIONARY AND WORKING TEST PERIODS**

Employees in the competitive class must serve a three-month probationary period. Employees in the non-competitive and labor classes must also serve a three-month working test period. Entry level law enforcement titles (Corrections and Sheriffs Officers are subject to a working test period of twelve-months.

Employees not satisfactorily performing the duties of their respective positions during their probationary or working-test periods may be terminated. If the provisions of a negotiated contract are in conflict with the above information, the negotiated contract takes precedence.

### **3.4 PERSONNEL RECORDS**

Employees have the right to inspect their personnel files upon request to the Office of Personnel. An appointment will be scheduled; at which time a personnel representative and the employee will review the personnel file.

Employees must keep their personnel records up-to-date by notifying the Office of Personnel of all changes concerning the following:

- Address and telephone numbers
- Person to be notified in case of accident/emergency
- Legal name (name change
- Marital status

- Name, number and age of dependent children
- Number of tax exemptions

### **3.5 PROMOTIONS**

Promotions are by competitive promotional Civil Service examinations. These examinations are open only to County employees with the department where the promotion occurs. Generally, to be eligible for promotion and to compete in a promotional examination, an employee must have permanent employment status for at least one year in the specified job title, or titles, to which the promotional examination is opened. For information concerning veteran's preference in connection with promotional examinations contact the Office of Personnel.

### **3.6 TRANSFERS/REASSIGNMENTS**

Transfers or reassignments can be made from one position to another in the same class in another organization unit. Transfers or reassignments will be made with the approval and consent of the employee and Department Heads involved and the County Administrator.

### **3.7 DEMOTIONS**

Job classification demotions may occur as a result of an employee's voluntary request or as a direct consequence of a disciplinary action against the employee.

### **3.8 RESIGNATIONS**

In order to resign in good standing, employees must submit their resignation in writing to their Supervisor at least two weeks prior to the resignation date.

If an employee is absent from duty for five consecutive workdays without giving proper notice, the employee is considered to have resigned not in good standing (see section on unauthorized absence).

Upon the resignation, termination, or retirement of a County employee, the last day on the payroll will be the last day worked by the employee. Any accrued vacation time will be in a lump sum payment in the employee's last paycheck.

### **3.9 GRIEVANCE PROBLEM**

All claimed grievances should first be discussed between the employee and his/her Supervisor, and if unresolved the employee should then follow the grievance procedure guidelines as explained in the applicable contract agreement.

### **3.10 WORK SCHEDULE**

The standard workweek is thirty-five (35) hours, from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday, with one hour for lunch. All other work schedules have been negotiated and set forth by the employees representative union. Consult your contract for your work hours.

### **3.11 LATE or ABSENT CALL-IN**

County employees who cannot report to work or will arrive late must report to their Supervisor by phone by the scheduled starting time. If the employee works in a department, division, or agency that operates on a twenty-four hour basis, the employee must, at a minimum, leave a message with his/her Supervisor's location of employment at least one hour prior to start time.

### **3.12 UNAUTHORIZED ABSENCE**

Any employee who is absent from work for five or more consecutive business days without the approval of his/her Supervisor shall be considered to have abandoned his/her position and the employee will be recorded as a resignation not in good standing.

### **3.13 MEDICAL RETURN TO WORK**

When an employee has been absent from work for five or more consecutive working days due to a non-work related injury or illness, the employee in consultation with the Supervisor will ask to schedule a return to work physical with the County Physician, at which time the employee must present his/her private doctor's note. The County Physician will then make a determination on the fitness of the employee to return to work. The County Physician will advise the Office of Personnel as to whether the employee may return to work. The Office of Personnel will communicate the findings of the County Physician to the involved parties.

## ***IV. EMPLOYEE BENEFITS AND PROGRAMS***

### **4.1 PENSIONS**

All Mercer County employees unless specifically prohibited or exempted are required as a condition of employment to become members of either the New Jersey Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) or the New Jersey Police and Fireman's Retirement System (P.F.R.S.). Both plans offer the employee:

- A retirement income for as long as you live based on your years of service credit and your final average salary.

- Financial protection in case of disability or death.
- Benefits in addition to social security.

