

Greetings!

We are pleased to introduce the December 2017-revised edition of **PARISH & SCHOOL EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK GUIDE**. Whether developing an employee personnel handbook for the first time, or revising a current edition, this publication will assist in your efforts.

The Archdiocesan Pastoral Council first discussed the need for parishes/schools to establish written personnel guidelines for employees in 1990. Since then, many parishes/schools have developed employee handbooks for their employees. Keeping these publications current, as the laws and business trends require, can be a daunting task. This publication will be a resource to assist in this endeavor.

This manual is arranged to make it easy for a parish/school to design or revise its own Parish/School Personnel Handbook. This manual will lead you step by step through the various recommended sections for the handbook.

The manual consists of sections:

- Template Handbook  
*Sample wording for each section. In most cases, the parish/school could insert this exact wording into its own handbook. Blanks will be provided in those areas where the parish/school must decide on its own policy requirements.*
- Analysis  
The analysis pages give background and alternatives for the wording in the model handbook section. It will present legal considerations, suggested inserts, or rationale for including the policy in the parish/school's handbook. This section will also serve as a resource if problems develop over a particular policy.
- Resources
- Index

Retention and recruitment of individuals is vital to the life of any organization. Having clear, consistent policies and practices, rooted in justice, sends the message to employees that their work and ministry within the Church is respected. The lack of written guidelines can cause confusion and lead to conflict and turmoil within a parish/school staff. Our busy days are better spent working to accomplish the mission of the parish/school than resolving disputes over who gets more vacation time!

Since this is an on-line publication, revisions will be made from time to time to keep it current. Please let us know if you spot sections that do not adequately address your needs or fail to provide clear direction. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

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# Introduction

## **What is the purpose of this manual?**

This manual is designed to help the Pastor, Parish Director, Personnel Committee and other parish/school leaders create and maintain a Parish/School Personnel Handbook for employees. The first part of the manual offers policy that may be selected for the parish/school's handbook. The second part of this manual offers an Analysis section to understand the thought process and/or logic associated with each policy. Finally, there is an Index to help locate topics quicker with a Resource section to learn more on specific laws and specific Archdiocesan policies.

## **To whom is the manual designed ?**

This manual depicts the breathe and depth of having paid staff. As the demands on the Pastor/Parish Director continue to grow, it is unrealistic to expect the Pastor/Parish Director to do it all. The Pastor/Parish Director should have a working knowledge of personnel policies and practices in the parish/school and other staff and parishioners with employment expertise may be called on for assistance.

In some parishes/schools, the Director of Administrative Services will play a key role in the development and implementation of these policies. In smaller parishes/schools, it is highly recommended that a Personnel Committee be formed. This committee can be the main resource on matters of personnel and employment.

The field of employment law is becoming more complicated every year. Having a group of informed and knowledgeable people serving on a Personnel Committee will be invaluable. Employees know their employment rights and will rightly exercise them, if needed. Pastors/Parish Directors also must know what rights exist for employees under Canon Law to avoid employee appeals to the Tribunal Court of Equity.

## **Why develop a Parish/School Personnel Handbook?**

Whether the parish/school is large or small, employs full-time staff or only several part-time employees, a Parish/School Personnel Handbook is a reference tool that defines and directs a course of action as an employment situation arises. Employees will appreciate the fact that policies are not created on the spot and are not inconsistently administered.

An employee handbook is a good start to a new employee's orientation because it lays out a framework of policies and practices that can be discussed with the new employee on the first day of work. Thereafter, it provides a resource for an employee to discover for him/herself how a particular policy or practice will apply to their situation.

\*Written personnel policies also help by:

- Establishing well-balanced approaches to typical employee concerns about workplace fairness.
- Informing employees about their rights, privileges and obligations.
- Focusing employee energy on the work to be done, thus maximizing output in spite of facing more demands and fewer resources.
- Operating consistently and within the framework of the many laws that govern the workplace.
- Informing supervisors of the proper way to address ongoing workplace concerns.
- Facilitating the development of just and humane work practices envisioned in the Church's teaching.

\*(Source: NACPA "Personnel Policies and Procedures, 1994)

### **Where to begin and end?**

If your parish/school has not had an employee handbook before, the following steps may be helpful in beginning the task:

Inform the Pastoral Council and the Personnel Committee of the need for formulation of an employee handbook. Ask the Personnel Committee, with the Pastoral Council's blessing, to begin the process of drafting a handbook using the Model Handbook section of this Manual as a guide.

The committee should research and inventory existing policies and practices relating to personnel in the parish/school. This would include specific formal or informal policies, listings of benefits offered, outdated employee handbooks, etc. If the parish/school is merging with another parish/school, drafting a comparison sheet of the policies and benefits of each parish/school may be useful.

The parish handbook maybe the same as the school handbook. If different, there should be consistency between the parish and school handbook wherever possible, and any differences should be noted (i.e. no vacation provided for school faculty positions). When schools are an extension of the parish most policies should apply for all employees except where noted. When developing school personnel policies in conjunction with the school principal, the Archdiocesan School's "Parish and School Policy Manual" should be used.

Once the Personnel Committee has compiled a rough draft of the handbook, have an outside third party review it for completeness and clarity. The Office for Parish and School Personnel at the Archdiocese of Milwaukee will assist with this review. It is important that the tone of the handbook reflect who we are, a Catholic, religious institution. Handbook language that is too "corporate" in its style is not well received by Church employees.

Have the draft of the handbook circulated internally to several parish/school employees and parish/school leaders. Find out if there are any "hot button" issues that need to be re-examined.

Send the draft of the handbook to legal counsel for review. Make sure the legal counsel selected works in Employment Law. Revise as necessary.

Have the Personnel Committee present the final draft of the handbook to the Pastoral Council. They should ask the Council to review the handbook, and if anything seems unclear or incomplete, to send their written comments to the chair of the Personnel Committee. The Personnel Committee will consider and address the written comments. The Council will be asked to approve in total the use of the completed handbook. The Council should not be permitted to "line-item" the handbook, as this undermines the work of the Personnel Committee.

Present to each employee his/her copy of the employee handbook. Have each employee sign and date a written Disclaimer & Acknowledgement of Receipt of Handbook indicating they have received the handbook. If he/she has any questions about any aspect of the handbook, he/she can contact their supervisor for more information.

Set a date for the next review of the handbook by the Personnel Committee. The life of an employee handbook is generally two to three years. Changes within this time period are normally made as required by law or as appropriate based on the changing needs of the parish/school.