

EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK FOR HEAD START

Concho Valley Council of Governments



Head Start/Early Head Start Director

Date _____

Approved by Policy Council

Date _____

Approved by Executive Board

Date _____

San Angelo, Texas

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MISSION OF THE CONCHO VALLEY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Concho Valley Council of Governments (CVCOG) is a voluntary organization of local governments which fosters cooperative efforts toward resolving problems, policies, and plans that are common and regional.

ABOUT THE CONCHO VALLEY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

CVCOG is a voluntary association of local governments (cities, counties, schools and special-purpose districts) established in 1967 under the provisions of Section 391 of *Texas Local Government Code*. CVCOG is an independent political subdivision covering the 14 county Concho Valley region.

- CVCOG's primary purposes are to make plans to guide the future development of the region and to provide joint services which local governments are unable to provide individually.
- CVCOG is funded by grants and contracts from State and Federal governments, as well as by local funds.
- CVCOG conducts major programs in services for the aging and provides public transportation, 9-1-1 emergency communications, criminal justice planning and training, economic development, regional services, 211, and Head Start.
- CVCOG is governed by a General Assembly made up of local elected officials representing each of the local governments, which meet annually; and an Executive Committee chosen from General Assembly representatives, which meets monthly to conduct the on-going business of CVCOG.
- The Executive Committee appoints an Executive Director, who serves as CVCOG's chief administrative officer and is responsible for hiring and supervising all other employees.

ABOUT HEAD START

The mission of Head Start is to promote the school readiness of young children from low-income families by enhancing their cognitive, social, and emotional development.

The purpose of Head Start programs is to provide comprehensive services needed to support the development of children ages birth to 5 years from low-income families and promote children's overall school readiness. It is also designed to support parents as the child's most important teacher, empowering them to shape their programs.

Head Start programs support children's growth and development in positive learning environments and by offering a variety of services including early learning, health and family well-being.

HANDBOOK

This Handbook will assist you in learning about CVCOG. Specifically, it will help you understand many important points about how we work with our employees, guests and each other.

CVCOG has an obligation to help you get acquainted as quickly as possible with the way we do business. That includes making you familiar with our practices, policies, procedures, and training you properly. Your responsibility includes working in accordance with our policies and procedures

This Handbook has been created to give you direction on how to handle yourself and what is expected of others. The policies and procedures in this handbook are not to be interpreted as a contract for employment. The Executive Director, with the permission of the Executive Committee, has the complete right to **alter, modify, delete, change, add, or interpret** as deemed necessary. You will be notified of any such changes, deletions, additions, modifications, and decisions. All changes are subject to approval from the Executive Director and the Executive Committee. This handbook and its policies will be reviewed annually to ensure Federal and State compliance as well as to ensure all policies in place create clear and concise boundaries that are in line with our commitment to the service of our community. Policies not listed in this handbook (such as Travel, P-Card, and all financial policies) can be found on our CVCOG team website, or you can seek direction from your Supervisor, Director, or Human Resources (HR) at any time.

Please note that the Head Start Program is required by outside federal, state, and local agencies to have certain specified policies in place that do not affect other areas or operations of CVCOG.

The policies outlined in this Handbook are established by the Executive Committee of CVCOG. These policies completely replace and supersede any and all personnel policies previously adopted individually or as a set of policies by the Executive Committee.

The Executive Director, along with HR, is responsible for the administration of CVCOG'S personnel policies and procedures. The Executive Director will make all final decisions regarding policies and in the event of his absence may delegate authority to appropriate staff to act on his or her behalf in the administration of these policies and procedures.

These personnel policies apply equally to all employees of CVCOG unless a class of employees is specifically exempted by these policies. In cases where Federal or State laws or regulations supersede policy for specific groups of employees, such laws or regulations will control only insofar as necessary for compliance. Please note this is a possibility since the varied parts of CVCOG work from different program regulations and grant requirements.

CVCOG'S Department Directors and Supervisors are willing to answer your questions and give you the help you need in order to learn about CVCOG, its organizational structure, and its policies.

EMPLOYMENT TERMS, CONDITIONS AND BUSINESS ETHICS

COMPLIANCE

Any violation of the policies and procedures listed in this handbook will subject the employee to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. Any CVCOG employee having knowledge of any violations that require reporting are required to promptly report such violation to the appropriate level of management. Each supervisor, manager, director and officer of CVCOG is responsible for policy compliance in their area of responsibility. When a question arises regarding any aspect of the policy, contact HR or the Executive Director.

EMPLOYMENT-AT-WILL

This handbook is not to be interpreted as representing a contract of employment. CVCOG is an employment-at-will employer. This means both you and CVCOG have the freedom to terminate our employment relationship at any time, with or without cause. No representative of management has the authority to make any arrangements or commitments to the contrary, or seek to enter into employment contracts without the express, written approval of the Executive Director.

CVCOG'S employees maintain only the highest ethical standards in the conduct of CVCOG's affairs. The intent of this policy is that each employee conducts CVCOG's business with integrity, and complies with all applicable laws in a manner that excludes considerations of personal advantage or gain.

Further, the Executive Director and the Executive Committee have the right and freedom to alter, modify, change, delete, add to or interpret the guidelines as they deem appropriate.

GIFTS AND GRATUITIES

A CVCOG employee may not: solicit, accept or agree to accept a financial benefit other than from CVCOG, that might reasonably tend to influence his or her performance of duties for CVCOG or that he or she knows or should know is offered with intent to influence the employee's performance; accept employment or compensation that might reasonably induce him or her to disclose confidential information acquired in the performance of official duties; accept outside employment or compensation that might reasonably tend to impair independence or judgment in performance duties for CVCOG; make any personal investment that might reasonably be expected to create a substantial conflict between the employee's private interest and duties for CVCOG; or solicit or accept or agree to accept any financial benefit from another person in exchange for having performed duties as a CVCOG employee in favor of that person.

Gifts, Favors, and Payments Made by CVCOG: Gifts, favors, and payments may be given to others at CVCOG'S expense, if they meet all of the following criteria:

1. They are consistent with accepted business practices,
2. They are of sufficiently limited value and in a form that cannot be perceived as a bribe or payoff,
3. They are not in violation of applicable law or generally accepted ethical standards; and
4. Public disclosure of the facts will not embarrass CVCOG.

Gifts, Favors, Entertainment and Payments Received by CVCOG Employees:

- Employees shall not seek or accept, for themselves or others, any gifts, favors, entertainment, or payments without a legitimate business purpose; neither shall they seek or accept personal loans (other than conventional loans at market rates from recognized lending institutions) from any persons or business organizations that do, or seek to do business with, or are a competitor of CVCOG.

In the application of this policy:

- Employees may accept for themselves and employees of their family’s common courtesies usually associated with customary business practices. These include but are not limited to:
 - Lunch and/or dinner with vendors sometimes including spouses as long as the invitation is extended by the vendor.
 - Gifts of small value from vendors such as calendars, pens, pads, knives, etc.
 - Tickets to events (such as sports, arts, etc.) are acceptable if offered by the vendor and the vendor accompanies the employee to the event. These are not to be solicited by CVCOG employee and must be approved by the Executive Director.
 - Overnight outings are acceptable under the condition that individuals from either other companies or the vendor are in attendance. The employee must have prior approval from the Executive Director.
 - Gifts of perishable items usually given during the holidays such as hams, cookies, nuts, etc., are acceptable.
 - The receipt of alcoholic beverages is allowed; however, employees must continue to follow CVCOG’s Drug and Alcohol Policy.

- Day outings such as golf, fishing, and hunting are acceptable if offered by the vendor and the vendor accompanies the employee to the event. These are not to be solicited by CVCOG employees and must be approved by the Executive Director. Participation by the employee's family is not acceptable.
- It is never permissible to accept stocks or other forms of marketable securities of any amount.
- A gift of cash or cash equivalent, such as gift cards, should not be accepted in an amount of more than limited value, or in violation of generally accepted ethical standards.
- Employees are not expected to buy gifts for supervisors, managers, and/or directors. If situations arise, directors, managers, and supervisors should not accept gifts of more than limited value from those under their supervision. Gifts to management employees are only given on their own free will with the understanding the employee will not receive any form of fiduciary gains.

For the purposes of this handbook, limited value is equal to \$25.00 per occurrence and \$50.00 per calendar year. For further clarification, seek out guidance from your supervisor or HR. *The exception to this policy is employee incentives received via donation and delivered through CVCOG Engagement Committee activities.*

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Employees should avoid any situation which involves or may involve a conflict between their personal interest and the interest of CVCOG. As in all other facets of their duty’s, employees dealing with clients, suppliers, contractors, competitors or any person doing or seeking to do business with CVCOG, are to act in the best interest of CVCOG. Each employee shall make prompt and full disclosure in writing to their manager of any potential situation which may involve a conflict of interest. Such conflicts include:

- Ownership by the employee, or by the employee’s family, of a significant interest in any outside enterprise which does or seeks to do business with or is a competitor of CVCOG.
- Serving as a director, officer, partner, consultant, or in a managerial or technical capacity with an outside enterprise which does or is seeking to do business with or is a competitor of CVCOG. Exceptions to this may be approved by the Executive Director.
- Acting as a broker, finder, go-between or otherwise for the benefit of a third party in transactions involving or potentially involving CVCOG or its interests.
- Any other arrangements or circumstances, including family or other personal relationships, which might dissuade the employee from acting in the best interest of CVCOG.

Employees of CVCOG will neither have financial interests in the profits of any contract, service, or other work performed for CVCOG nor derive personal profit directly or in-directly from any contract, purchase, sale or service between CVCOG and any person or company.

Confidential Information: The revelation or use of any confidential product information, data on decisions, plans, or any other information which might be contrary to the interest of CVCOG (not in conflict with the Freedom of Information Act or Open Information Act) without prior authorization, is prohibited. The misuse, unauthorized access to, or mishandling of confidential information, particularly personnel information, is strictly prohibited.

INTERNS, FIELD STUDENTS, VISTA, CONTRACTORS AND TEMPS

Field Students and Interns – CVCOG understands the importance of working with local universities and other entities to provide hands on job experience to those seeking out degrees or jobs in fields related to public service. CVCOG will continue to seek out qualified applicants for field students & internships while working in partnership with said agencies to provide experience to potential future applicants. All field students & interns interested in creating an agreement with CVCOG will be required to follow the same process of applying for a regular position allowing CVCOG to follow its hiring process. Field students & Interns will also comply with the following guidelines;

- Acknowledgement that any field student’s assignment, project, task, or internship with CVCOG is purely an educational experience
- A field student’s assignment, project, task, or internship will have no exchange of wages unless otherwise arranged
- Any creations, inventions, designs, projects, or intellectual material developed while working as a field student or during internships are property of CVCOG regardless of whether they were developed by external consultants, employees of CVCOG, field students, or interns
- There are no expectations of a job offer once a field student’s assignment or internship is completed
- Field students and interns are required to follow all policies and procedures
- The Department Director and or Executive Director have the right to terminate a field student’s assignment or internship at any time

VISTA – AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) staff are those that provide needed resources to nonprofit organizations and public agencies to increase their capacity to lift communities out of poverty. At times, CVCOG may utilize these VISTAs in order to provide support to our programs.

The VISTA Director will contact the HR department with details such as the date the VISTA will start, location, shift, duration of the assignment, etc. Based on the information provided, HR will do the onboarding and conduct orientation. VISTAs will be issued a badge and may be given a keycard & keys for building access. They are responsible for following the ID Badge and the Key Card/Keys Policies.

The VISTA Director and VISTA Program Manager will be responsible all aspects of the VISTA’s employment, during the assignment, which includes training, job responsibilities, time management, and will also monitor performance. If any performance concerns arise, the supervisor/manager or VISTA Director must notify the HR department immediately. Disciplinary actions will be handled by the HR department and AmeriCorps.

Contractors and Temporary Workers – CVCOG acknowledges that a portion of its staffing requirements may be met through the use of agency temporary (temp) workers and contractors. The HR department will oversee the management of the selection and hiring processes related to temporary and contract staff.

The Department Director will contact the HR department with a request for a temp worker and will provide details such as the date the worker is needed, job responsibilities, location, shift, duration of the assignment, and recommended salary. HR will contact a staffing agency with a request for a temp worker, provide the specifics of the position, review the candidates, and work with the Department Director to make a selection.

The Department Director will be responsible for signing the temp’s timesheets during the assignment and will monitor performance. If any performance concerns arise, the supervisor/manager or Department Director must notify the HR

department immediately. Disciplinary actions will be handled by the HR department and the temp agency's representative.

JOB POSTING

In accordance with Texas Government Code 656.024, as soon as a position becomes available or vacant, CVCOG will publicly list said vacancy on, at minimum, the Texas Workforce Solutions and CVCOG website along with other appropriate platforms. Jobs are posted in accordance with the requirements of the EEO Policy/Affirmative Action Plan. If appropriate and effective, newspaper advertisements, flyers placed in the community and word of mouth may be utilized as well. Vacancies will be posted for a minimum of 10 (ten) working days, with notice provided to current employees.

Certain situations may call for the Executive Director, to not publicly or internally post a position, or post for less than 10 (ten) days. The Executive Director will use guided discretion based on operational and program need or the availability of a highly qualified internal candidate. If this situation occurs, CVCOG will continue to adhere to all local, state, and federal EEO requirements.

Every effort will be made to ensure that all CVCOG employees are made aware of and have the opportunity to apply for open positions, either before or concurrent with CVCOG's consideration of external candidates for the position. While it is CVCOG practice to promote from within whenever possible; certain business conditions could cause a position to be filled without posting internally.

Regardless of the source of applicants, CVCOG seeks to locate the **best-qualified** person for the job.

All regular part time and full-time employees with 90 days or more of continuous employment with CVCOG or with approval from the Executive Director and who have satisfactory performance and attendance records are eligible to apply for any CVCOG position. Operational exceptions may be approved by the Department Director and Executive Director.

Qualified and eligible employees who wish to apply for a posted position must notify their Department Director. Interested employees will be prompted to submit their resume and CVCOG's online application. These employees may contact HR for guidance in applying for these positions

SELECTION OF EMPLOYEES

Our application and screening processes are designed and carried out in a **non-discriminatory** manner in order to maintain compliance with Federal, Local, and State Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) laws; CVCOG will not discriminate against applicants based on a person's protected status such as race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, pregnancy, citizenship, familial status, disability status, veteran status, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other protected group status. It is our goal to employ the best-qualified applicant for the job. Additionally, we seek to promote from within whenever we can find the best-qualified person for the job inside our workforce.

All candidates for employment must fully complete CVCOG's online application. The forms must be completed in detail and electronically signed by the applicant to verify the accuracy and completeness. Incomplete applications will not be accepted. A resume will not be accepted in place of a completed application. If an applicant wishes, the resume may accompany the completed application form as additional information.

In compliance with our funding agency and contractual requirements, it is our policy to conduct background investigations on all new employees. The following types of searches may be conducted during the hiring process:

Verification of Identity - CVCOG requires all employees to have a valid and current driver license or some form of identifying documentation, used to verify a person's identity.

Reference Checks - To ensure that individuals who join CVCOG are well-qualified and have strong potential for success and productivity, CVCOG may verify previous employment references prior to extending a job offer.

Education Verification - CVCOG may verify education listed on your job application as CVCOG feels necessary.

Employment Verification - CVCOG may seek to verify all prior employment.

Criminal Records Search - CVCOG will conduct a criminal records search for information such as misdemeanor or felony convictions, open arrest warrants, or other related illegal activities. CVCOG will obtain a sex offender record and any other criminal record search required by their department. CVCOG employees may not have any felony or misdemeanor convictions within the last 7 years from the time of the employment offer. Felony or misdemeanor convictions outside of the 7-year time frame are up for review by the Department Director and Executive Director. Severity of charges as well as length of time passed since charges were made is taken into consideration. Immediate disqualification may occur if the applicant has charges of physical violence, domestic abuse, child abuse/neglect, or elderly abuse during any time on their search history.

National and State Data Bases - Depending on department requirements, CVCOG may submit your information through various national data bases such as the Office of Inspector General (OIG) US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Exclusion and the Texas Health and Human Service Commission Exclusion data bases. Immediate disqualification may occur if the applicant is listed on either of these exclusion data bases, in accordance with program requirements.

Social Security Number Verification - CVCOG verifies an individual's connection to his or her social security number by participating in a government program called E-Verify. This program determines an employee's eligibility to work in the United States.

Driving Eligibility - CVCOG verifies if an individual has a valid and current driver's license. If the individual does not have a driver license, they must sign the CVCOG Employment - Driver License Waiver and will not be able to operate a motor vehicle while on duty.

Skills/Competencies - Certain jobs may require an applicant to test for the position, in order to evaluate skills with computers, internet/e-mail, word processing, program-specific hardware, or other specific aptitudes.

Certain employees must be capable of being bonded. This may be a required condition of employment, if the position involves the handling of money or other negotiable instruments.