Membership and life insurance information on the two retirement plans is listed below:

### MEMBERSHIP (PERS)

Requirements for membership are as follows:

- Permanent/Unclassified Employee
- Temporary (provisional employees employed for twelve consecutive months.
- Part time employees earning \$1,500.00 or more per annum, (please refer to A, B under membership.

### Life Insurance (Contributory/Non-Contributory)

Members of the Public Employee's Retirement System have compulsory coverage under the contributory insurance program during the first twelve months of membership. Covered employees contribute .55 of 1% of their bi-weekly salary. After the initial twelve months the employee may cancel membership, however, they may not reinstate coverage. Cancellation of contributory insurance results in non-contributory coverage. No employee deductions are needed for this coverage. The amount of member's death benefits depends on salary and membership status at the time of death. Please refer to the chart below for the death benefit schedule.

### COVERAGE FOR ACTIVE MEMBERS

Age at Death	Members under non-contributory only	Members under both non-contributory plan and contributory plans
At any Age	½ Times Salary	3 Times Salary

### Membership (P&FRS)

Requirements for membership are as follows:

- Permanent full time employees in law enforcement titles.
- Must meet physical standards set by State of New Jersey.
- Under age 35 (subject to legislative change)

### GROUP LIFE INSURANCE PLAN NON-CONTRIBUTORY (P&FRS)

Members of the P&FRS are covered under the non-contributory insurance program. The cost of the insurance is borne completely by the employer. The amount of the



benefit due to your designated beneficiary is based on final annual salary and membership status.

## COVERAGE FOR ACTIVE MEMBERS

<u>Member's Status</u>	<u>Amount of Insurance</u>
Active	3 & ½ Times Compensation Salary

For information concerning eligibility on Pension Buy Back Programs and additional information concerning membership in the State Administered Pension System, please contact the Pension Section in the Department of Finance.

### **4.2 HEALTH MAINTENANCE ORGANIZATION (H.M.O.'s)**

The following plans are offered under the New Jersey State Health Benefits Program.

AETNA / U.S.H.C.	HMO BLUE
AMERIHEALTH	NYLCARE
CIGNA / COMED	OXFORD HEALTH PLAN
FIRST OPTION	PRUCARE OF NEW JERSEY
HIP OF NEW JERSEY	UNIVERSITY

Each year there are open enrollment dates at which time employees may choose to join or change their health benefit program. For further information regarding these optional dates contact the Division of Employee Relations, Benefits Section at 609-989-6657.

### **4.3 HOSPITALIZATION**

Employees hired after December 31, 1996 must work a minimum of thirty-five hours per week to be eligible for any employee health benefits program.

Employees may choose between a traditional plan, a preferred provider plan and various H.M.O.'s. Employees are responsible for contributing towards all health benefit programs including dental and prescription.

### **4.4 PRESCRIPTION DRUG PROGRAM**

Mercer County provides a ten dollar (\$10.00 brand name, two dollar (\$2.00 generic, or zero dollar (\$0.00 mail order co-pay drug program, for eligible full time permanent and full time unclassified County employees and their dependents. The amount of this co-payment may be subject to changes during contract negotiations.

#### **4.5 DENTAL PROGRAM**

All eligible full-time employees and their dependents are provided with a choice of two dental programs.

#### **4.6 WORKER'S COMPENSATION**

County employees are entitled to the benefits as prescribed by the Worker's Compensation Law. Employees' medical bills and temporary benefits are paid by the County as provided for by the New Jersey Worker's Compensation Law and/or as otherwise provided by contractual agreements.

#### **4.7 DEFERRED COMPENSATION**

County employees are eligible to enroll into a Deferred Compensation Program. We provide two plan administrators, PEBSCO and COPELAND Companies. We provide two enrollments per year. For further information, you may contact the Insurance and Property Management Office at 609-989-6655.

#### **4.8 WORKER'S DISABILITY**

All County employees are eligible and are covered by the State of New Jersey Temporary Disability Program. This Program is a shared cost program, paid for by the employee and the County. Details explaining this program may be obtained by contacting the Insurance and Property Office at 609-989-6655.