The following types of searches may be conducted during employment:

Any of the aforementioned searches may be conducted during an employee's tenure as based on program and contractual requirements but may also include:

Office of Attorney General (OAG) - CVCOG will enter every hired employee's information to the Child Support Division of the OAG data base, in accordance with Federal and State Law. CVCOG will follow all laws and regulations regarding these types of withholdings

Verification of Employment - All requests for information on current or former employees must be referred to the HR Department. Prospective employers, financial institutions, and residential property managers routinely contact employers requesting verification of a former or current employee's work history and/or salary. Requests must be submitted in either physical or electronic written format, with a wet signature, and all responses will only be provided in written format. Regardless of employment status and/or termination reason; the only information to be provided will be

dates of employment, last position held, salary or hourly rate, nature of the separation (voluntary or involuntary) and rehire status (only if available). Representatives of Government or law enforcement agencies, in the course of their business, may be allowed access to additional personnel file information.

Rehire Policy- Employees that have terminated from employment on a permanent basis are not prohibited from applying for any position with CVCOG. Due to TCDRS requirements (see pg. 36 for more details), previous employees, no matter the reason for termination, will not be considered for rehire until a full 3 calendar month period has passed. The following items will be taken under consideration before CVCOG rehires an employee;

- Previous resignation was submitted in a timely manner
- Reason for leaving
- Severity of disciplinary issues
- Ability to meet all current hiring requirements
- Previous supervisors suggested rehire status (if available)

Previous employees have no guarantee of rehire. HR and the Department Director will seek the approval from the Executive Director regarding rehiring employees.

CVCOG reserves the right to add to or take away from the searches listed above in accordance with grant, local, State or Federal, and contractual requirements. The Executive Director has final discretion on if an applicant meets CVCOG background requirements. *See the Employee and Volunteer Background Check Policy for more information.*

OUTSIDE ACTIVITY

Employees may not engage in any outside employment, activity, or enterprise that adversely affects the employee's job performance or is determined by the Executive Director to be inconsistent or incompatible for employment with CVCOG. CVCOG does not intervene in the private lives of its employees. However, should a conflict with a client, or an employee's activity, be of a nature that could tarnish the image of CVCOG or hurt our business position in the community, the Executive Director reserves the right to enforce proper disciplinary action.

OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT/MOONLIGHTING

Moonlighting is considered as additional employment. Such extra employment will be allowed if it does not interfere with your duties at CVCOG and is not in competition with CVCOG. Should any outside financial endeavor become damaging to our business position in the community, CVCOG will require corrective action on your part.

If a supervisor or director becomes aware that an employee's second job is having an adverse effect on his or her job with CVCOG, a supervisor or director may request the employee to make a choice between employment with CVCOG or with their alternate employer.

All outside employment must be conducted COMPLETELY off of CVCOG premises. CVCOG equipment, supplies, or space may never be used toward outside employment.

EMPLOYMENT OF RELATIVES (NEPOTISM)

Nepotism is the demonstration of favoritism toward a relative. The practice of nepotism in the hiring of personnel or awarding of contracts is forbidden by CVCOG.

No person may be hired who is related within the first (parent or child), second (brother, sister, grandparent or grandchild) or third (great-grandparents, great-grandchildren, parent's brother or sister, or nieces and nephews) degree of affinity (marriage) or consanguinity (blood) to any member of the Executive Committee or to the Executive Director. No person who is related to a member of the Executive Committee or to the Executive Director in one of the prohibited

degrees may continue in CVCOG's employ. The exception will be if the employee has been employed continuously by CVCOG for a period of:

At least 30 days, if the Executive Director or member is appointed;

At least 6 months, if the Executive Director or member is elected at general election (other than the general election for State and county officers); or

At least 1 year, if the Executive Director or member is elected at general election for State and county officers.

All other employees may not directly supervise any member of their family. CVCOG strongly advises against hiring family members within the same department. Any applicant related in any way by affinity or consanguinity to a current employee must have Executive Director approval before hiring.

TRANSFERS, PROMOTIONS AND DEMOTIONS

All internal job transfers, promotions and demotions are handled on the same non-discriminatory basis as new hires. CVCOG will not discriminate against applicants or employees based on a person's protected status such as race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, pregnancy, citizenship, familial status, disability status, veteran status, genetic information or other protected group status. All internal job transfers, promotions and demotions will be subject to a 90-day probationary period. If an employee is within their 90-day probationary period, their transfer, promotion or demotion will be subject to the Department Director's discretion with the approval of the Executive Director.

A **transfer** is an assignment to another job of equal pay, status, or benefits. A transfer is not a promotion. Transfers to other positions can be requested by you, the Department Director, or both. The purpose of a transfer may be: to relocate you in a more suitable position; to achieve better scheduling; to address personal issues; to be able to retain you if you might otherwise have to leave; or to train you in other tasks so that you can ultimately make a more significant contribution to the organization and our clients.

A **promotion** occurs when you move to a new position with more pay or status. Promotions will always put the best-qualified person into a job that demands more skills, knowledge and judgment. There are no scheduled promotions or raises at CVCOG.

Previous performance management discussions and seniority are important considerations for both transfers and promotions. Any employee wishing to be considered for a promotion or transfer must notify the Department Director and submit an updated resume and online application to HR.

A **demotion** may occur in your best interest, in the best interest of CVCOG, or both. A demotion is a move to a job with lesser pay or status.

POLYGRAPH EXAMINATIONS

In the event of an investigation, or other CVCOG required event, you may be asked to submit to a polygraph examination. Any polygraph examination will be limited solely to inquiries related to CVCOG's business affairs. You will not be asked about your personal or private affairs unrelated to CVCOG's business affairs. Any polygraph examinations are conducted in compliance with the "Employee Polygraph Protection Act of 1988."

PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS

With the exception of CVT and the Head Start Department, CVCOG does not generally conduct health-related inquiries or medical examinations on job applicants, although there are certain positions in CVCOG which may require agility

testing prior to starting work. Any physical examination, including agility testing, is conducted in accordance with the guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act and EEO Laws.

LICENSES, CERTIFICATIONS AND REGISTRATIONS

Some jobs require a license, certification or registration as a condition of being able to legally and ethically perform the job. In these cases, it is your responsibility to provide proper documentation prior to being allowed to perform any duties of the job or work with your supervisor on obtaining certifications in a timely manner. All licenses, certifications and registrations are verified prior to any performance of job duties.

MEDICAL STATEMENT

All Full-Time, Part Time, Substitutes, and Volunteers will be required to have a physical and a Tuberculosis (TB) Screening prior to reporting to work or volunteering in the classroom. If Tuberculosis Screening is positive the employee will not be allowed to report for work until released by a physician. The physical and TB must be kept up-to-date based on the most current Head Start Standards and guidelines.

JOB DESCRIPTIONS

A job description has been prepared for each position, including general duties and responsibilities, minimum qualifications, and reporting and supervisory information.

You will be presented with your specific job description, which will remain available for you to review. You must sign a copy of your job description.

Job descriptions are reviewed periodically for content and accuracy. Job descriptions are updated as needed; revisions and updates to your job description do not necessarily give reason for a pay raise.

ORIENTATION

On your first day, you will be given a general orientation to CVCOG. Safety issues and training will be given to you during this time. During your first few weeks and months your supervisor will work closely with you to help you learn your duties quickly and to provide you with guidance as you need it.

Feel free to ask your immediate supervisor or Department Director for understanding and clarification of any new words, terms, or concepts you do not understand. Questions can also be directed to HR.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

When you have completed the 90-day introductory period, you will receive a review of your performance. This is to determine early on how you are performing. During this review, we will point out job functions that you are performing satisfactorily. Any areas that may need further development will be discussed and documented for your benefit. At this time, and anytime throughout your employment, the employee and CVCOG have the right to terminate employment.

Your supervisor does have the discretion to meet with you sooner to discuss early interventions for any behaviors and or performance issues that require immediate action. In this case, the disciplinary process may be applied.

Subsequent performance management will be conducted semi-annually via discussions with your supervisor. This provides semi-annually evaluations on your performance, development, satisfaction of your job requirements, job knowledge, growth plans and needs. These annual performance management sessions will become part of your permanent record of performance and may be taken into consideration for pay increases, promotions, etc.

See Disciplinary Issues and Procedures section for more information.

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

CVCOG provides several avenues for you to advance your knowledge. This starts with the new skills you learn to perform the basics of your job functions. Depending on your position, there may be opportunities for you to attend job-related programs. Some trainings may be optional and be supplemental to the in-house training you receive at COG, however, there are some trainings that may be a requirement for a particular position.

If CVCOG authorizes or requires you to attend any educational or training course, conference, or seminar related to your role or department, CVCOG will adjust your schedule to allow for the necessary time off, with pay, and will reimburse you for associated costs (including tuition or registration fees and authorized travel, meals, and lodging). When appropriate, CVCOG may prepay registration fees, hotel costs, and/or airline or other public transportation costs directly to the entity involved.

See the Travel Policy for additional information regarding more detailed travel instructions.

EDUCATION ASSISTANCE POLICY

Concho Valley Council of Governments (CVCOG) strives to be a desired and competitive workplace and to hire the most qualified of applicants. Various factors contribute to an applicant's decision to work for CVCOG, but benefits are high on the list. This Education Assistance Policy would be an additional benefit to working at CVCOG and is established to allow CVCOG to offer, when appropriate and authorized by funding agencies, the opportunity for employees to receive assistance in higher education expenses. CVCOG does not guarantee issuance of assistance. This policy would not only offer an additional benefit, but support CVCOG in succession planning. Employees advancing their education increases their skill and knowledge base, which in turn, benefits their program and CVCOG as a whole.

Eligibility: This policy applies to full-time and part-time employees. Temporary and seasonal employees, along with interns, are not eligible for any type of Education Assistance. For the purposes of this policy, program and department will be used synonymously.

Guidelines: Education assistance will be specific to each department and or program. CVCOG administers a various number of programs with each program having its own set of requirements and regulations. Some programs may ask employees to show proof of Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application completion to determine if they may qualify for grants or other assistance. In addition to program requirements, CVCOG also includes the following criteria for an employee to be eligible to request education assistance;

- Employee's program and/or funding agency must allow for such expenses.
- Education assistance is contingent on availability of funds within the program budget.
- Employee must have been employed for six months (unless program requirements specify otherwise).
- Employees must be in good standing and not have received any type of disciplinary reprimand in the last six months.
- Degree or certification sought must be relevant to their current position or as a component of a documented department succession plan.
- The employee must complete their department specific form and include a statement stating their purpose and commitment.
- Classes should be scheduled per the availability of the employee, with minimal disturbance to their regular work schedule.
- No more than two hours per week of paid worked time are allowed for coursework.
- For graded courses, employees must maintain a GPA of 2.5 or higher at all times.

- Departments will specify their individual allowances and requirements every fiscal year or upon the implementation of their plan.
- Once coursework is completed, the employee must stay employed with CVCOG for a minimum of three years or will be required to pay back a pro-rated amount of the assistance provided.
 - An exception would be in the event of an involuntary termination.
- The maximum amount of assistance, regardless of department, will be \$3500 unless authorized by the Executive Director.
- Departments will have different individual requirements to meet but may require monies be returned in the event of a failing grade or termination of employment, (whether voluntary or involuntary) prior to designated time.

Types of Education Authorized:

- Required program certifications
- Associate degree programs
- Bachelor degree programs
- Graduate degree programs
- Any other degree or certification required by the program

Approval: Department Directors will approve the initial employee request, then submit to the Executive Director for final approval. Education Assistance forms are located on the CVCOG team site or may be requested from your supervisor/director.

Changes to Education Assistance Policy: The Executive Director, with approval from the Executive Committee, reserves the right to alter, modify, delete, change, add, or interpret this Education Assistance Policy as needed. Notification of changes will be made to all appropriate employees.

RULES OF CONDUCT

The purpose of this section is to provide you with the rules, or expectations, that are common to all of us. Hopefully, CVCOG can answer many of your questions regarding how to conduct business and the behavior required of all employees. Our purpose is to point out what can cause you problems so that inappropriate conduct can be avoided.

OPEN DOOR POLICY

Our "Open Door" Policy states that your supervisor, Department Director, HR and the Executive Director are accessible to discuss issues. Should you have a personal or business need to discuss, please feel free to do so. CVCOG wants you to enjoy a full, productive and healthy work relationship with us. If CVCOG can assist you, please approach us and give us the opportunity to help you.

CVCOG does request you respect the "chain of command" when needing to discuss matters of concern. However, if you are unable to discuss your concern with your immediate supervisor or Department Director, you may also contact HR. If HR is not available, you may contact the Executive Director. If neither is available and your situation is such that a response is required immediately, you may also contact another Department Director.

EMPLOYEE INVESTIGATIONS

There are times during the operations of any business, including ours, when investigations for various reasons and purposes are necessary. CVCOG will attempt to keep sensitive information discovered during such necessary investigations confidential; however, this does not equate to total secrecy. Although our efforts and intents are to achieve confidentiality during investigations, CVCOG cannot guarantee total confidentiality.

PROBLEM - SOLVING PROCEDURE

The first step is to review with your immediate supervisor what is of concern to you, unless there is a concern about talking with your supervisor. If there is a concern, another member of management may be sought out. The supervisor or management team member will receive your problem/concern, and seek to resolve the issue within a reasonable period of time.

If you do not believe you have received a satisfactory solution, you may then speak with any other member of management or the Department Director. At this point you will be asked to submit your issue in writing. This extra step will further ensure the Department Director understands clearly the exact nature of your concern.

The Department Director, with assistance from HR, will need a reasonable amount of time to investigate this issue, research options for a solution and get back to you with an answer.

We ask that you do not speak with anyone, who is not a member of management, regarding the concern as this could be considered as perpetuating gossip or rumors.

Should you feel you still are not satisfied with a resolution to your problem/concern, you have another avenue of assistance: you may request to discuss it with the Executive Director. As in the prior steps, the Executive Director will need a reasonable amount of time to study, obtain necessary facts and opinions, conduct research and finally provide you with an answer to your inquiry.

It is critical to realize that having had adequate appeals steps, the decision of the Executive Director will be final and there is no other appeal or avenue to take for resolution.

During this entire problem-solving procedure, you are free to consult with HR. This person can assist you in: submitting your problem/concern in writing and articulating the issue clearly; explaining the steps in the procedure and answering questions for you; possibly arranging the meetings with your immediate supervisor, Department Director and the Executive Director; interpreting the resolution; and ensuring all the steps are conducted in a non-discriminatory manner.

DISCIPLINARY ISSUES AND PROCEDURES

There are times when corrective action becomes necessary. In most instances, an attempt will be made to correct the behavior that causes disciplinary action. However, sometimes a behavior or an action will be deemed serious enough to justify immediate termination.

Examples that would call for immediate termination include but are not limited to: theft, drug or alcohol use/abuse, insubordination, misconduct, physical violence, sexual harassment, other forms of harassment, dishonesty, breach of business ethics, incorrect treatment of our employees, certain forms of outside activity, mistreatment of fellow employees, abusive behavior, inappropriate language, lack of productivity, or an inability to meet goals.

Our preferred course of action is coaching and training. For acts not resulting in immediate termination, the employee will be verbally counseled. This will include demonstrating for and discussing with the employee their incorrect action(s) and what changes are expected. The manager will document the occurrence of the verbal counseling. All verbal counseling documentation will be removed from an employee's personnel file after one year if the employee has corrected the action and no additional disciplinary proceedings occurred.

Should further violations occur, or if the violation is severe enough and verbal counseling is not appropriate, the employee will be given a formal written warning. Again, the behavior, action, practice, policy or principle involved will be pointed out and explained for the employee's benefit.

If further infractions occur, the employee will receive a formal write-up. At this time, the Director and Executive Director will have the option of probation, suspension or termination. The employee may be suspended, with or without pay, for up to 30 days. During this time the employee will be asked to consider if they truly want to work for CVCOG.

Probation can be set for a term of 30, 60, 90, or other situation-appropriate number of days, and must be approved by both HR and the Executive Director. During the set time, an employee must meet all goals set by their supervisor. Supervisors will closely work with the employee and meet no less than twice a month. At the end of the probation period, the employee will be evaluated and a decision will be made regarding the employee's future with CVCOG.

Suspension can be effective immediately, and be set for one to thirty (30) days. Suspensions are for more serious infractions that would be cause for immediate termination, immediate removal from the work place, or an immediate investigation. This will give CVCOG time to make a well-informed decision regarding corrective action and future employment with our organization.

After a suspension, CVCOG may deem it necessary to terminate employment based on information acquired through an investigation, or from receiving clarification on the violation. If CVCOG believes the behaviors or actions can be remedied or prevented in the future, an employee may continue employment if the employee indicates the desire to work for CVCOG and follow its policies, practices, and corrective actions. However, if the employee decides they do not agree with CVCOG'S purpose, practices, policies and beliefs, they will be terminated or given the opportunity to resign. If, following suspension, the employee further violates our policies, practices, and/or beliefs, the employee will be terminated. Should management decide suspension would not accomplish any purpose, they may terminate the employee immediately.

Supervisors and Department Directors are not required to use above mentioned coaching and training method. Nor are they required to place an employee on probation or suspension. CVCOG has the right to terminate an employee when it

is the best course of action for CVCOG, its employees and clients. All final decisions require HR review and approval from the Executive Director.

Employees have the option to appeal any disciplinary action they receive. The employee will need to contact the Director of Human Resources and may be asked to complete the Disciplinary Action Appeal Form. Submission of an appeal, verbally or in writing, should occur no later than five (5) business days after receiving the disciplinary action. If the Director of Human Resources upholds the disciplinary action, the employee may then take their appeal to the Executive Director. The Executive Director will make the final decision regarding the disciplinary action.

FIREARMS & WEAPONS

Employees are only permitted to carry firearms in a concealed manner while on the COG's premises, while conducting company business, or while acting as a company representative at any work-related activity, meeting, or function. This prohibition against the possession or carrying of firearms applies even if the employee is licensed to carry a concealed handgun or to openly carry a handgun by the state of Texas. This policy is intended to comply with all applicable state laws concerning employee rights to possess and carry firearms and shall be interpreted and enforced accordingly.

Firearms and any other form of weapons are not permitted at any Head Start / Early Head Start location.

HORSEPLAY

It is impossible to list all the possible forms of horseplay. Examples of horseplay include: exploding fireworks; throwing things around the work area; tampering with food; pulling a chair out from under a person who is about to sit down or any other behavior that could be perceived as dangerous or cause potential harm to employees and or the facility. Horseplay has been shown to be insulting, dangerous and unsafe.

THEFT

Theft can occur in many different ways. Stealing property of any kind from a coworker, visitor, vendor, client or CVCOG is considered theft. All manner of theft is prohibited and will be dealt with quickly.

ABUSIVE, PROFANE, OR OBSCENE LANGUAGE

This type of language is unacceptable in the workplace. It is not acceptable, for any reason, to direct this type language towards clients, visitors, or fellow employees, and it will not be tolerated.

VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

CVCOG seeks to provide a safe workplace for all of its employees and visitors. To ensure a safe workplace and to reduce the risk of violence, all employees should review and understand all provisions of this Workplace Violence Policy.

Prohibited Conduct: CVCOG does not tolerate any type of workplace violence committed by or against employees. Employees are prohibited from making threats or engaging in violent activities.

The following list, while not all inclusive, provides examples of conduct that is prohibited:

- Causing physical injury to another person;
- Making threatening remarks;
- Aggressive or hostile behavior that creates a reasonable fear of injury in another person, or subjects another person to emotional distress;
- Intentionally damaging employer property or property of another employee;
- Use of any weapon, illegal or legal, while on CVCOG property or while on CVCOG business;

- Committing acts motivated by, or related to, sexual harassment or domestic violence.

Reporting Procedure: Any potentially dangerous situation must be reported **immediately** to a supervisor or HR. Reports can be made anonymously; all reported incidents will be investigated. Reports or incidents warranting confidentiality will be handled appropriately and information will be disclosed to others only on a need-to-know basis. All parties involved in a situation will be counseled and the results of investigations will be discussed with them. CVCOG will actively intervene at any indication of a possibly hostile or violent situation.

Risk Reduction Measures

Hiring: CVCOG takes reasonable measures to review candidates' backgrounds and conduct background investigations so as to reduce the risk of hiring individuals with a history of violent behavior.

Safety: CVCOG conducts inspections of the premises to evaluate and determine any vulnerability to workplace violence or other hazards. If you become aware of any dangerous situations or areas notify any manager immediately. Any necessary corrective action will be taken to reduce risk.

Individual Situations: While we do not expect employees to be skilled at identifying potentially dangerous persons, employees are expected to exercise good judgment and to inform any member of management if any employee exhibits behavior which could be a sign of a potentially dangerous situation. Such behavior includes:

- Discussing weapons or bringing them to the workplace;
- Displaying overt signs of extreme stress, resentment, hostility, or anger;
- Making threatening remarks;
- Sudden or significant deterioration of performance;
- Displaying irrational or inappropriate behavior;
- Cordial and ethical relationships improve our business, and our feelings towards each other. At no time will fighting or altercations, physical or verbal, be tolerated.

Employees at Risk: CVCOG will identify employees, roles, or positions which have been determined to be at risk for becoming victims of violence because of the nature of their job or because they are subject to harassment, violence, or threats from a non-employee. Management will design a plan with at-risk employees to prepare for possible emergency situations.

Enforcement: Threats, threatening conduct, or any other acts of aggression or violence in the workplace will not be tolerated. Any employee determined to have committed such acts is in violation of CVCOG policy. Non-employees engaged in violent acts on the employer's premises may be removed immediately or reported to the proper authorities and fully prosecuted.

ARRESTS AND INCARCERATIONS

CVCOG reserves the right to respond to any employee being arrested and/or incarcerated as it sees fit. Employees are required to report the information and appropriate details to their supervisor regarding any arrest or incarceration as soon as possible following the incident. Depending on the offense and potential negative impact on CVCOG's position in the community, CVCOG reserves the right to apply the disciplinary process up to and including suspension during the incarcerated time period or during an investigation and termination. If a resulting guilty charge or verdict does not meet CVCOG or awarding agency background requirements, CVCOG will immediately process a termination.

INSUBORDINATION

Insubordination includes the following behaviors: willfully disobeying one's supervisor; showing disregard for instructions that are reasonable management directives; actions that could have a negative impact on our productivity and service to our clients; or abusive conduct or language toward a supervisor. Insubordination will not be tolerated.

CONFLICT OF CONSCIENCE

You may have religious or other personal beliefs and convictions that may put you in conflict with our business purposes and policies. If you feel such a condition might exist, you are encouraged to inform your supervisor or other member of management in order to seek a resolution if possible. Regardless of your held beliefs, all CVCOG policies must still be followed.

DUTY OF LOYALTY

CVCOG has valid ethical and business reasons to expect and require duty of loyalty from our employees. Employees' duty of loyalty includes maintaining confidentiality both during and after their employment with CVCOG and always making decisions, acting and behaving in a manner conducive with the values and ethics CVCOG strives to maintain. Employees can neither use nor disclose confidential or proprietary information they have obtained as a result of working for CVCOG. This confidentiality applies both during and after employment with CVCOG.

Current employees may not gather confidential information with the goal of disclosing that information after their employment with CVCOG has terminated. An employee is also prohibited from diverting business opportunities that would otherwise benefit CVCOG. Employees are expected to aggressively continue to pursue business opportunities for CVCOG with both current and potential clients.

The revelation or use of any confidential product information, data on decisions, plans, or any other information which might be contrary to the interest of CVCOG (not in conflict with the Freedom of Information Act or Open Information Act) without prior authorization, is prohibited. The misuse, unauthorized access to, or mishandling of confidential information, particularly personnel information, is strictly prohibited.

CVCOG will pursue all remedies against any employee (current or former) who violated this confidentiality. In addition, CVCOG will seek remedy from this employee's future employer who caused or allowed such a violation to occur.

See the CVCOG Privacy Policy for additional information regarding confidentiality.

FALSIFICATION OF RECORDS/FACTS

Falsification includes knowingly not stating the truth; knowingly not stating the truth fully; knowingly providing incorrect information to members of the public, CVCOG staff, board members or stake holders; knowingly entering or submitting incorrect information on time sheets or other CVCOG, local, State or Federal required forms; omission of important details; and deceptive Statements. Such behavior will not be tolerated.

FOOD PREPARATION AND STORAGE

An employee who prepares, eats or stores food on CVCOG property is responsible for cleaning the area immediately after preparation and/or eating. Additionally, any food stored needs to be kept in a sealed container to help protect against pests.

GAMBLING

CVCOG prohibits most forms of gambling in the workplace, including professional or organized gambling activities. Where federal, state and local gambling laws allow, the company may allow exceptions to this policy for CVCOG sponsored events supporting a charitable or other fundraising cause. Employees must seek the approval of the Executive Director prior to engaging in any gambling activities. Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

SMOKING AND TOBACCO USE

There will be no smoking or tobacco use in any form (i.e., snuff, dipping, smoking, or vaping) in CVCOG owned vehicles, facilities, in high pedestrian traffic areas such as any of the exterior doors, or while conducting CVCOG business. Smoking and tobacco use is restricted to designated outside areas only.

Head Start/Early Head Start is smoke-free environment and prohibits e-cigarette, vaporizer, or tobacco product or use any tobacco product on the premises, on the playground, or during field trips.

Employees who require breaks to smoke, vape, etc. should communicate this need with their supervisor. Breaks should be minimal and not interfere with the employee's productivity.

GANGS

Head Start is a Gang-free zone which prohibits gang related criminal activity or engaging in organized criminal activities within 1,000 feet from the Head Start/Early Head Start Program. Any of these activities is a violation of this law and is therefore subject to increased penalty under state law.

STANDARDS OF DRESS AND GROOMING

CVCOG strives to maintain a workplace environment that functions well and is free from unnecessary distractions and annoyances. As part of that effort, Head Start requires employees to maintain a neat and clean appearance that is appropriate for the workplace setting and for the work being performed. The Site Supervisor and Head Start Director may determine and enforce guidelines for workplace-appropriate attire and grooming & hygiene for their areas; guidelines may limit natural or artificial scents that could be distracting or annoying to others.

Regardless of the specific dress code, each employee shall be neatly and appropriately dressed as specified for their particular job. All dress and appearance will be in good taste and utilize good judgment. No dress or personal appearance will be provocative or in bad taste. Your Department Director, HR, and the Executive Director will be the interpreters of what is defined as provocative attire and what attire is in bad taste.

Without unduly restricting an individual's tastes, the following personal appearance guidelines and dress code should be adhered to at all times:

- Clothing such as midriff baring tops, "muscle" shirts, sweatpants, workout leggings, tights as pants, shorts of any kind, short skirts (anything above the knee), short dresses (anything above the knee), t-shirts (unless it is a Head Start/ Early Head Start or CVCOG T-shirt), jeans with holes and low-slung pants are never allowed.
- Shoes must be appropriate for your role and environment.
- Mustaches, beards, and other facial hair must be clean, well-trimmed, and neat.
- Hairstyles are expected to be in good taste and present an appropriate professional appearance.
- Offensive body odor and poor personal hygiene is not professionally acceptable.
- Perfume, cologne, and aftershave lotion should be used moderately as some individuals may be sensitive to strong fragrances.

In addition,

Standards of dress and hygiene also include the following:

- All site supervisors, office personnel, family service workers, and teaching staff are expected to wear professional attire at all times.
- Classroom staff are expected to interact with children and should dress in clothing that is professional yet, are able to move around with the children. They should wear shoes with straps across the heel, no slip-ons or "flip-flops".

- Staff working directly with children must keep their fingernails short, and the undersides should be cleaned frequently with soap and water. Because of their length, longer fingernails can harbor more dirt and bacteria than short nails, thus potentially contributing to the spread of infection.
- Staff working directly with children, may not wear earrings that dangle or have piercings that can be determined a safety hazard for the children or the employee.
- T-Shirts must be a Head Start/ Early Head Start or CVCOG shirt. On Fridays you may wear your local districts game day t-shirts/ and or seasonal t-shirts. Also, t-shirts must **NOT** have any logos, advertisements, or other characters.
- Work appropriate leggings may worn, but must be accompanied with a dress or tunic that reached mid-thigh.
- Kitchen staff/Custodial staff is expected to wear clothing suitable to cooking and cleaning and to wear an apron over these clothes. They should wear comfortable, enclosed-toe shoes.
- Employees must adhere to all standards applicable to dress and hygiene (for example hairnets and gloves for food handlers) required by federal, state or local law.

Any staff member who does not exhibit safe and reasonable standards of personal hygiene or appear for work in inappropriately clothing or fingernails will be subject to corrective action and may be asked to leave the premises to change clothing or tend to their hygiene. Hourly paid staff members will not be compensated for any work time missed because of failure to comply with designated workplace attire and grooming/hygiene standards. In compliance with Federal and State Laws, medical accommodations will be provided with appropriate medical documentation.

PERSONAL TELEPHONE CALLS AND CELLULAR PHONE USAGE

Personal use of CVCOG phones: COG telephones are to be used for COG business. It is understood that occasionally personal calls are necessary; however, use of COG telephones for local personal calls are permitted only if the number and length of calls are kept to a minimum.

Personal cellular phones: Cell phones are not allowed in the classroom while the children are present. Smart watches with texting and calling capabilities are also prohibited in the classroom. All Teaching staff must keep their cell phones in their car or in the front office while children are present. Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

CVCOG is not liable for the loss, damage or theft of personal cellular phones brought into the workplace.

Driver safety and cell phone use: If your job responsibilities include regular or occasional driving, and you have been issued a cell phone for business use, you are expected to refrain from using the cell phone while driving. **Safety comes before all other concerns.** If your job responsibilities include regular driving while making or accepting business calls, provisions (such as hands-free equipment) and/or practices will be implemented to allow you to comply with the policy.

If your job responsibilities do not specifically include driving as an essential function, and you are issued a cell phone for business use, you are expected to abide by the provisions above. **Under no circumstances are you allowed to place yourself or others at risk to fulfill business needs.**

Employees who are charged with traffic violations as a result of cell phone use while driving will be solely responsible for all liabilities that result from this behavior.

CLIENT AND GUEST RELATIONS

Interactions with our clients and guests are of primary importance. Honesty, courtesy, and satisfaction of our clients' expectations are our goals.

Our clients are extremely valuable to us. Whether you are speaking with a person on the telephone or in person, please follow these client relations rules:

- If you know their name, address them by their name
- Identify yourself to them
- Smile as you speak with our clients
- Listen and concentrate on what they need
- Either give them the assistance they need or get the help for them with a minimum of delay
- Always be courteous, polite, and professional

VISITORS AND VOLUNTEERS

It is understood that occasionally personal visits are necessary; however, such personal visits are permitted only if the number and length of the visits are kept to a minimum. Former employees are permitted, with approval of the Executive Director, and must have an employee escort with them at all times.

CHILDREN IN THE WORKPLACE

If an employee has a child enrolled in Head Start/ Early Head Start the employee may bring their child with them at 7:30, however, the child must be picked up during regular dismissal from Head Start/ Early Head Start.

If bringing a child to work with the employee is unavoidable, the employee must first contact his or her supervisor as soon as possible to discuss the situation and obtain permission from the Director or Assistant Director to have the child at the employee's site while working. Such occasions should be very unusual and very infrequent. Factors that supervisors may consider are: the age of the child, how long the child needs to be present, the work environment in the employee's area, if school is in session, and any possible disruption to the employee's and co-workers' work. Children with an illness should not come to work with the employee.

A child brought to the workplace in unavoidable situations will be the responsibility of the employee and must be accompanied and remain under the direct supervision of the parent at all times.

This policy has been designed to minimize potential liability to CVCOG, risk of harm to children and decreased employee productivity due to distractions and disruptions.

This policy is not intended to prohibit children or other minors and family members from being in the workplace during CVCOG sponsored events.

POLITICAL ACTIVITY

Employees of CVCOG are encouraged to vote and to exercise other prerogatives of citizenship consistent with State and Federal law and these policies. An employee **may not**:

1. Use his or her official authority or influence to interfere with or affect the result of an election or nomination for office.
2. Directly or indirectly coerce, attempt to coerce, command, or advise a local or State officer or employee to pay, lend, or contribute anything of value to a party, committee, organization, agency, or person for a political purpose.

No CVCOG owned property, vehicle, building, and/or office may be used for displaying campaign materials or for conducting any partisan political activity. CVT and the use of "bus wraps" are specifically addressed in the CVCOG Handbook for CVT Employees.

Any CVCOG employee who is subject to the provisions of the Federal Hatch Act may not be a candidate for elective office in a partisan election. (A partisan election is an election in which candidates are to be nominated or elected to represent a party whose candidates for presidential electors received votes in the last preceding election in which presidential electors were selected). CVCOG employees are subject to this additional Federal Hatch Act restriction if their principal employment is in connection with an activity which is financed in whole or in part by loans or grants made by the Federal government.

An employee's political activity or affiliation, not in violation of this section, shall not be considered in determining his or her compensation, eligibility for promotion or demotion, work assignment, leave or travel request, or in applying any other employment practices to the employee.

CVCOG follows Government Code Chapter 556 Political Activities by Certain Public Entities and Individuals. Violation of this policy could put CVCOG, its funding, and employees at risk and will not be tolerated.

RESTRICTING PRODUCTIVITY/OUTPUT

CVCOG strives to be good stewards of its funding and always maintain high levels of efficiency where productivity and client services are concerned. Employees may not engage in any activity that restricts output of services to our clients or general work productivity. Examples of activities that could interfere with productivity/output include, but are not limited to: excessive cell phone usage, conversations with co-workers, social media or internet browsing (not related to work), excessive smoke or snack breaks, and napping.

SOLICITATION

Solicitation is prohibited in CVCOG public areas; including client service areas, lounges for clients and sales areas. Additionally, we do not allow solicitation during work time. Generally, we frown on solicitation in the workplace.

CVCOG prohibits the solicitation, distribution and posting of materials on or at CVCOG property by any employee or non-employee, except as may be permitted by this policy. The sole exceptions to this policy are charitable and community activities supported by the Executive Director and CVCOG sponsored programs related to CVCOG products and services.

Non-employees may not solicit employees or distribute literature of any kind on CVCOG premises at any time.

Employees may not distribute literature of any kind during work times, or in any work area at any time, except in connection with a CVCOG-sponsored event. The posting of materials or electronic announcements are permitted with approval from Executive Director.