#### **4.9 COBRA**

Consolidate Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1985 (COBRA) gives employees, spouses and dependent children the opportunity to purchase coverage under the State program if they would otherwise lose this coverage because of

- Reduction in work hours
- Termination of employment
- Divorce or death of a spouse
- Marriage (children)
- Going beyond the age limit (children only)

COBRA coverage may be purchased for up to eighteen months if the employee terminates employment, no longer qualifies due to a reduction in hours, or is on an approved leave of absence. Coverage can be extended under certain conditions. Contact the Division of Employee Relations, Benefit Section for further information.

#### **4.10 HOLIDAYS**

Full-time permanent, temporary and provisional employees receive holiday pay for the following holidays designated as paid holidays by the Board of Chosen Freeholders:

New Years Day	Labor Day
Martin Luther King's Birthday	Columbus Day
Lincoln's Birthday	General Election Day
Washington's Birthday	Veteran's Day
Good Friday	Thanksgiving Day
Memorial Day	Day after Thanksgiving
Independence Day	Christmas Day

The Board of Chosen Freeholders must authorize any additional holidays. Holidays falling on Saturday are observed on the preceding Friday and holidays falling on a Sunday are observed on the following Monday.

If a holiday should fall within the employee's vacation period, he/she will not be charged for a vacation day. The holiday leave policy is not all-inclusive as it may be subject to changes by the appointing authority as prescribed by the applicable State of New Jersey Statute.

#### **4.11 VACATIONS**

All full-time permanent and full-time temporary or provisional employees earn their vacation time and are credited on January 1, 1999, as follows:

- One working day of vacation for each month of service during the remainder of the calendar year following the date of appointment.
- After one year to the completion of five years, the employee earns twelve vacation days.
- Beginning of the sixth year, to the completion of the tenth year, the employee earns fifteen vacation days.
- Beginning of the eleventh year to the completion of the fifteenth year, the employee earns twenty vacation days
- After completion of the fifteenth year, the employee earns twenty-five vacation days.

Annual vacation leave with pay for all full-time temporary and full-time provisional employees is earned at a rate of one working day of vacation per month.

Permanent part-time employees must work twenty hours per week to be eligible for vacation time. Time granted is in proportion to the hours worked and the number of years of employment.

A maximum of ten vacation days, at the option of the employee may be carried over from one calendar year to the next. Any days in excess of ten must be approved by the Chief of Staff / County Administrator. In no case, may an employee carry over more than a maximum of twenty-five vacation days.

#### **4.12 SICK LEAVE**

All full-time employees are entitled to sick leave with pay which may be taken when the employee is unable to perform his/her duties due to personal illness or injury, exposure to contagious disease, or with the approval of their Supervisor, to care for any ill or injured members of their immediate family.

Full-time permanent employees earn one sick day for each month of service during the remainder of the calendar year following their date of appointment. As of the first of the year following full-time permanent employee's date of appointment, fifteen sick days are awarded to these employees. Sick days may be accumulated and carried over each year.

The County may require proof of illness of an employee on sick leave, whenever such requirements appear reasonable. Abuse of sick leave shall be cause for disciplinary action.

Full-time temporary, provisional employees earn one sick day per month for the remainder of the year in which they are hired. Beginning January first of the employee's first full calendar year of employment, fifteen sick days will be awarded.

Employees are credited with sick leave at the beginning of each year. Employees who exceed fifteen days sick leave usage within a twelve-month period, pursuant to State statutes, may be required to bring in medical verification.

Abuse of sick leave procedures and usage will subject an employee to disciplinary action.

#### **4.13 SICK LEAVE BUY BACK**

Full-time employees having accumulated ten or more of their fifteen sick days for that year, will have the option to be paid five days wages in lieu of carrying over five of their sick days.

Any employee wishing to exercise the leave pay option must exercise this option by December 1, of the year in which the requirements have been met. An employee shall make this request in writing to the Chief, Division of Employee Relations. Any decision to exercise this option subsequent to December 1 of the year in which the requirements have been met shall not be considered.

#### **4.14 FAMILY LEAVE**

The New Jersey Family Leave Act provides for employees who have worked at least 1,000 hours during the last twelve months to receive an unpaid leave of absence for a period not to exceed twelve weeks in any twelve month period for the following reasons:

- The birth or adoption of a child.
- The serious health condition of a family member (i.e., child, parent, or spouse).