SUGGESTIONS AND CLIENT FEEDBACK

We constantly strive to improve our products and services. We welcome input from our clients that can result in improvement. CVCOG encourages feedback that you think will allow us to improve and increase our services to the Concho Valley.

UNACCEPTABLE PERFORMANCE

It is CVCOG'S belief that when you came to work here you wanted to be a productive member of the CVCOG team. As mentioned in the Policies section of this Handbook, you will receive feedback on your performance periodically. CVCOG will not tolerate unacceptable performance.

Unacceptable performance includes but is not limited to, repeated or similar mistakes, carelessness in performance or decision making, poor performance in general, not meeting minimum job standards & expectations, diminishing morale with a poor attitude, and perpetuating gossip or rumors. Engaging in behaviors that have a negative impact on COG employees, stakeholders, or members of the public is also considered to be unacceptable performance. Violation of this policy will not be tolerated.

TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

There are two primary ways to end the employment relationship:

- **Voluntary Termination:** you, the employee, terminate the employment relationship by submitting a resignation, an intention to cease work, or behave in a way interpreted to have resigned or quit work.
- **Involuntary Termination:** the employer terminates the relationship.

As a reminder, employment is by mutual consent. We are an employment-at-will employer. Therefore, an employee is free to resign at any time and the employer is free to terminate an employee at any time, with or without cause.

Notification of Termination: Written and advance notice of 2-4 weeks is the preferred resignation method. This allows us time to find a suitable replacement and work out a smooth transition. CVCOG reserves the right to waive your advance notice and take your resignation effective immediately if it is more beneficial to CVCOG or the employee or if CVCOG thinks there is any threat to our security or operations.

Exit Interview: You and your supervisor may be asked to complete an exit interview. An exit interview helps CVCOG to obtain information that may be useful in improving employee relations and provide a rehire status that may or may not be used for future employment opportunities with CVCOG. This notification will also allow us to give you information on the pension plan, benefit end dates, Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 (COBRA) and will help expedite your final check.

Reduction in Force: An employee may be separated when his or her position is abolished, or when there is either a lack of funds or a lack of work. When reductions in force are necessary, decisions on individual separations will be made after considering (1) the relative importance of each position to the organization, (2) the performance record of each employee, (3) qualifications of the employee for remaining positions with CVCOG, and (4) the employee's length of service. Prior to separation, employees may apply for other CVCOG positions for which they may be qualified; applying does not guarantee an employee will be selected per CVCOG'S hiring process.

Upon termination, whether voluntary or involuntary, any CVCOG issued uniforms, keys, devices, equipment, etc. should be returned to your supervisor, Department Director, or someone in HR. Items should be returned at the time of termination but no later than one (1) business day. In accordance with local, state, & federal laws, failure to return any CVCOG issued items could result in deductions from the employee'S final paycheck.

RETIREMENT

If you plan to retire, please notify HR so you can be provided with information regarding the Texas Counties and Districts Retirement System (TCDRS) as well as general information regarding retirement.

Employees will retire on a voluntary basis, and will not be asked by members of CVCOG to retire at a particular time. Upon retirement, there will be no expectation to return to your previous position or any other position with CVCOG. Once an employee has retired and withdrawn money or has begun to receive monthly payments from TCDRS, said employee is not eligible for rehire for 3 full calendar months. There will be no exceptions.

For more information, see TCDRS under the Benefits Section.

ACCESS TO PERSONNEL RECORDS

All employees of CVCOG are allowed reasonable access to their individual personnel files. Although personnel files are the property of CVCOG, you may see your own file by making an appointment with the HR, during normal working hours.

Since personnel files are the property of CVCOG, you will be allowed to review your own file only while in the presence of your supervisor, manager or HR. Although you have access to review your personnel file, you may not alter, modify, change, delete, remove, or mark on any of the material in your file.

It is to our mutual benefit to see that personnel files are kept current and accurate. You are required to let us know if there are any changes to your official name, address, marital status, telephone number and other contact information, emergency contact information, and any changes regarding your dependents. Keeping your information up to date prevents errors regarding your benefits and tax records, and lets us know how to contact you in case of an emergency.

Lastly, information in your personnel file will only be released by legally required release orders, such as a court order, or by your specific written permission.

PAY

PAY POLICIES

CVCOG uses a Pay Period in Reserve Policy. Any work performed during the 1st thru the 15th of the month will be paid on the last day of the month. Work performed from the 16th thru the last day of the month will be paid on the 15th of the following month. If the 15th or last day of the month falls on a Saturday, Sunday or holiday, employees will receive pay checks the business day preceding said day. Direct Deposit is the preferred method for an employee to receive their compensation. For employees receiving a paper check, they are required to deposit or cash said check within 30 days of employee receiving the check. This is in order to maintain compliance with funding agency requirements.

Certain deductions from your pay will automatically and routinely be withheld. These withholdings include FICA (for temporary and seasonal employees who do not qualify for participation in the retirement system), retirement (for all other employees who do qualify for participation in the retirement system), Medicare, deferred compensation, and Federal income tax. Other payments that may be deducted from your pay are United Way, and any legally required garnishments such as child support payments and IRS bankruptcy or student loan garnishments. Elected benefit deductions will occur semi-monthly. Other deductions may be approved by you and CVCOG, if required. *See the Benefits section for more information.*

Employees are responsible for submitting all time sheets, missed punch requests, and leave requests through our electronic Time Reporting System (TRS) accurately and in a timely fashion. Failure to do so may result in delayed pay, as well as denial of compensation for leave taken without proper documentation or approval. Employees will have 3 business days after a pay period to electronically submit time sheets. When time sheets are submitted without correct information or missing hours, and they are NOT submitted within the 3-day grace period, there will be one pay period delay on the incorrect hours. You will receive the remainder of your paycheck as scheduled.

Included in the 3-day grace period is approval on all Paid Time Off (PTO). If there is an extenuating circumstance, an employee will be granted a one pay period grace period to have leave requests submitted electronically. If the one pay period grace period has ended, leave will not be paid out and those hours will remain on your balance.

CVCOG'S pay policies do not allow advances on your potential pay.

CLASSIFICATION OF EMPLOYEES

Regular Full Time: An employee who works an average 30-40-hour workweek on a regularly-scheduled basis.

Regular Part Time: An employee who works an average of less than 30 hours a work week, either on a regularly-scheduled basis or on an irregular basis.

Temporary: An employee who is hired for a specific, limited purpose to work on a non-regular basis that is less than 12 months.

Seasonal: An employee who is hired for a specific, limited purpose for less than 6 months and generally beginning around the same time of the calendar year.

Every position is classified as either exempt or non-exempt. An **exempt** (salaried) position is usually of a managerial, administrative or professional nature, and is exempt from overtime calculation and payments. A **non-exempt** (hourly) position is usually of a clerical, technical, or service nature, and is eligible for overtime. Overtime pay is explained in the Pay Policy.

NON-EXEMPT EMPLOYEE TIME AND PAY

According to FLSA regulations, an employee classified as non-exempt (or paid hourly) is entitled to overtime pay and is usually of a clerical, technical, or service nature. Overtime shall include all time actually worked for CVCOG in excess of 40 hours in any workweek. Leave are not hours worked and are not counted when determining overtime.

According to the provisions of the FLSA, overtime hours are paid at one-and one-half times your base pay, or will be recorded as “comp time” (compensatory time). Comp time is time off, with pay, at a rate of one and one-half (1 ½) times the amount of overtime worked. CVCOG will work with supervisors and directors to determine whether to payout the overtime or to classify it as comp time. Overtime hours must be approved **in advance** by your supervisor. Unapproved overtime is not allowed. It is understood and agreed that all employees may be required to work additional time in excess of our normally scheduled hours based on operational or service need.

Meal Breaks: Due to the nature of their jobs, most Head Start employees do not receive a separate lunch break, as their job entails eating with the children; however, there is a pay adjustment that makes provisions for their meal breaks.

All records for payments of wages are important documents. You will be asked to complete certain paperwork involving your pay: We expect accurate and timely completion of this paperwork to help us maintain payroll records that are required by law. Your help and compliance are appreciated.

CVCOG is an equal pay employer. CVCOG does not discriminate in amounts of pay, or in the application of our pay policies, based on a person's protected status such as race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, pregnancy, citizenship, familial status, disability status, veteran status, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other protected group status.

EXEMPT EMPLOYEE PAY

An exempt (or salaried) position is exempt from overtime pay provisions and is usually of a managerial, administrative or professional nature. In accordance with Fair Labor Standards Act regulations, exempt employees who are paid on a salaried basis may not have their pay reduced for variations in the quantity or quality of work performed. CVCOG follows the following regulations when processing payroll.

Exempt employees normally must receive their full salary for any week in which they perform any work, without regard to the number of days or hours worked. However, exempt employees need not be paid for any workweek in which they perform NO work at all for the organization.

Deductions from pay cannot be made as a result of absences due to the circumstances listed below. These improper pay deductions are specifically prohibited by CVCOG, regardless of the circumstances. Managers or supervisors violating this policy will be subject to investigation of their pay practices and appropriate corrective action will be taken.

- Jury duty (Please note: documentation will be required)
- Attendance as a witness in a court of law or other legal hearing (Please note: documentation will be required)
- Temporary military leave (Please note: documentation will be required)
- Absences caused by CVCOG
- Absences caused by the operating requirements of CVCOG
- Partial-day amounts other than those specifically discussed below

The few exceptions to the requirement to pay exempt employees on a salaried basis are listed below. In these cases, deductions may be permissible as long as they are consistent with other CVCOG policies and practices:

- Absences of one or more full days, for personal reasons other than sickness or disability, such as leave of absence without pay (partial days must be paid)
- Absences of one or more full days due to sickness or disability
- Fees received by the employee for jury or witness duty or military leave may be applied to offset the pay otherwise due to the employee for the week. However, no payroll deductions can be made for failure to work for these reasons
- Penalties imposed by infractions of safety rules of major significance
- Unpaid disciplinary suspensions of one or more full days in accordance with CVCOG'S disciplinary policies
- Deductions for the first and last week of employment, when only part of the week is worked by the employee, as long as this practice is consistently applied to all exempt employees in the same circumstances
- Deductions for unpaid taken in accordance with a legitimate absence under the Family and Medical Leave Act

In order to comply with federal, State, local, and awarding agency requirements, CVCOG employees classified as exempt will meet the following requirements:

- Exempt employees are paid using a "daily rate" basis determined by an employee's annual salary
- Exempt employees are required to complete personnel activity reports (time sheets) that document worked hours in order to submit charges to Federal or State awards

These personnel activity reports, as per the Uniform Grant Management Standards, will meet the following standards:

- Reflect an after-the-fact distribution of the actual activity of each employee
- Account for the total activity for which each employee is compensated
- Coincide with each pay period
- Be signed by the employee and the supervisory official having firsthand knowledge of the work performed by the employee
- Budget estimates and other distribution percentages determined before the services are performed to do not qualify as support for charges to Federal or State awards
- Salaries and wages of employees used in meeting cost sharing or matching requirements of Federal or State awards will be supported in the same manner as those claimed as allowable costs under Federal or State awards

Employees must account for a minimum of 8 hours a day or 40 hours per work week total activity. Any available leave must be applied if the 8-hour day or 40-hour week is not met. CVCOG will always follow DOL regulations in determining if an exempt employee's pay needs to be adjusted based on full days or weeks with no worked hours. Applying or exhausting leave balances will occur before deductions are considered for employees who miss full days or weeks.

In times of federally declared natural disasters, federal agencies such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) allow for salaried exempt employees who are performing job duties which are out of the scope of their regular job descriptions to be compensated for time in excess of their normal work hours. CVCOG will allow for these expenses as well, to the extent that agencies such as FEMA reimburses the expenses, and all time will be tracked separate and apart from normal timesheets.

PROCESS FOR COMPLAINTS REGARDING PAY

If you believe that your pay has been reduced improperly, please contact your supervisor or the Payroll Department immediately to request an investigation. You will be asked to specify, in writing, the circumstances of the pay deduction, and whether it has occurred on other occasions. We will review pay records and interview the supervisor or manager, and payroll representatives handling the payroll to determine if the allegation is correct. If the deduction was in fact improper, you will be reimbursed as promptly as possible (but in no case longer than one pay period from the identification of the problem).

The individual(s) responsible for the error will be investigated further to determine if this was an isolated incident or a pattern of conduct that requires further action on the part of CVCOG. If warranted, the responsible person(s) will be held accountable for the error(s), consistent with CVCOG disciplinary policy. The resolution of the situation will be documented (including your confirmation that the situation has been resolved) and kept with your payroll records.

RECORDING OF WORK AND NON-WORK TIME

You will be shown how to record your work time accurately. CVCOG uses different methods for accurately recording time worked throughout the various programs. Depending on where you work, you may be required to accurately record your actual time worked by one of the following methods: time clock, electronic time sheet on a computer or tablet. In some areas, exempt employees may also be required to record their actual work time.

It is very important that you record your time in and out as shown to you. Your pay is based on the hours you work. We are required by law to maintain accurate records of when you work. Should a mistake occur when using any of our time recording methods, let your immediate supervisor know about it immediately, and submit the proper electronic documentation.

Time worked and/or not worked must be recorded accurately and legally. Non-exempt employees should not be checking, sending or responding to emails, or performing other work duties outside of their regularly scheduled work week. Circumstances in which an hourly employee must check, send, or respond to work emails, or perform other duties will do so only at the request or approval of their immediate supervisor. In the event an employee needs to take such action, the employee is responsible for recording this time in TRS in 15-minute increments.

Employees who fall under the punch system must clock in and out at the beginning and end of every shift. Lunch breaks also require a punch in and punch out. Punch errors should be non-existent or very limited and will be required to have a valid reason for supervisor approval. Excessive punch errors may result in disciplinary action.

Also, please remember that once you are clocked in you are to be productive. Supervisors are free to use discretion in disciplinary actions when employees have various, albeit repeated, offenses to the timekeeping policy or procedure.

Failure to report time accurately, knowingly reporting incorrect time worked, or punching in for another employee is a violation of CVCOG's Falsification or Records/Facts Policy. Any questions about whether your time is being accurately recorded and reported for pay purposes should be directed immediately to your supervisor, Department Director, or payroll/finance staff.

INCENTIVE PAY

When appropriate, and when budgets allow, Department Directors may provide incentive compensation to CVCOG employees based on cost reduction, efficient performance, suggestion awards, safety awards or program improvement plans, per 2CFR Part 200.430. All incentives must be determined then approved by the Executive Director. Employees will receive details prior to the distribution of said incentive compensation and provide written acknowledgment of receipt of incentive requirements.

BAD WEATHER AND UNEXPECTED OR EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES POLICY

In the event of a time of crisis, such as a natural disaster, pandemic, or any other socially disruptive event, the Executive Director has the authority to enact Unexpected or Extraordinary Circumstances (UEC) conditions. During UEC conditions,

the Executive Director is authorized to issue UEC leave in accordance with local, state, and federal laws and requirements.

In the event of closures or reduced staff during UEC conditions, all employees should remain available in the event they must report to work and/or work from home. UEC leave will not be given to employees that are not scheduled to work at times when UEC is authorized. During UEC conditions, the following positions are deemed essential core functions:

- Board Executive Leadership
- Executive Director
- Finance (selected employees)
- Human Resources (selected employees)
- Information Technology
- Maintenance/ Facility staff
- Program Directors
- Other staff as required based on operational need

BENEFITS

CVCOG offers a variety of mandated benefits in addition to many elective benefits. CVCOG follows all current Affordable Care Act (ACA) regulations on the benefits CVCOG offers to its employees. Benefits, the laws and regulations that impact benefits administration and the desirability of specific benefits change from time to time. It is important to remember that all of the following benefits are subject to change, modification, amendment or elimination. Benefit costs will vary year to year. Specific employer and employee costs can be located in the benefit manual provided to employees every year during open enrollment.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Full time CVCOG employees, per ACA regulations, are eligible for medical, dental, vision, MASA, and life insurance coverage on the 1st of the month immediately following 60 days of employment. All coverage is optional to the eligible employee, and acceptance or request for coverage has no bearing on future employment status, promotions, pay, or termination decisions.

CVCOG follows ACA requirements on determining classification of employees regarding full time or part time status. Part time employees are not eligible for medical, dental, vision, or life insurance. If in question, CVCOG uses the ACA approved look back method of 12 months to determine if an employee meets full time status requirements which would make the employee eligible for coverage.

CVCOG also offers a Pension and 457 plans that do not require the same 60 day waiting period mentioned above. See *Deferred Compensation section for more information.*

Deductions for benefits will occur on a semi-monthly schedule beginning the first check of the month an employee is eligible. Employees will need to register for benefits with HR prior to the month an employee is eligible. Only benefit deductions that have been selected and approved by the employee will be deducted from their semi-monthly pay checks.

LEAVE

All time off (other than FMLA leave) taken by CVCOG employees must be submitted electronically for supervisor approval via TRS. Supervisors and Department Directors are responsible for keeping track of time off requests from their employees to ensure proper department coverage. Leave requests can be made up to one year in advance. Employees are responsible for ensuring they have adequate leave accrued to accommodate their requests.

Employees will not be allowed to use leave when they are out for an extended period, and are receiving long-term disability income.

Employees who work 40 hours within the workweek, or more, will not enter leave time & this will be treated similar to flex time. *Example: If an employee out on leave for 8 hours on Monday and makes up these 8 hours on Saturday, the employee would not enter 8 hours of leave on that Monday. Actual hours worked will be entered on the days worked.*

Note: Head Start Administrative Staff will follow CVCOG's Leave Policies and Procedures.

PAID TIME OFF LEAVE (PTO)

Site Supervisors, Family Service Workers, Teachers, Teacher Assistants, Cooks, Custodians, and receptionists will receive the following:

Head Start

Head Start employees will receive 56 hours of PTO leave every year on June 1st. This leave is accessible until the end of the grant year on May 31st. Any unused leave does NOT roll over and will be cleared. Then a new pool of leave will be issued on the following June 1st.

Employees that are not employed on June will receive pro-rated rates. Head Start employees will receive rates based on how many pay periods are left in the grant year. The Head Start Director will determine these hours prior to the start of the fiscal year and disseminate this information to their employees.

Early Head Start

Early Head Start will receive 64 hours of PTO leave every year on June 1st. This leave is accessible until the end of the grant year on May 31st. Any unused leave does NOT roll over and will be cleared. Then a new pool of leave will be issued on the following June 1st.

Employees that are not employed on June will receive pro-rated rates. Early Head Start employees will receive rates based on how many pay periods are left in the grant year. The Head Start Director will determine these hours prior to the start of the fiscal year and disseminate this information to their employees.

Head Start and Early Head Start Leave guidelines:

- No pay shall be received for unused PTO during employment and/or resignation or termination of employment.
- Leave without pay will NOT be authorized until all PTO has been exhausted and has Director approval.
- Once a leave pool is exhausted, employees will be placed on Leave Without Pay (LWOP) at the discretion and upon approval from the Site Supervisor and Department Director.
- An employee that terminates voluntarily or involuntarily, within 6 months of the beginning of the grant year, will be required to pay back the used leave at the same pro-rated amount used for new hires of 2.3 hours (for Head Start) or 2.6 hours (for Early Head Start) for each remaining pay period. (CVCOG will comply with all DOL and Texas Payday Laws)
- Once an employee has exhausted their leave pool, after 5 days, or 40 hours, of LWOP, an employee will be charged with an unexcused absence.
 - o If an employee has been absent for three consecutive or non-consecutive days, with or without notification, CVCOG has the right to process a termination of that employee, effective the date of the first absence. Any such termination is considered voluntary and an abandonment of the job.
 - o Leave will not be authorized to instructional staff during in-service days unless approved by the Head Start Director.
 - o Please see the full EHS/HS calendar for a list of all blackout days.

****Please remember that non-compliance with our attendance expectations has a direct impact on other members of our team and on the children and families we serve.***

Employees should request all leave through TRS and notify their Site Supervisor immediately in order to ensure proper classroom coverage. A request for leave is not a guarantee of approval and is subject to review by the Site Supervisor, Director, HR, and Executive Director.

You are encouraged to **schedule your PTO and request PTO leave well in advance**. Leave scheduling must accommodate CVCOG'S work schedules. If there is a conflict in vacation schedules involving two or more employees, employees are granted their preference on a "first come, first served" basis. If two requests are received at approximately the same time and cover the same requested vacation period, the employees will be granted their preference at the discretion of the Department Director. If the desired leave schedules conflict with CVCOG requirements, CVCOG'S requirements will be given first consideration.

Medical Statement: PTO lasting three (3) full days or longer may require you to furnish written verification by a physician of the existence of a medical condition which prevents you from reporting for work, or allows you to return to work. Your failure to provide such verification when requested may be considered a policy violation.

If an employee is out, either consecutively or individually, for three (3) or more full days within a calendar month, written verification by a physician of the existence of a medical condition which prevents you from reporting for work or allows you to return to work may be required.

Chronic Conditions/FMLA: Any employee requiring leave that lasts two (2) weeks or longer will be required to apply for and use FMLA. If an employee has a chronic condition that requires them to be out for several days of the year, they may be required to provide documentation for absences. Please see HR for more information.

Exhaustion of PTO: If you have exhausted your PTO leave, you will be required to use LWOP. No advance of unearned PTO leave benefits will be made for any reason.

If you submit a request for leave and an event occurs that prevents you from taking your requested leave, notify your supervisor within 48 hours of requested leave date so they may make suitable arrangements in regards to staffing and coverage.

**Leave pools, amounts, and carry over rules are subject to budget restrictions and may be modified in the event funding in a new grant year cannot accommodate the current PTO policy.*

HOLIDAYS

Head Start employees will have approximately 18-22 Holidays a year. This time includes winter break, spring break and other miscellaneous holidays throughout the school year and will vary from site to site and from year to year. Please see the calendar issued by the ERSEA Manager or visit with your Site Supervisor regarding holidays specific to your site.

**Holidays are subject to change based on operation need or local closures, weather events and other miscellaneous world events that may cause changes to the school year calendar.*

Summer Vacation:

Head Start employees will have approximately 2-5 weeks of summer vacation. This varies by site and is dependent on program calendars as well as start and end dates of the current and next school year. Summer vacation will vary from year to year.

Early Head Start employees will have approximately 2 weeks. May vary by site and is dependent on program calendars as well as start and end dates of the current and next school year. Summer vacation will vary from year to year.

Full time employees will receive 8 hours on an established holiday. Part time employees will receive a set number of hours established for their entire department and may vary depending on the position. These hours are determined by the Department Director and are based on normally scheduled hours for that day in which the established holiday falls. The Head Start Director will determine these hours prior to the start of the fiscal year and disseminate this information to their employees. If an official holiday falls within your scheduled vacation, you will be granted the holiday and not charged for a day of vacation.

See below for additional information regarding holidays:

- An employee who is absent without approval on the workday immediately preceding or following a holiday will not be paid for the holiday
- Whenever an approved holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday, it will be observed on the Friday preceding or the Monday following, as determined by the Executive Director
- Employees who work on a holiday will only get paid for the number of hours worked unless the time worked does not meet the number of holiday hours they would have received, if not working. *(Example: If a full-time employee works 6 hours, they will only be given 2 hours of holiday pay)*
- Non-exempt employees get paid time and a half for worked hours on a holiday; employees must have approval from their supervisor to work on a holiday
- Whenever an approved holiday falls on a day in which the employee is normally scheduled be off, the employee will not be paid for the holiday
- Seasonal or Temporary employees will not be paid for the holiday
- Employees on approved FMLA will be paid for the holiday
- Employees on Worker's Compensation Leave will not be paid for the holiday.

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) provides eligible employees with up to 12 weeks (or 480 hours) of unpaid leave in the event of a serious health condition affecting the employee or the employee's immediate family (defined as a spouse, children, or parents), or for the birth or adoption of a child. CVCOG tracks all FMLA on a rolling year. A rolling year is defined as a 12-month period measured backward from the date the employee takes FMLA leave. The leave may be taken in one consecutive period of time, intermittently, or via reduced schedule, as needed.

All FMLA requests will go to HR immediately. From date of notification, CVCOG has 7 days to provide employee with proper paperwork. The employee then has 15 days from receipt of paperwork to return to HR in order to receive a designation notice to inform the employee if the leave was approved.

Eligible employees must:

- have worked for a total of 12 months;
- have worked at least 1,250 hours over the previous 12 months;
- And have worked where at least 50 employees are employed by the employer within 75 miles.

"Key" employees, defined as a "highly compensated employee" may be affected by other stipulations in the Family and Medical Leave Act, which will be addressed as the situations arise.

Unless an emergency situation occurs, you are required to inform CVCOG at least thirty (30) days in advance of your intended leave date. We will need to discuss continuation of your health and/or dental insurance benefits during your absence. CVCOG will continue to pay for the employer portion of your benefits. You will be responsible for the employee portion of insurance premiums while on leave regardless if your FMLA is covered by accrued vacation or sick leave. This includes but is not limited to medical, dental, vision, and life insurance. Please contact the Payroll Department to make payment arrangements. Failure to do so could result in cancellation of insurance.

As allowed under FMLA, employees are required to use their PTO leave concurrently with their FMLA leave. Employees that have exhausted their leave or do not have a sufficient amount of leave accrued to cover approved FMLA time off, will be on LWOP but will still be covered under FMLA regulations.

Upon return to work, CVCOG will attempt to place you in the same or equivalent job you had when your leave began. Medical release documentation will be required, informing CVCOG that you are clear to return to work. If a doctor provides a release of "light duty," CVCOG will accommodate this request if such a position or work is available. CVCOG will not create a special position or role to accommodate "light duty." If "light duty" is not available, an employee will not be able to return to work until a full medical release is obtained. Each department has different levels of physicality; therefore, each "light duty" request will be determined based on position and department need.

An employee that has exhausted their 12 weeks (or 480 hours) of FMLA, and still has not returned to work, will be placed on a Leave of Absence (LOA). This LOA will not exceed 30 days beyond the exhaustion of FMLA. If the employee is still not able to return to work at the end of their FMLA, and LOA, CVCOG will move forward with a termination. The termination will be effective on the last day of the month after the employee has exhausted FMLA and the Leave of Absence.

In accordance with provisions of the National Defense Authorization Act and its amendments to the requirements of the Family and Medical Leave Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, FMLA may be extended for up to 26 workweeks of unpaid leave, during a single 12-month period, for qualifying emergencies arising out of the fact that an employee's spouse, son, daughter, or parent is on active duty in the Armed Forces or for employees who are caregivers for a spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin of who is a seriously injured service member. Up to 12 of the 26 weeks may be for an FMLA-qualifying reason other than military caregiver leave. *For example, if an employee uses 10 weeks of FMLA leave for his or her own serious health condition during the single 12-month period, the employee has up to 16 weeks of FMLA leave left for military caregiver leave.*

PLEASE CONTACT HR WITH ANY QUESTIONS OR AS SOON AS YOU BELIEVE YOU MAY HAVE FMLA ELIGIBLE LEAVE.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

The Executive Director may grant additional time off without pay to regular full-time employees. This leave is only to be used when no other leave is appropriate, an employee does not qualify for FMLA, or FMLA has been exhausted (*See FMLA section for more information*). The length of time granted as Leave of Absence must be approved by your Department Director and the Executive Director in advance and will depend on the circumstances.

JURY DUTY

If you receive notice of jury duty, you will be allowed time off from work to do so. However, if you should not actually be serving jury duty, you are to report back to work. Please notify your supervisor immediately upon receiving a summons. Employees will be given the option to use available PTO or may request LWOP so as not to use PTO but it must be approved by the Head Start Director. CVCOG will allow you to keep any pay you may receive for jury duty but you will need to provide your Department Director proof of your jury duty requirement.

Should you be required to serve longer than a week, you need to talk with us about your job duties and work coverage. CVCOG may need to adjust the schedule and duties of the affected department to be sure that our clients are well-served and our workflow continues productively.

VOTING RIGHTS

We all have the opportunity to vote in elections to register our preference for candidates and other issues. Ordinarily, voting polls are open early enough and stay open late enough to allow us to vote. Additionally, early voting with absentee status is also an option.

SOCIAL SECURITY

CVCOG participates in the Texas County and District Retirement System (TCDRS) in lieu of participating in the Social Security System. However, seasonal and temporary employees do not qualify to participate in the TCDRS System. Therefore, those categories of employees participate in Social Security. Your status will be relayed to you at your employee orientation. Also, employees who were hired on or after March 1, 1986 are required by Federal law to be covered by the Medicare tax.

TEXAS COUNTY AND DISTRICT RETIREMENT SYSTEM

CVCOG is very proud to be a member of the Texas County and District Retirement System (TCDRS). The TCDRS system is a Statewide system created in 1967; it has more than 830 participating counties and districts.

A requirement of our TCDRS membership is that all eligible employees enroll immediately into the TCDRS Plan at the organization's elected rate. There is no waiting period for TCDRS and deductions begin on the 1st pay check. Employees do not have an option to opt out of the TCDRS Plan, as all employees are required to contribute to the TCDRS Plan; a stipulation of CVCOG's membership.

Regular full time and part time employees contribute 7% of their respective compensation. Temporary or seasonal employees do not qualify to participate in TCDRS therefore they participate in Social Security. CVCOG currently matches that amount at a rate of 250%, after vestment. However, it is important to note that one or both of these percentage rates may be changed in the future. Under the TCDRS rules, employees may not contribute more than the established rate.

CVCOG adopted the 10-year vesting with 3 retirement qualifications.

- Age 60 (with vesting) – employee must be 60 years of age and have 10 years of service
- Rule of 80- service years plus age equals or exceeds 80
- At any age- 30 years of service any age

For more information, please contact HR or visit the "Member Benefits Guide" available to all employees at www.tcdrs.org.

DEFERRED COMPENSATION

In addition to our TCDRS Pension Plan, CVCOG provides an optional 457 plan, also known as a deferred compensation plan for its employees. There is no waiting period for the 457 plans, and full-time employees may elect to begin deductions at the time of their choosing. Employees may elect to have a portion of their salaries deferred (not to exceed limits set by Federal law) and placed in one of several investment accounts offered by the trustee. Voluntary contributions to the plan are withheld from employees' paychecks and deposited with the trustee by CVCOG. Participants direct the investment of funds in their accounts and receive periodic statements from the trustee. For information on enrollment, contact HR.

HEALTH SERVICES

If you become ill at work, or somehow injure yourself while at work, CVCOG must know about it so we can help you. CVCOG will be glad to assist you in getting proper medical attention. Contact your supervisor, Department Director or, if they are unavailable, HR, immediately and notify them of any illness or injury that happens at work.

CVCOG may be required by law to maintain a record of your illness/injury on the job. It is important for us to help you and, at the same time, to document the facts involved in your illness or injury. These records will be maintained confidentially in a file separate from your personnel file.

CVCOG encourages employees to return to work as soon as they are able to do so. An employee returning to work may be required to submit a physician's release to return to work. As determined by the Executive Director, at CVCOG's expense, an employee may be required to submit to examination by an independent physician.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION INSURANCE

Employees of CVCOG are covered by workers' compensation. This insurance provides medical expense and salary continuation coverage to employees who receive a bona fide, on-the-job, work-related injury or illness. It is required that you notify CVCOG immediately upon receiving a work-related injury to ensure you are properly taken care of and that proper procedures are followed.

Coordinating with HR is important because CVCOG'S Worker's Compensation Insurance Company maintains a list of eligible health care providers that must be used by employees in non-emergency situations. They also provide prescription services for any medicine that must be purchased for a work-related injury or illness.

If you should get injured while conducting business for CVCOG, whether on or off premise, immediately notify your supervisor and obtain a 1st Report of Injury Form. (If it is an emergency, seek medical treatment immediately.) Once you have filled out the 1st Report of Injury, you may choose to go and visit one of the approved physicians. If you feel your injury does not require a physician visit, you are not required, but must return to work. If you go to a physician, they will provide you with information regarding being able to return to work, or having to take time off. Whichever is the case, you must provide documentation to either return to work or be out.

If you must miss work due to a work-related injury, our insurance provider, TML, will be in contact with you and let you know what steps to take next. Worker's Compensation Insurance may provide Temporary Income Benefits (TIBs) to an employee who misses eight (8) or more work days due to a work-related injury. In the interim, an employee will use accumulated PTO leave-or take LWOP; once the employee meets the 8-day threshold and begins TIB, they will not be allowed or required to utilize any leave.

Employees out for 2 weeks or longer due to a Worker's Compensation Injury will be required to apply for and use FMLA. All FMLA requirements must be met during this time, including paying employee's paying their portion of insurance premiums and updating HR every two weeks.

We will need to discuss continuation of your health and/or dental insurance benefits during your absence. You will be responsible for your portion of insurance premiums while on leave. This includes but is not limited to medical, dental, vision, and life insurance. Please contact the Payroll Department to make payment arrangements. Failure to do so could result in cancellation of insurance.

Before returning to work, employees who have been out due to a work-related injury or illness will be required to provide a full release from their doctor. If a doctor provides a release of "light duty", CVCOG will accommodate this request if such a position or work is available. CVCOG will not create a special position or role to accommodate "light duty". If "light duty" is not available, an employee will not be able to return to work until a full medical release is obtained. Each department has different levels of physicality required; therefore, each "light duty" request will be determined based on position and department need.

At any time, you can contact the representative from TML or HR for more information.

Department of Insurance, Division of Worker's Compensation - Notice to Employees:

You may elect to retain your common law right of action if, no later than five days after you begin employment or within five days after receiving written notice from the employer that the employer has obtained coverage, you notify your employer in writing that you wish to retain your common law right to recover damages for personal injury. If you elect to retain your common law right of action, you cannot obtain worker's compensation income or medical benefits if you are injured.

CONTINUATION OF GROUP INSURANCE (COBRA)

The Federal Consolidated Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1985 (COBRA) allows certain individuals the option of continuing their group health and/or dental insurance coverage beyond the date on which it would otherwise end, normally at the termination of employment, at the individuals full expense, under specified conditions. An insurance certificate from CVCOG'S group insurance carrier is issued to every employee at the time of employment, which explains continuation of benefit options under CVCOG'S carrier at the time the employee is hired. Any revisions to group insurance coverage are outlined in subsequent insurance certificates distributed to each employee at the time the coverage revision is effective.