Any leave granted to an eligible employee under this Act due to the serious health condition of a family member may be taken consecutively or intermittently depending upon the legitimate needs of the employee. Any leave granted due to the birth or adoption of a child must be taken consecutively unless otherwise agreed to by the employer and must commence within one year of the adoption or birth. Irrespective of the manner in which the leave is taken, however, in no instance does the Act require an employer to grant more than a total of twelve weeks of leave in any consecutive twelve month period. Inquiries regarding the administration of this Act should be directed to the Office of Personnel.

#### **4.15 PERSONAL DAYS**

All permanent employees earn one personal day every four months during the calendar year of their appointment. Thereafter, permanent employees are credited with three personal days at the start of each calendar year. Temporary, provisional and J.T.P.A. employees (full-time earn one personal day every four months at all times. Employees are not permitted to take personal days in conjunction with vacation or sick leave, nor can they be accumulated from year to year. Employees are required to give their Supervisor forty-eight hours notice prior to leave date when requesting a personal day except in case of extreme emergency.

#### **4.16 BEREAVEMENT LEAVE**

All full-time employees will be granted a Bereavement Leave not to exceed five consecutive days in a seven-day period, if a death should occur in an employee's immediate family for the purpose of attending to family affairs. Vacation, sick, personal, or compensatory days are not to be counted toward the computation of Bereavement Leave. No special reimbursement will be provided should the five consecutive days include holidays. Immediate family is defined as mother, father, sister, brother, spouse, child, grandmother, grandfather, mother-in-law, father-in-law or any other relative who lived regularly in the household. The Bereavement Leave policy is not all-inclusive, as it may be subject to changes during contract negotiations.

#### **4.17 MATERNITY LEAVE / CHILDCARE LEAVE**

Permanent full-time employees may be granted a maternity leave of absence for any period provided the employee presents a written doctor's certificate to the Division of Employee Relations. Employees currently on maternity leave may also qualify for childcare leave, which can be extended to a maximum of one year from the date of birth of the child.

#### **4.18 MILITARY LEAVE**

A permanent employee who is called to active duty with the U.S. Armed Forces in time of war or emergency will be granted a leave of absence for the period of service.

A permanent employee who is a member of the National Guard, Naval Militia or a Reserve component of any of the Armed Forces of the United States and who is required to attend yearly training sessions will be granted a leave of absence with pay for such period of time.

#### **4.19 TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT**

Employees are reimbursed when required to use their personal vehicle for County business. The rate per mile is subject to change during contract negotiations. Inquiries as to the current reimbursement rate should be directed to the Division of Employee Relations.

#### **4.20 JURY DUTY**

Employees required to perform Jury Duty will receive full pay from the County for all time spent on Jury Duty. Employees granted this leave will be required to reimburse the County for any Jury fees or compensation received while serving on Jury Duty.

#### **4.21 EDUCATION LEAVE**

An educational leave of absence may be granted if it has been determined by the County Administrator that both the employee and the County would benefit from the resulting job skill enhancement.

#### **4.22 EXTENDED SICK LEAVE**

A permanent employee may be granted a sick leave for a maximum of two years. If the anticipated date of return to work equals or exceeds a period of three months, an initial leave of three months may be granted.

Thereafter, the County Physician, Chief of Employee Relations and the approval of the County Administrator may grant extensions of up to three months subject to review.

#### **4.23 EMERGENCY AND SPECIAL LEAVE**

Emergency and special leave may be granted for reasons not mentioned in this manual at the discretion of the County Administrator.

#### **4.24 LONGEVITY PLAN**

All full-time County employees, temporary or permanent, classified or unclassified, are awarded longevity payments based on their continuous years of service to the County after completing:

Five Years	\$ 300.00
Ten Years	\$ 900.00
Fifteen Years	\$1,350.00
Twenty Years	\$1,850.00
Twenty-Five Years	\$2,300.00
Thirty Years	\$2,700.00
Thirty-Five Years	\$3,100.00
Forty Years	\$3,500.00
Forty-Five	\$3,900.00

Some contracts offer a four hundred-dollar increment after twenty years, which would decrease the above totals by a hundred dollars. The longevity pay schedule is subject to change during contract negotiations.