At termination, insurance carriers are notified which causes an automatic trigger to mail out COBRA information. In order to qualify for continued coverage, specific deadlines for application must be met, and full premiums must be paid in a timely manner by the employee and/or the applicable spouse or child.

Each covered employee is responsible for notifying CVCOG of any change in family status such as separation from employment, divorce, birth of a child, or a child becoming eligible or ineligible for dependent coverage. If the change causes the employee or a covered dependent to become ineligible for CVCOG-supplemented group insurance, CVCOG or its designee will provide an Insurance Coverage Continuation Form to be completed by the appropriate person(s).

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Employees of the CVCOG are covered under the Texas Unemployment Compensation Insurance Program. This program provides payments for unemployed workers in certain circumstances. Texas Workforce Commission Unemployment Benefits Website will provide more information.

POLICIES

WORKING HOURS

The official work week for CVCOG is a seven-day period beginning at 12:01 a.m. on Sunday morning and ending at midnight on the following Saturday. Generally, working hours are Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with one hour for lunch (12:00p.m. to 1:00 p.m.), for a total of 40 hours per workweek. Due to the nature of their job requirements some CVCOG departments have varying work hours and lunch breaks. General working hours may also be affected by various employment positions and special events such as noon and/or evening meetings, training, conferences, holidays, etc.

Each employee is scheduled for definite hours of work, with the exception of temporary and seasonal employees. These will be communicated to you before your scheduled time of work. Adjustments to the general hours of operation may be made by your supervisor and/or the Department Director, in order to better serve member governments or the public.

TELEWORK OR REMOTE WORK

Teleworking or working remotely is a way for CVCOG to provide an additional work option in the event of an emergency or crisis. Teleworking or remote working may be suitable for some employees and roles, but not for others. Teleworking or remote work is designated at the discretion of the Department Director based on the operational needs and requirements of their specific department.

Eligibility:

- Employee's participation as a teleworker is entirely voluntary and is available only to eligible employees, at CVCOG's sole discretion
- **Not all positions** will be eligible to telework or work remotely. This is not a critique of any particular position or person; rather it is the realization that some positions that require an individual to physically be in their office or designated workspace. Your Department Director can clarify what category your position falls.
- CVCOG's requirement to provide service to our clients supersedes the Telework and Remote Work Policy. As such, the Department Director will determine if teleworking or remote work workable within their department. The Department Director and the employee(s) will then determine details of the arrangement which will be submitted to HR and the Executive Director for final approval.
- Each request is approved on a case-by-case basis and a request to telework or work remotely does not guarantee approval.
- While it is not required that teleworking or working remotely be uniformly available to all positions in a department, supervisors are responsible for ensuring the fair and equitable administration to eligible employees.

TIMELINESS AND ATTENDANCE

You are expected to be at work each day and be punctual in reporting for work, keeping appointments, and meeting schedules for completion of work. If you expect to be late for, or absent from work, you must communicate the expected tardiness or absence to your Site Supervisor by 6:00 am, and when possible, 24 hours prior than the time you are scheduled to begin work, unless emergency conditions exist. Staff may communicate absences/tardiness via phone message, text message, or other method that has been approved by your supervisor. ***You must receive a response indicating your supervisor, or other member of management, is aware of this absence/tardiness.***

Individual employee schedules are based on the site and the employee's position and are as follows:

Rural Centers:

- Teachers and Teacher Assistants work 7:30am to 3:30pm (no lunch)
- Cooks, and Cook/Custodians work 7:15am to 3:15pm
- Site Supervisors work 7:30am to 3:30pm (no lunch)

Note -Site Supervisors are exempt employees and worked hours may deviate outside hours listed above.

San Angelo Centers:

- Site Supervisors work 7:15am to 3:45pm (with a 30 min lunch)
- Teachers, Teacher assistance, and Floaters work 7:30am to 3:30pm (no lunch break)
- Custodians work 8:00am to 5:00pm (one-hour lunch)
- Cooks work 6:00am to 2:30pm (30 min lunch)
- Family Service Workers work 7:30 am to 4:00pm (30 min lunch)
- Receptionists and Data Clerk work 7:30 am to 4:00pm (30 min lunch)
- Part-Time Cooks work 8:00am to 1:00pm
- Travel Custodian works 1:00pm to 5:00pm

**Universal Substitutes will be instructed as to when their workday begins and ends.*

Failure to report to work within the required period may result in leave without pay for the absence. Due to the nature of our work, it is vital to have full communication between you and your supervisor.

If an employee begins to show a pattern of **excessive** absenteeism, regardless if PTO leave or LWOP is used, and regardless if multiple forms of physician/provider documentation are provided, the disproportionate absenteeism and the affect it has on the employee's department will be addressed with the employee.

The Department Director will ultimately determine what is considered excessive. CVCOG will follow all local, state, and federal regulations regarding mandated leaves; however, if there is a chronic medical issue, employees should visit with HR about the FMLA Policy and process located in Benefits section of this handbook.

UNEXCUSED ABSENCES FROM WORK

An **unauthorized absence** is one in which an employee is absent from regular duty without permission of a supervisor. Employees are not paid for unauthorized absences and such absences are not permitted.

If an employee has been absent for three (3) consecutive days **without notification**, CVCOG ordinarily has the right to process a termination of that employee, effective the date of the first absence. Any such termination is considered voluntary and an abandonment of the job.

If an employee fails to return from an approved leave of absence within a period of three (3) consecutive days of the scheduled date of return **without notification**, CVCOG ordinarily has the right to process a termination of that employee, effective the date the employee was scheduled to return from the leave of absence. Any such termination is considered voluntary and an abandonment of the job.

Please remember that non-compliance with our attendance expectations has a direct impact on other members of our team.

Again, please be advised that if you are absent for three (3) consecutive days without contacting your supervisor, your actions will be interpreted as quitting work without notice, abandoning your job, and your employment may be terminated immediately.

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

If you have a relationship with a fellow employee, no display of affection, touching, massaging, etc., is allowed on premises. Work performance is not to be affected. This policy also includes e-mails, faxes and other electronic communications of offensive or pornographic materials. Employees must notify their immediate supervisor and/or HR of inter-work relationships. Relationships amongst supervisors and subordinates are highly discouraged.

SECURITY

For your protection and the protection of our clients and visitors, CVCOG has designated security measures. The first and most prominent of these security measures is the issuance of identification badges. These badges identify the individuals who are permitted on premises. Guests, clients, volunteers, and contractors may be issued temporary badges and/or key cards when necessary. *See the full ID Badge Policy for more information.*

When CVCOG is closed for lunch, or at any other time during regular business hours that the front reception desk is unmanned, the front door will remain locked, for the security of those who remain inside the building.

Your awareness of any unusual or strange action or behavior exhibited by another person is an important part of our security measures.

In order to protect yourself and others, it is necessary to strictly follow all our security procedures. Breaking any of these rules could endanger business, other people and yourself. This is a **personal responsibility** of each employee. Should it become necessary to conduct a search of the premises for any reason, you will be expected to cooperate to the fullest extent with all parts of the search procedure.

INTERNET CONDUCT AND USE

The Internet is provided to employees for the benefit of our organization and our employees; it allows employees to connect to information resources around the world. CVCOG maintains a separate Information Technology Policy & User Guide that contains all relevant computer and internet use guidance. All CVCOG staff should be familiar with the policies and must comply with them.

See the complete IT Policy and User Guide, located on our CVCOG Team Site, for further questions, or seek guidance from your supervisor or HR.

DISCIPLINE AND GUIDANCE POLICY

Head Start has very specific rules regarding how discipline is carried out. Staff are expected implement positive strategies to support children's well-being and prevent and address challenging behavior.

Discipline must be:

- 1) Individualized and consistent for each child;

- 2) Appropriate to the child's level of understanding; and
- 3) Directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control.

A caregiver may only use positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourage self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, which include at least the following:

- 1) Using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior;
- 2) Reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements;
- 3) Redirecting behavior using positive statements; and
- 4) Using brief supervised separation or time out from the group, when appropriate, for the child's age and development, which is limited to no more than one minute per year of the child's age.

There must be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child. The following types of discipline and guidance are prohibited:

- 1) Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment;
- 2) Use isolation to discipline a child;
- 3) Bind or tie a child to restrict movement or tape a child's mouth;
- 4) Use or withhold food as a punishment or reward;
- 5) Use toilet learning/training methods that punish, demean, or humiliate a child;
- 6) Use any form of emotional abuse, including public or private humiliation, rejecting, terrorizing, extended ignoring, or corrupting a child;
- 7) Physically abuse a child;
- 8) Subjecting a child any form of verbal abuse, including harsh, abusive, profane or sarcastic language, Threats;
- 9) Use physical activity or outdoor time as a punishment or reward;
- 10) Pinching, shaking, or biting a child;
- 11) Hitting a child with a hand or instrument;
- 12) Putting anything in or on a child's mouth;
- 13) Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child;
- 14) Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet with the door closed or open; and
- 15) Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age.

Staff should always respect and promote the unique identity of each child and family. Never make derogatory remarks about the child or child's family and do not stereotype on any basis, including gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or family composition.

Employees are expected to report any instances in which they observe someone using any of the forms of discipline or guidance mentioned above. CVCOG will conduct a thorough investigation on all complaints and act swiftly and decisively if the allegation(s) is/are confirmed, following the Disciplinary Procedure.

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE OR SEXUAL ABUSE

Head Start/Early Head Start agencies are required to provide comprehensive health, nutritional, social and other services to the children to attain their full potential.

"Child abuse and neglect" means harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare by a person responsible for the child's health or welfare.

Any staff and/or regular volunteers who has reasonable cause to know or suspect that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect, or who has observed the child being subjected to circumstances or conditions that would result in abuse or neglect, must immediately report such fact to the responsible State Agency, Social Services or Local Law Enforcement Agencies. The Program Director and/or the Family & Community Manager/Specialist must be informed of such suspicion immediately. (Initial Report/Follow-Up Form for Reporting Child Abuse/Neglect case to TDPRS) **Child Abuse Hot Line Number 1-800-252-5400,**

Each staff and/or regular volunteers will receive specific orientation and training on the identification and reporting of child abuse and neglect pursuant to state law and outlining the staff member's personal responsibility to report all suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect according to state law.

Head Start/Early Head Start agencies will preserve the confidentiality of all records pertaining to child abuse or neglect in accordance with applicable State or Local Law.

Head Start/Early Head Start programs will not undertake, on their own, to treat cases of child abuse or neglect. Head Start/Early Head Start program will cooperate fully with child protective service agencies in their communities.

SOCIAL MEDIA

CVCOG recognizes the important role social media plays in distributing information to the public, clients, board members, and stakeholders. CVCOG carries out many services for the Concho Valley, and we want you to be proud to share your work with friends, family and the public. The way you do so is at your sole discretion. However, social media has the potential to cause problems by interfering with an employee's productivity, creating a harassing environment, or harming the reputation of CVCOG or its clients. Whenever you mention CVCOG or the work you do on any social media outlet you must adhere to our Confidentiality Policy, but also stay within the following guidelines;

- Anytime you mention CVCOG make sure all comments and opinions are advertised to be your own voice and not to be interpreted as being a representative of CVCOG
- Never speak derogatorily about any fellow employees or CVCOG itself
- Never mention personal information about clients, employees or other agencies CVCOG works with
- Never comment on settled or on-going legal issues
- Refrain from posting any content that can be perceived as harassment based on a person's protected status such as race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, pregnancy, citizenship, familial status, disability status, veteran status, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity, or other protected group
- Social media activities should not interfere with your duties at work, limit use to breaks or lunch hour (CVCOG reserves the right to monitor its facilities to ensure compliance with this restriction)

Business Use of Social Media: CVCOG expects that all employees use good judgment as well as maintain a high level of professionalism, along with following guidelines;

- The Executive Director must approve all CVCOG social media sites before implementation
- Only authorized staff or hired public relations professional will be allowed to create, edit, post or modify to CVCOG social media outlets
- Departments wishing to have content posted on any CVCOG social media outlet should submit their request to HR or the Executive Director following the Social Media Procedures
- Always use proper grammar and correct spelling
- Only use family appropriate photos and refrain from using profane, sexually explicit, harassing or discriminatory images

- Mistakes or incorrect information must be corrected immediately along with an apology for the error

CVCOG reserves the right to restrict, remove, or deny content that is deemed or perceived to be in violation of this policy. CVCOG employees should immediately bring to the attention of management staff any inappropriate content. Failure to abide by these guidelines will not be tolerated.

See the complete Social Media Procedure, located on our CVCOG Team Site, for further questions, or seek guidance from your supervisor or HR.

CVCOG COMMUNIQUE & MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS

The following is our guide to information and relationships with the outside media:

- Advertisements for newspapers, radio, television, trade journals, magazines, brochures, trade association bulletins, and so forth: All advertisements must comply with official CVCOG formats and specifications and must only be placed through CVCOG approved advertising agencies. These advertisements must be approved in writing by the Executive Director.
- Requests for in-office photographs, videotape footage, and so forth must be previously approved in writing by the Executive Director.
- Requests for sponsorships from civic, professional community and/or other groups must be approved in writing by the Executive Director.
- In the case of matters dealing directly within the scope of an employee’s program expertise, the Executive Director and Departmental Director allow employees to speak on program events or matters that are informational in nature, with advanced notice. This allowance is for standard and normal interviews dealing with non-contentious or non-divisive program issues. The Executive Director and Departmental Director reserve the right to withdraw this privilege without notice.
- Other than as allowed above, news articles, inquiries, questions, interviews, editorials, research papers and/or other comments about CVCOG, its business and its employees are to be handled solely and personally by the Executive Director. No other person in CVCOG, unless specifically authorized by the Executive Director, is permitted, authorized or allowed to represent CVCOG to the media, newspaper, magazines, radio-television stations or other similar media organizations.
- Requests for endorsements from machinery, equipment, product vendors, and consultants are not allowed.

ID BADGE

- The ID Badge is the property of CVCOG
- CVCOG governs the use of the ID Badge
- The ID Badge is nontransferable, and lending the badge to anyone else for any purpose may result in disciplinary action
- Must be worn at all times when at work
- Must be clearly visible
- Must not be covered in any way by outside stickers, pins or buttons
- Must not be misused, altered or copied
- You may receive one new badge every calendar year, if needed. If you require more than one replacement in a calendar year, you will be monetarily responsible for the replacements
- Stolen cards will be replaced with the submission of a completed police report. If no report is furnished, the card will be replaced as listed under “lost or damaged”
- Cards replaced due to name changes, job transfers or other similar occurrences will be replaced at no charge

- Upon termination, ID Badges will be returned to CVCOG, failure to do so could result in monetary responsibility on the departing employee

All employees will have their picture taken and be issued an ID Badge, blue sleeve and given the choice of a lanyard, clip or magnet to secure their badge to their clothing. If an employee has a personal preference for a different method of attaching their ID it will be allowed as long as it does not interfere or cover any portion of the ID Badge, is in good taste, and is approved by both the Executive Director and Department Director.

All volunteers will also be issued a badge. They will be issued a green sleeve and given their choice of attachment method. They follow all other protocol regarding the ID Badge.

KEY CARD / KEYS

Key cards and keys are for security purposes as they grant access to specific facilities for employees. Not every employee will receive a key card and or keys. If you receive a key or key card, you must abide by the following:

- The Key Cards, and keys, are the property of CVCOG
- The Key Card, and keys, are nontransferable and lending them to anyone else for any purpose is not permitted
- The Key Cards use a proximity sensor to the readers located at the doors providing access to the building. They are not magnetic strip cards and will not have to be removed from the sleeve
- Sliding the Key Card across the face of the card reader will disable the lock (indicator light will turn green) and the employee may enter without ever having to remove the card from the sleeve
- After hours, all central office employees will access the CVCOG Main building thru the door located on the east side of the building. This door is the designated "Employee Entrance". If an employee is accessing the building during regular business hours, they may enter thru the front entrance.
- Upon entering and exiting a CVCOG building, it is the responsibility of each central office employee to ensure that the door closes behind them
- Upon entering and exiting, do not allow others to enter with or behind you unless you are aware that they are a current CVCOG employee. Ask to see their ID badge if you are not certain
- At no time is an unattended door to be "propped open". Any employee found to have left an unattended door propped open may be subject to disciplinary action. Additionally, if an employee finds an unattended door propped open, it is their responsibility to remove the object and ensure the door closes correctly. The employee should then report the incident to their Departmental Director at the next available opportunity
- An unattended door is defined as a door outside of the clear vision of an employee and the employee not being clearly visible from that door
- If a meeting, class, or other event is planned for after hours (HS Policy Council, one-time police class, etc.) the sponsoring department will be responsible for all guests
- Abuse, neglect, employee performance, or other work issues may result in an employee losing the privilege to access the building outside of normal business hours
- Lost, damaged or stolen Key Cards must be immediately reported to either HR or IT so that the individual Key Card may be disabled. Employees may also be required to notify their Department Director according to Departmental requirements
- CVCOG will pay for the replacement of one lost or damaged key card/fob. If the employee loses or damages the new card/fob, it will be replaced at the cost of \$10.00 to the employee
- Stolen cards will be replaced with the submission of a completed police report. If no report is furnished, the card will be replaced as listed under "lost or damaged"
- Upon termination, the Key Card must be returned to CVCOG, failure to do so could result in monetary responsibility on the departing employee

While it is impossible for any policy document consider every situation that may occur, it is essential that every central office employee understand, commit and use common sense in applying these policies. The emphasis must be to never compromise the intent of this policy.