#### **4.25 SHIFT DIFFERENTIAL**

Employees working shifts that include late night or early morning hours are entitled to a shift differential bonus. Please refer to your current contract for correct rate of shift differential pay.

#### **4.26 UNIFORM ALLOWANCE**

A uniform allowance is provided for the purchase of maintenance of required clothing. The specific allowance figures are contained in your current contract agreement.

#### **4.27 UNION AFFILIATION**

The following is a list of the Unions that represent County employees. For your representative's phone number contact the Office of Personnel.

AFSCME	Local #2287	White & Blue Collar
AFSCME	Local #2320	Foremen
Teamsters	Local #35	Nurses
Teamsters	Local #102	Prosecutors, Clerical
Teamsters	Local #102	Engineer Professional

Teamsters	Local #102	Engineers/ Technical
Teamsters	Local #102	Public Safety Professional Unit
Teamsters	Local #102	Sheriffs, Communication Officers
P.B.A.	Local #167	Correction & Superior Correction Officers
P.B.A.	Local #187	Sheriff's Officers
P.B.A.	Local #339	Prosecutors, Detectives & Investigators
C.W.A.	Local #1032	Superintendent of Elections

#### **4.28 AGENCY SHOP LAW**

Many County employees are members of labor unions or other employee associations which they join for collective bargaining reasons.

State law of New Jersey recognizes that organizations, which act as the majority Representative, have an obligation to represent both members and non-members without discriminations. Because of this obligation some unions and associations of County employees have negotiated an agency shop clause in their respective contract.

The agency shop law requires non-members of the respective organizations to pay a representation fee of up to 85% of dues paid by members. To apply to become a full dues-paying member, contact the union or association.

#### **4.29 STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

The Mercer County Staff Development Program is designed to provide financial assistance to County employees seeking education, including vocational education, and other developmental opportunities to enhance job performance.

The program is administered by the Affirmative Action and Training Office and is divided into four categories:

- Tuition Reimbursement
- Training Reimbursement
- Conference Reimbursement
- In house training workshop

To obtain further information regarding these employee programs contact the Division of Employee Relations.

#### **4.30 EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

This program provides free, confidential, professional assistance to help employees and their families resolve problems that effect their personal lives or job performance.

The Mercer Employees Assistance Program affiliated with the County provides these services. There are a number of sites throughout the County that will be convenient for



employees.

For information regarding this program, contact the Office of Personnel.

#### **4.31 CREDIT UNION**

County employees have the opportunity to join the Andrews Federal Credit Union. Any deductions will be taken from the employee's bi-weekly paycheck. For information on the services offered call 1-800-487-5500.

#### **4.32 BLOOD BANK PROGRAM**

Mercer County has an employee blood program which covers blood needs for employees and designated dependents. The program requires that participants donate blood a minimum of once a year in order to maintain membership. The employee or a designated proxy donor may give donations. Blood can be given at County drives in the Administration Building or at the Public Works Facility. Donations are also taken at:

Community Blood Council of New Jersey  
1410 Parkside Avenue  
Hamilton Hospital Substation  
Trenton, New Jersey 08638  
609-883-9750

By donating a pint of blood, coverage is guaranteed to family members with a choice of two plans:

##### **PLAN A**

- Employee
- Employee's Spouse
- All Dependent Children
- Parents and Parents-in-Law
- Grandparents and Grandparents-in-Law
- One other individual living in the same house.

##### **PLAN B**

- Employee
- Employee's Parents and Grandparents
- One other individual living in the same house.
- Brothers and sisters legally dependent upon parents or children legally dependent upon member.

Retirees can remain covered under the County program. A donation must be made

yearly until the age of sixty-six. After this time, the participant is covered for life. If retirement occurs before age sixty-six, a yearly donation must be made until the above mentioned age is reached.

Further information can be obtained from the Office of the County Administrator, 609-989-6443.

#### **4.33 AAA TRAVEL MEMBERSHIP**

AAA travel membership or renewal membership is offered by the County at a discounted rate. Application forms can be obtained by contacting the Personnel Office at 609-989-6636.