USE OF COMPANY VEHICLES

Any employee that may be required to operate a CVCOG vehicle during their employment must be authorized to do so. The employee is responsible for ensuring the vehicle is in full operational condition before each use. Employees are required to follow all local, state, and federal laws in regards to operating a motor vehicle.

Due to the nature of their job, certain employees may have to be on-call for emergencies that occur after hours. The Department Director may authorize these staff to keep CVCOG vehicles parked at their home outside of normal business hours. Use of the CVCOG vehicle should be for business purposes. Personal use of CVCOG vehicles may be approved by the Department Director or Executive Director should a rare situation arise, that would warrant such usage. Failure to follow these guidelines, may result in this privilege being revoked and the employee may be subject to disciplinary action.

CVCOG employees should be aware that CVCOG vehicles are always in view of the public and should practice good stewardship regarding use of said vehicles.

ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE AND TESTING

It is clearly the position of CVCOG to not condone, authorize or tolerate alcohol and or drug use during business hours or to engage in any outside illegal drug use. Employees are expected to report for work and remain at work in condition to perform assigned duties free from the effects of alcohol and drugs. Alcohol abuse or illegal drug use, and their physiological effects, present a threat to the well-being and security of employees, and can have an adverse effect on an employee's job performance. It could jeopardize the safety of other employees, the public, or CVCOG equipment and it could also cause extensive damage to CVCOG's reputation, community standing and or effect CVCOG's relations with the public.

CVCOG prohibits the use of non-prescribed drugs or alcohol during work hours as well as the possession, sale or transfer of alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs, other controlled substances, or improper use of prescription drugs either on CVCOG property or while performing duties of work for CVCOG. For all employees, alcohol consumption is strictly prohibited during the workday, including rest periods and meal periods.

This policy does not prohibit employees from the lawful use and possession of prescribed medications. Employees must, however, consult with their doctors about the medications' effect on their fitness for duty and ability to work safely, and they must promptly disclose any work restrictions to their supervisor.

CVCOG will assist and support employees who voluntarily seek help for drug or alcohol addiction before becoming subject to discipline or termination under this or other CVCOG policies. Such employees will be allowed to use accrued paid time off, placed on leaves of absence, referred to treatment providers and otherwise accommodated as required by law. Employees may be required to document that they are successfully following prescribed treatment and to take and pass follow-up tests if they hold jobs that are safety-sensitive or require driving, or if they have violated this policy previously. Once a drug test has been initiated under this policy, unless otherwise required by the Family and Medical Leave Act or the Americans with Disabilities Act, the employee will have forfeited the opportunity to be granted a leave of absence for treatment, and will face possible discipline, up to and including termination.

If an employee comes to work, and is suspected to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or is reported to have used drugs or alcohol during work time, this should be reported to the Department Director, the HR Director or HR Supervisor, or the Executive Director immediately. *It should never be shared with co-workers.*

CVCOG reserves the right to request any employee to submit to testing for alcohol or drug usage based on the employee's condition, actions, comments, observations (i.e., smell of alcohol, slurred speech, abnormal movements or behaviors), on input from others, or an accident occurrence. In addition, CVCOG reserves the right to initiate the following types of drug testing in the future should we feel it necessary:

- for cause/reasonable suspicion testing
- safety-related testing

Such drug and or alcohol testing requests will be made when, in our belief, there is a *legitimate* reason for needing the test results. The test results will be treated as confidential information and only a limited number of people will know the results. These persons will be on a "need to know" basis only.

A full and thorough investigation will be made quickly. CVCOG does reserve the right to inspect the workplace and your work area. This may include desks, lockers, storage areas and packages. (This provision makes allowance for items required by the Criminal Justice Department to conduct legitimate law enforcement training.)

CVCOG will act swiftly and decisively regarding drug or alcohol-related investigations. If necessary, the employee will be disciplined according to the steps outlined in CVCOG's disciplinary procedure.

It is important that you know and understand that compliance with these requests and this action are clearly a **condition of employment** with CVCOG. A refusal to test, refusal to give written permission to test or a "no show" for testing as directed will be interpreted as quitting work on your part, and your resignation will be effective immediately.

Information and records relating to positive test results, drug and alcohol dependencies, and legitimate medical explanations will be kept confidential to the extent required by law and maintained in secure files separate from normal personnel files. Such records and information may be disclosed among managers and supervisors on a need-to-know basis and may also be disclosed when relevant to a grievance, charge, claim or other legal proceeding initiated by or on behalf of an employee.

OTHER WORKPLACE ISSUES

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Employees of CVCOG should be constantly aware that the growth and progress of CVCOG is dependent upon the growth of our community. CVCOG encourages employees to take an active role in support of civic and community projects that make our community a better place in which to live and work.

CVCOG is proud to have its employees involved in such endeavors. If necessary and appropriate, you may be granted time off from your regular work in order to fulfill community involvement commitments.

Please be sure that you have provided written notification to your Department Director, HR and the Executive Director prior to or at the time of undertaking any community involvement activity.

EMPLOYEE INFORMATION SYSTEMS

There are numerous ways we try to communicate and keep our employees informed about activities and information.

CVCOG's bulletin boards located in the employee breakroom contain information important to everyone. (Please note that the bulletin boards are property of CVCOG and information placed on them is subject to our policies and approval.) Notices and other information on the bulletin boards are updated continually, and you will want to check them frequently.

Throughout the year we may issue newsletters with information for you. Newsletters contain information about employees, CVCOG, and other specific issues. Employee meetings are another way we keep you informed. Employee meetings provide you the opportunity to ask questions or make comments that you may not have addressed previously.

Your supervisor and Department Director are also a continual source of information. You are encouraged to speak with them freely and enlist his or her assistance with getting you information important to your job and employment at CVCOG.

Finally, we occasionally send out e-mails, memos and intercom announcements about new issues, decisions and events. These are valuable, quick sources of help and information.

MONITORING EMPLOYEE ACTIVITY

CVCOG employees should be aware that all employee activity is subject to monitoring and there should be no expectation of privacy. CVCOG reserves the right to monitor communications and activity during the work time and at other periods when your actions may reflect on CVCOG practices, procedures and image.

Working premises include the following areas: regular work areas, break areas, hallways, parking lots, passage ways, work rooms, shops, production areas, warehouses, and CVCOG vehicles or vehicles rented or leased.

Please be advised that CVCOG has the right to search all premises. This includes lockers, desks, storage areas, and CVCOG vehicles (owned, leased or rented). Employees using CVCOG provided equipment and furnishing, such as computers, desks and lockers, may have them searched. If you have provided your own locking device for CVCOG

provided equipment, you must provide CVCOG with the combination, password or other means of access so that we can enter the area as needed.

CVCOG may monitor the following activities: fax transmissions, telephone communications, and all Internet and e-mail communications. In addition, we may use cameras and video monitoring to oversee activities at our locations.

You will be informed of the communication devices you have authority to use. Only authorized employees may use any CVCOG communications devices.

The receipt and/or transmission of illegal or pornographic communications are forbidden. Pornographic and any other illicit or illegal activity on the premises is forbidden.

See CVCOG's IT Policy and User Guide for additional information.

RECORDING DEVICES IN THE WORKPLACE

CVCOG prohibits employee use of personal cameras, camera phones, tape recorders, smart watches or other recording devices in the workplace as a preventative step we believe necessary to secure employee privacy, trade secrets and other business information. Recording devices that are permitted include ones owned and operated by CVCOG (i.e., cameras and video recording equipment installed in CVCOG buildings & property).

It is a violation of our policy for an employee to use personal recording devices such as cameras or video recorders without permission of CVCOG. You are also prohibited from arranging for others, including non-employees, to engage in any recording of conversations, phone calls or other activities in our workplace.

Authorization to record an event or proceeding may be granted when a specific business purpose will be served by the use of such a device and when its use will not violate employee privacy. In such a case, all parties to the meeting or conversation that is to be recorded must be informed at its outset that it will be monitored, transcribed, intercepted, or recorded.

You are allowed to bring a recording device that will NOT be used for recording into the workplace, such as a cell phone with a built-in camera. CVCOG may revoke this permission at any time for any reason; at which point you will be given a reasonable opportunity to remove the equipment from the premises.

You should regard this policy as an explicit Statement that CVCOG does not permit the recording of any meetings or discussions without prior authorization, as discussed above. Please contact your Department Director if you have any questions about this policy.

RESTRICTED ITEMS

In order to provide as much protection as possible for our employees and property, certain restricted items will be issued only to those employees whose responsibilities require them.

Examples of restricted items include: security keys, office or room keys, file, desk and cabinet keys, CVCOG-sponsored credit cards, telephone credit cards, and policy and procedures manuals.

All restricted items will be controlled and issued by the proper agent of CVCOG. If you receive restricted items, you may be asked to sign a form indicating that you have received the particular items and understand that they are the property of CVCOG. Duplication of any restricted item (for example, copying a key) is prohibited.

Loss, damage or theft of any restricted item should be reported to the issuing party as soon as the loss, damage or theft is discovered. You may be charged a fee or be asked to replace any lost, damaged or stolen restricted item. Upon leaving employment for any reason, all restricted items must be returned prior to final processing.

PATENTS, COPYRIGHTS AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

CVCOG may occasionally develop certain patents, copyrights and/or intellectual materials which are the property of CVCOG, regardless of whether they were developed by external consultants or internally by compensated employees of CVCOG.

Additionally, any intellectual property, inventions and electronic property developed or generated while one is in the pay or employ of, or is otherwise reimbursed by CVCOG, is the property of CVCOG.

TRAVEL

On July 25, 2001 the CVCOG Executive Committee elected to follow the State travel policies. The Travel Policies will be provided to you as a separate document not included in this handbook. All CVCOG staff should be familiar with the policy and must comply with it in order to have travel expenses paid or reimbursed.

See the complete Travel Policy on the CVCOG Team Website.

WHISTLEBLOWERS

A whistleblower is an employee who reports an issue or activity in the workplace that he/she believes to be illegal, dishonest, or fraudulent. A whistleblower is not responsible for investigating the activity or for determining fault or corrective measures; appropriate management officials are charged with these responsibilities. Examples of illegal or dishonest activities include violations of Federal, State or local laws; billing for services not performed or for goods not delivered; and fraudulent financial reporting.

If you feel you have knowledge of an illegal or dishonest or fraudulent issue in our workplace, please contact one of the following: your immediate supervisor, your Department Director, HR the Director of Finance, Executive Director, or any member of the Executive Committee.

We ask that you be as certain as possible about the allegation. Any employee who intentionally files a false report of wrongdoing will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

All reports of illegal and dishonest activities will promptly be submitted to the Executive Director and/or Executive Committee, who are responsible for investigating and coordinating corrective action.

Whistleblowers are protected in two ways:

- Insofar as possible, the confidentiality of the whistleblower will be maintained. However, identity may have to be disclosed in order to conduct a thorough investigation, to comply with the law, or to provide accused individuals their legal right to defense.
- CVCOG does not retaliate against a whistleblower. This includes, but is not limited to, protection from retaliation in the form of an adverse employment action such as termination, compensation decreases, poor work assignments or threats of physical harm. Any whistleblower who believes he/she is being retaliated against

must contact his/her immediate supervisor, Department Director, HR the Director of Finance, Executive Director, or any member of the Executive Committee immediately. The right of a whistleblower to protection against retaliation does not include immunity for any proven personal wrongdoing.

Employees with any questions regarding this policy should contact the HR, the Director of Finance, or the Executive Director.

RETALIATION

FLSA (Fair Labor Standards Act) protects employees from retaliation from their employer. CVCOG strives to maintain a work environment free of retaliation. FLSA States that it is a violation for any person to “discharge or in any other manner discriminate against any employee because such employee has filed any complaint or instituted or caused to be instituted any proceeding under or related to this ACT, or has testified or is about to testify in any such proceeding, or has served or is about to serve on an industry committee.”

CVCOG employees, supervisors, managers and directors may not punish any employee for making discrimination or harassment claims or for participating in a CVCOG investigation. This policy extends out to any employee making any type of complaint towards or against their supervisor or any CVCOG team member.

Retaliation are any negative actions that affects one’s job. Observable examples include, but are not limited to, termination, demotion, unreasonable reduction in work, unreasonable addition of work, and reduction in salary. More subtle signs of retaliation can include, but are not limited to, sabotaging a coworker, unreasonable demands, making life difficult for another employee, exclusion (includes emails, events, and meetings), forgetting to return messages, or refusing to speak directly to the employee.

It is clearly the position of CVCOG to not condone, authorize or tolerate retaliation. A thorough investigation on these charges will be made quickly. CVCOG will act quickly and decisively on charges of retaliation.

HARASSMENT, DISCRIMINATION, AND BULLYING

HARASSMENT / DISCRIMINATION

It is clearly the position of CVCOG to not condone, authorize or tolerate harassment. CVCOG is committed to maintaining a work environment that is free of harassment and discrimination-of employees by anyone, including supervisors, co-workers, clients, vendors or employees.

Harassment consists of unwelcome conduct, whether verbal, physical, or visual, that is based on a person's protected status such as race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, pregnancy, citizenship, familial status, disability status, veteran status, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other protected group. This policy includes e-mails, faxes and other electronic communications of offensive/pornographic materials. CVCOG will not tolerate harassing conduct that affects tangible job benefits, interferes unreasonably with an individual's work performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

Each employee has an obligation to **immediately** report an occurrence of harassment. Your obligation is to let us know about your belief that harassment has occurred. Employees may submit their information to any Director, HR or Executive Director. Submissions may be verbal, but are strongly encouraged to be in written format. Employees may also submit information anonymously, if this makes them more comfortable. An employee is not required to follow the chain of command on any type of harassment allegations. You are **strongly encouraged** to personally (verbally or in writing) inform the person causing the offensive action that you want it stopped.

Managers and supervisors are required to **immediately** report to their Department Director, HR or the Executive Director all reports or observations of harassing behavior regardless if the employee wants the information reported up the chain of command. Managers and Supervisors have an obligation to protect all employees by allowing CVCOG opportunity to thoroughly investigate all claims and take proper action. Failure of a supervisor or manager to report claims of sexual harassment will not be tolerated.

CVCOG policy is to investigate all such complaints thoroughly and promptly. An investigation of these charges will be made quickly-and CVCOG will act swiftly and decisively on charges of harassment. To the fullest extent practicable, CVCOG will keep complaints and the terms of their resolution confidential. If an investigation confirms that harassment has occurred, CVCOG will take corrective action, following the Disciplinary Procedure.

Harassment and Discrimination are protected acts against retaliation. *See CVCOG Retaliation Policy for more information.*

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

It is clearly the position of CVCOG to not condone, authorize or tolerate sexual harassment. CVCOG is committed to maintaining a work environment that is free of sexual harassment-of employees by anyone, including supervisors, co-workers, clients, vendors or employees of CVCOG.

Sexual harassment is defined as:

Unwelcome sexual conduct that is a term or condition of employment, when submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment...and unwelcome sexual conduct that unreasonably interferes with an individual's job performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment even if it leads to no tangible or economic job consequences.

There are two types of sexual harassment. "**Quid pro quo**" sexual harassment occurs when an employee/agent of management makes the "submission to or rejection of such conduct" by them as a "basis for employment decisions affecting" the employee. **This type of authority and action is not given to any supervisor, Department Director, Executive Director or agent of CVCOG.** Examples of quid pro quo sexual harassment are:

- submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment;
- submission to or rejection of such conduct by an employee is used as a basis for employment decisions; or
- conduct that has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an employee's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

The second type of sexual harassment is called "**hostile environment.**" Hostile environment occurs when the unwelcome sexual conduct creates an "intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment." This can be verbal or physical conduct that ridicules or shows hostility or aversion to an individual because of sex or gender that:

- has the purpose of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment; or
- has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or otherwise adversely affects employment opportunities.

Sexually harassing conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- slurs, negative stereotyping, threatening, intimidating or hostile acts that relate to sex or gender;
- written, offensive, graphic material/pictures that ridicules or shows hostility or aversion to an individual because of sex or gender.

Each employee has an obligation to **immediately** report an occurrence of sexual harassment. Your obligation is to let CVCOG know about your belief that sexual harassment has occurred. Also, you are **strongly encouraged** to personally (verbally or in writing) inform the person causing the offensive action that you want it stopped.

Managers and supervisors are required to **immediately** report to their Department Director, HR or the Executive Director all reports or observations of harassing behavior regardless if the employee wants the information reported up the chain of command. Managers and Supervisors have an obligation to protect all employees by allowing CVCOG opportunity to thoroughly investigate all claims and take proper action. Failure of a supervisor or manager to report claims of sexual harassment will not be tolerated.

CVCOG's policy is to investigate all such complaints thoroughly and promptly. An investigation of these charges will be made quickly, and CVCOG will act swiftly and decisively on charges of sexual harassment. To the fullest extent practicable, CVCOG will keep complaints and the terms of their resolution confidential. If an investigation confirms that sexual harassment has occurred, CVCOG will take corrective action, following the Disciplinary Procedure.

Sexual harassment is protected acts against retaliation. *See CVCOG Retaliation Policy for more information.*

BULLYING

It is clearly the position of CVCOG to not condone, authorize or tolerate bullying. CVCOG is committed to maintaining a work environment that is free of bullying of employees by anyone, including supervisors, co-workers, clients, vendors or employees of CVCOG.

Per Texas law, bullying is described as the following:

- engaging in written or verbal expression, expression through electronic means, or physical conduct that occurs on CVCOG property, CVCOG sponsored activity, in a vehicle operated by CVCOG; that has or will have the effect of physically harming an employee, damaging an employee's property, or placing an employee in reasonable fear of harm to the employee or of damage to the employee's property
- sufficiently severe, persistent, and pervasive enough that the action or threat creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive work environment for the employee
- exploits an imbalance of power between the employee perpetrator and the employee victim through written or verbal expression or physical conduct
- interferes with an employee's daily tasks or substantially disrupts the operation of the organization

Each employee has an obligation to **immediately** report an occurrence of bullying. Your obligation is to let CVCOG know about your belief that bullying has occurred. Also, you are **strongly encouraged** to personally (verbally or in writing) inform the person causing the offensive action that you want it stopped.

Managers and supervisors are required to **immediately** report to their Department Director, HR, or the Executive Director all reports or observations of bullying behavior regardless if the employee wants the information reported up the chain of command. Managers and Supervisors have an obligation to protect all employees by allowing CVCOG opportunity to thoroughly investigate all claims and take proper action. Failure of a supervisor or manager to report claims of sexual harassment will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

CVCOG's policy is to investigate all such complaints thoroughly and promptly. An investigation of these charges will be made quickly, and CVCOG will act swiftly and decisively on charges of bullying. To the fullest extent practicable, CVCOG will keep complaints and the terms of their resolution confidential. If an investigation confirms that bullying has occurred, CVCOG will take corrective action, following the Disciplinary Procedure.

Bullying is protected acts against retaliation. *See CVCOG Retaliation Policy, for more information.*

HIV/AIDS DISCRIMINATION

CVCOG does not discriminate against any employee or applicant afflicted with the HIV virus or AIDS.

We will make reasonable efforts to accommodate any individual afflicted with the HIV virus or AIDS, while at the same time ensuring the health and safety of our other employees.

CVCOG does not require that any of its employees or applicants be tested for the HIV virus or AIDS. Any individual who suspects exposure to the HIV virus or AIDS is encouraged to submit to voluntary testing. Should an individual receive a positive test result, CVCOG encourages, but does not require, consultation with our designated management representative.

All information regarding any individual afflicted with the HIV virus or AIDS is strictly confidential, and will be disclosed to HR or the Executive Director only. Any improper disclosure regarding any individual afflicted with the HIV virus or AIDS by individual's supervisor, Department Director or other management representative is a violation of CVCOG's Confidentiality Policy.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

CVCOG does not discriminate on the basis of a person's protected status such as race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, pregnancy, citizenship, familial status, disability status, veteran status, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other protected group status.

Decisions about employment and job opportunities are based on workforce compatibility, principle of business necessity, applicant skill, education, experience, credentials, and training. CVCOG seeks to place the best-qualified person in all Council of Government positions. The Executive Director is responsible for reviewing, and authorizes all job postings prior to the posting of the job opening.

CVCOG has an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Policy and Affirmative Action (AA) Plan which ensure that it follows all local, state, and federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination. CVCOG'S EEO Policy and EEO Officer's contact information are posted in conspicuous places in all CVCOG facilities and are also available on CVCOG's Team Website.

The actions of every employee are important to achieving CVCOG's EEO Plan's objectives. Disciplinary action will be taken against any employee found to be deliberately obstructing implementation of the plan or participating in any discriminatory behaviors. Every supervisor is critically important to program success and should be familiar with EEO policies and procedures.

Reasonable Accommodation - In order to provide individuals with disabilities equal access to all employment opportunities, CVCOG is committed to comply with ADA requirement and provide reasonable accommodations to qualified employees or applicants with disabilities, unless to do so would cause undue hardship. "An individual with a disability is defined by the ADA as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment" (www.ada.gov).

Candidates and employees are considered in relation to the ability to perform the essential elements of the job. We seek to make reasonable accommodations, for applicants and employees as requested, and in compliance with Federal and State laws regarding a barrier-free workplace for all employees and provide a safe, accessible, and comfortable work environment.

If you require a reasonable accommodation, please contact HR to begin the process. Requests can be made orally or in writing and will be reviewed within two (2) business days. Employees will be contacted within ten (10) business days to retrieve additional information and verify that the accommodation would be effective and not cause due hardship. If a disability is not already known, or clearly visible, CVCOG may request medical information from a certified health professional. During this investigative time, a temporary accommodation may be proposed or granted. A final determination or request for additional information will be made within fifteen (15) business days of receiving the initial request. If an accommodation is denied, an employee may appeal to the Executive Director and use the Problem-Solving Procedure or any other means dictated by Federal, State or Local laws.

Religious Discrimination and Accommodation - CVCOG respects the religious beliefs and practices of all its employees and will make, upon request, an accommodation for such religious observances when a reasonable accommodation is available that does not create an undue hardship.

An employee whose religious beliefs or practices conflicts with his/her job, work schedule, or with CVCOG's policy or practice on dress and appearance, or with other aspects of employment and who seeks a religious accommodation must submit a written request for the accommodation to his/her immediate supervisor. The written request will include the type of religious conflict that exists and the employee's suggested accommodation.

The immediate supervisor, in conjunction with HR, will evaluate the request considering whether a work conflict exists due to a sincerely held religious belief or practice and whether an accommodation is available which is reasonable and which would not create an undue hardship on CVCOG's business. An accommodation may be a change in job, using paid leave or leave without pay, allowing an exception to the dress and appearance code which does not impact safety or uniform requirements, or for other aspects of employment.

The supervisor and employee will meet to discuss the request and decision on an accommodation. If the employee accepts the proposed religious accommodation, the immediate supervisor will implement the decision. If the employee rejects the proposed accommodation, he/she may appeal to HR and use the Problem-Solving Procedure.

See the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Policy and Affirmative Action (AA) Plan for more information.

SAFETY ANNEX

GENERAL SAFETY

It is the responsibility of each employee to see that that all tasks are conducted in a safe and efficient manner, complying with all local, State and Federal safety and health regulations, program-standards, and with any special safety concerns identified by CVCOG. Many safety regulations are consistent throughout each department and program, everyone is expected to identify and become familiar with the safety plan and procedures for your working area.

As a part of New Hire Orientation, employees will be given information regarding various safety procedures. Some employees may also need to attend a briefing on use of the Wellness Center at the Main Office (5430 Link Road) and sign a waiver before utilizing the Wellness Center.

It is also your responsibility to complete a First Report of Injury (DWC Form-001) for each safety and health infraction that occurred or that you witnessed. Failure to report such an infraction may result in employee disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

In order to maintain a safe work environment, please take note of the following items:

General office safety

Workstations

- Designed to reduce excessive bending and stretching
- Good housekeeping is essential
- Never store items under your desk
- Never store items on top of cupboards
- Never leave desk and/or filing cabinet drawers open

Chairs and desks

- Good lower back support
- Adjustable - knees and hips are level
- Chairs on castors must have 5 legs
- If your desk is too high, compensate by raising the seat height of your chair
- Never stand on the chair to reach anything, particular if the chair has wheels or is of the swivel kind

Stacking and storage

- Light objects stored on top and heavy objects in the bottom - also in filing cabinets
- Boxes, files and other heavy articles must not be stacked on top of cabinets, cupboards or window sills
- Keep passages clear and firefighting equipment unobstructed

Electrical safeguarding

- Cables
 - Loose lying cables can cause
 - Tripping hazards
 - Electrocution
 - People can hook on cables and pull expensive equipment from tables
 - They are untidy
 - It is your responsibility to inform the property director so they can be fixed

- No unauthorized person may tamper with any electrical appliance or distribution board.
- Do not use red plugs in the Main Office unless approved by the Director of IT
- Do not overload sockets. When plugging in multiple cords, use a plug bar with surge protection, or ask for an additional point to be installed (if possible).
- If a machine or an electric cable becomes warm to the touch, it must be disconnected and reported without delay.
- Cable and extension cords should not be run unprotected beneath carpeting nor should they span walkways without being secured in an encapsulation device.
- Do carry out your own visual inspections of plugs and leads and get them repaired as necessary.
- Look out for:
 - Physical damage to the cable
 - Damage to the plugs
 - Insecure connections to the plug
- Do switch off equipment before unplugging and before cleaning.

Heat generating equipment

Heat generating equipment, like electrical equipment, can be very safe if used and maintained correctly. However, improper care, storage, or placement of any type of equipment that generates heat can cause a fire, bodily injury, or even death.

Types of Permitted Heat Generating Equipment

- Coffee pot
- Cooling fans
- Mug warmer
- Other electrical equipment

Safe Practices for Heat Generating Equipment

- Nothing can be stored within 30" of electrical panels
- Plug into outlet directly
- Turn-off all items when not in use
- Do not leave equipment unattended

Accident reporting

- Report all injuries on duty to HR on the same day.

Slips, trips and falls

- Prevent them by remembering the following:
 - Do not allow cabling to create a tripping hazard
 - Clear up spillages quickly
 - Do not block passageways
 - Keep office areas clean
 - Keep stacking and storage areas safe watch out for:
 - Worn or loose carpets
 - Broken stair tread edges
 - Chipped floorboards and tiles
 - Watch where you walk!
 - High heels
 - Pick up objects that fall - pencils etc.

Office machines - learn how to operate them safely before you use them

- Learn how to operate them safely before you use them
- Loose clothing, jewelry, long flowing hair to be kept out of machines
- Keep hands and fingers clear of paper inlet at the shredder
- Switch the machine off before trying to clear a blockage

First aid box

- Make sure you know where the box is
- If the box is not stocked, report to the Facilities Manager

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Employees who are confronted by or who encounter an armed or dangerous person should not attempt to challenge or disarm the individual. Employees should remain calm, make constant eye contact and talk to the individual. If a supervisor or Department Director can be safely notified of the need for assistance without endangering the safety of the employee or others, such notice should be given. Otherwise, you should cooperate and follow any instructions given by the armed or dangerous individual.

ACTIVE SHOOTER

In the unlikely event of an active shooter, all employees should be prepared on how they will respond for different situations. CVCOG advises employees to follow the Department of Homeland Security's recommendations.

1. Evacuate

If there is an escape path, attempt to evacuate the premises. Be sure to:

- Have an escape route and plan in mind.
- Evacuate regardless of whether others agree to follow
- Leave your belongings behind
- Help others escape, if possible
- Prevent individuals from entering an area where the active shooter may be
- Keep your hands visible
- Follow the instructions of any police officers
- Do not attempt to move wounded people
- Call 911 when you are safe

2. Hide out

If evacuation is not possible, find a place to hide where the active shooter is less likely to find you. Your hiding place should:

Be out of the active shooter's view

- Provide protection if shots are fired in your direction (i.e., an office with a closed or locked door)
- Not trap or restrict your options for movement

To prevent an active shooter from entering your hiding place:

- Lock the door
- Blockade the door with heavy furniture

If the active shooter is nearby:

- Lock the door
- Silence your cell phone or pager
- Turn off any source of noise (i.e., radios, televisions)

- Hide behind large items (i.e., cabinets, desks)
- Remain quiet

If evacuation and hiding out are not possible:

- Remain calm
- Dial 911, if possible, to alert police to the active shooter's location
- If you cannot speak, leave the line open and allow the dispatcher to listen

3. Act against the active shooter

As a last resort, and only when your life is in imminent danger, attempt to disrupt and or incapacitate the active shooter by:

- Acting as aggressively as possible against him or her
- Throwing items and improvising weapons
- Yelling
- Committing to your actions

For more information, please visit the dhs.gov. The above steps have been taken from dhs.gov from "Active Shooter: How to Respond".

PARKING / PARKING LOT SAFETY

CVCOG provides reasonable parking for our employees. The handicapped parking places and the first-row parking spaces nearest the front door are all reserved for guests and business visitors. Please do not park in the first row of parking spaces. The remaining rows of parking spaces are for our employees. Please, take advantage of this area to maximize convenience for our guests and business visitors.

For the safety of clients and employees, the parking lot speed limit is 10 MPH. Always look before backing out of a spot, and watch for others who are trying to back out as well.

When suspicious persons are observed loitering around the parking lot or building, employees should contact their supervisor or HR. If suspicious persons are observed near parked vehicles, try to obtain the license number as well as the make and color of the vehicle before contacting a supervisor or HR.

CVCOG assumes no liability or responsibility for damage or theft to your vehicle while it is parked on Council of Government premises.

DRIVING SAFETY

The safety and well-being of our clients is of critical importance to our organization. We each have a responsibility to protect, not only ourselves when on the road, but also to do our part to protect those around us. If you are required to drive on CVCOG business at any time, you are expected to consistently apply and follow all the procedures below:

- Employees are expected to wear seat belts at all times while in a moving vehicle being used for CVCOG business, whether they are the driver or a passenger.
- Although use of cell phones under any circumstances is strongly discouraged while driving, the use of hands-free technology may be warranted in unusual or emergency circumstances.
- Use of handheld cell phones, whether personal or business-owned, while behind the wheel of a moving vehicle being used on CVCOG business is strictly prohibited.
- Engaging in other distracting activities including, but not limited to, eating, putting on makeup, reading or changing radio stations or music, is also strongly discouraged while driving, even when in slow-moving traffic.

- Use of alcohol, drugs or other substances, including certain over-the-counter cold or allergy medications that in any way impair driving ability, is strictly prohibited.
- All employees are expected to follow all driving laws and safety rules such as adherence to posted speed limits and directional signs, use of turn signals and avoidance of confrontational or offensive behavior while driving.
- Employees should never allow anyone to ride in any part of the vehicle not specifically intended for passenger use and/or any seat that does not include a working seat belt.
- Employees who drive commercial vehicles or who are otherwise subject to separate rules and regulations such as those dictated by State or Federal law are also expected to adhere to all policies and regulations associated with the applicable law or regulation.
- Employees must promptly report any accidents to local law enforcement as well as to CVCOG in accordance with established procedures.
- Employees are expected to report any moving or parking violations received while driving on CVCOG business and/or in CVCOG vehicles, personally owned vehicles, and rental vehicles.

INCLEMENT WEATHER PLAN

CVCOG will follow the same rulings as SAISD regarding delays or cancellation of services. If, SAISD is closed, then CVCOG offices will not be open. If SAISD is delayed, CVCOG services will start at the same time. This information can be obtained through local media and department supervisors will be responsible for notifying their staff of delays or closings. If flooding, wintry condition, etc. occur on a SAISD holiday, the decision to delay or close CVCOG services will be at the discretion of the CVCOG Executive Director.

Rural Head Start Employees will follow the School District in which their site is located.

We do want to ensure the safety of CVCOG employees. If you feel it is unsafe to travel to work, or you have questions, please contact your supervisor.

DISASTER PLANNING

Emergencies can occur anytime-anywhere. Violence can happen even in an environment dedicated to children and families. We must ensure that our staff, children and families are prepared to effectively handle a wide range of dangerous situations to continue to provide a safe environment where learning a can occur.

A comprehensive Emergency Response Plan has been created for each Head Start site and all staff members will be trained in order to effectively respond during emergencies. In any emergency situation, the Head Start / Early Head Start program's overriding mission is to:

- a. Protect life.
- b. Secure the facilities and infrastructure.
- c. Resume program operations.

The Emergency Response Plan will provide step-by-step guidelines to help deal with emergencies that may occur; however, this plan cannot foresee all possible circumstances of an emergency. Staff must be prepared to evaluate all the circumstances and make sound judgments based on the situation.

Each classroom will be supplied with a classroom Emergency Response Procedures Guide; section IV of this plan that provides instructions on how to respond to specific events as determined by the site emergency planning committee.

When an emergency condition exists, Site Supervisor will notify the necessary personnel to respond to their area of assignment. The methods of communication listed below in descending order will be used with “a” being the primary mode of communication followed by alternative modes.

- a. Telephone
- b. Messenger

In the event of an emergency all staff persons are to assume responsibility for the following actions:

1. Initiation of steps to safeguard the children, staff and property
2. Notification of authorities and center staff
3. Initiation of steps to mitigate or contain the situation
4. Implementation of evacuation procedures

When emergency conditions are stabilized and normal program operations can resume, the Head Start / Early Head Start Director will deactivate the Crisis / Emergency Plan. A formal announcement will be disseminated.

Immediately following the end of an emergency or crisis, a survey of the Emergency Team members and involved staff will be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the response.

**This handbook was originally adopted on October 1, 2008. This version supersedes all previous versions and has been revised on the following dates: October 1, 2008, January 1, 2010, January 16, 2013, September 2, 2015, September 9, 2016, August 15, 2017, September 1, 2018, October 1, 2020, September 15, 2021, November 9, 2022, March 15, 2023. CVCOG Handbook and Head Start Handbook Addendum combined and continued forward on August 9, 2023*