## **V. WAGE AND SALARY INFORMATION**

### **5.1 PAYCHECK DISTRIBUTION AND DEDUCTIONS**

Paychecks are distributed bi-weekly on Thursday. In the event a holiday falls on a Thursday, paychecks will be distributed one day earlier.

### **5.2 MANDATORY DEDUCTIONS**

- Federal Withholding Tax
- State Withholding Tax
- F.I.C.A. Social Security
- Unemployment Compensation Insurance
- Pension Program where membership is mandatory
- Repayment of Pension Loans
- Liens
- State Disability
- County Health Benefits

### **5.3 AUTHORIZED DEDUCTIONS**

- P.E.R.S. Contributory Insurance
- P.E.R.S. Supplemental Insurance
- H.M.O.'S
- Union Dues
- Savings Bonds
- United Way or Delaware Valley United Way
- Credit Union
- Deferred Compensation

### **5.4 FINAL PAYCHECK**

Employees are required to surrender all County issued equipment and their

identification cards upon termination of employment. Overuse of sick or vacation time will be deducted from the employee's final paycheck. The County reserves the right to hold the final pay equal to the value of the equipment withheld.

## **VI. MERCER COUNTY PHONE NUMBERS**

Office of County Executive	609-989-6518
Office of Chief of Staff	609-989-6516
Office of County Administrator	609-989-6502
President, Chosen Freeholders	609-989-6625

### *ADMINISTRATION*

Division of Employee Relations	609-989-6676
Insurance & Property	609-989-6655
Affirmative Action	609-989-6418
Budget	609-989-6504
Building & Grounds	609-989-6709
Clerk to the Board	609-989-6584
Constituent Relation	609-989-6517
Consumer Affairs	609-989-6671
Correction Center	609-989-6908
County Counsel	609-989-6511
County Physician	609-989-6260
Culture & Heritage	609-989-6899
Economic Development	609-989-6555
Electronic Data Processing	609-989-6501
Emergency Management	609-799-8868
Extension Services	609-989-6830
Fire Services	609-799-3245
Housing	609-989-6858
Job Training Partnership Act JTPA	609-989-6824
Medical Examiner	609-530-7522
Motor Pool	609-530-7525
Personnel	609-989-6633
Planning	609-989-6545
Print Shop	609-989-6566
Public Information	609-989-6214
Purchasing	609-989-6710
Records Management	609-989-6003
Treasurer	609-989-6694
Veteran Services	609-989-6120

### *BOARDS AND AUTHORITIES*

Board of Elections	609-989-6522
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Board of Taxation	609-989-6704
Park Commission	609-989-6530
Superintendent of Elections	609-989-6769
Superintendent of Schools	609-588-5877

*CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS*

County Clerk/Elections	609-989-6495
County Clerk/Recording	609-989-6466
Prosecutor	609-989-6305
Sheriff	609-989-6125
Surrogate	609-989-6329

*HUMAN SERVICES*

Office of Director	609-989-6526
Children & Youth	609-989-6718
Community Services	609-989-6982
County Adjuster	609-989-6664
Drugs & Alcohol	609-989-6897
Geriatric Center	609-588-5859
Library Services	609-989-6917
Mental Health	609-989-6574
Nutrition	609-989-6650
Office on Aging	609-989-6662
Office on the Disabled	609-989-6468
Summer Day Camp	609-989-6963
Youth Detention Center	609-530-7908

*TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE*

Office of Director	609-989-6629
Airport	609-882-1600
Engineering	609-989-6600
Highway	609-530-7500
TRADE	609-530-1974

## **VII. DISCLAIMER**

This Employee Handbook has been prepared to answer frequently asked questions concerning the County of Mercer's policies and procedures.

This handbook is not intended to constitute an employment contract between the employee and the County of Mercer. Only a contract signed between the County and an employee's representative union, which has been approved by the County's Board of Chosen Freeholders, is recognized as a contract. The County reserves the right to change handbook policy and practices, as needed at its' discretion.

If the handbook does not answer all of your questions, please contact the County's Office of Personnel. This office will be eager to respond to your request for help or additional information.

Respectfully,

Andrew A. Mair  
Acting Personnel Director