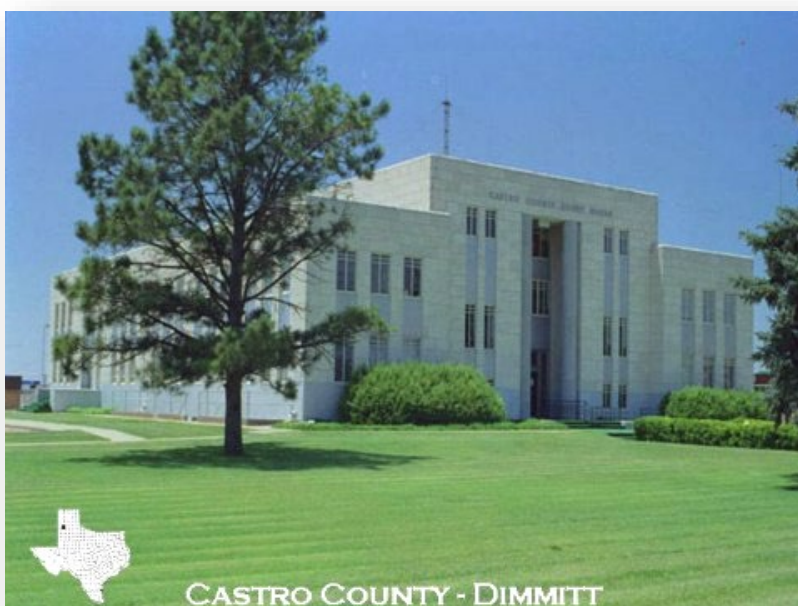


CASTRO COUNTY



EMPLOYEE POLICY HANDBOOK

Adopted by Castro County Commissioners Court
Effective as Amended August 11, 2025

CASTRO COUNTY

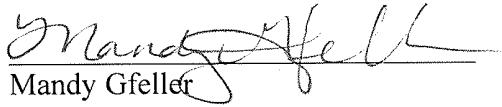
ORDER OF THE COMMISSIONERS COURT

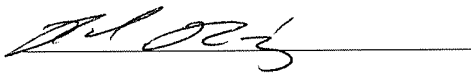
WHEREAS, the Castro County Commissioners Court desires to provide the employees of Castro County with a uniform format for educating themselves regarding various employment-related issues; and

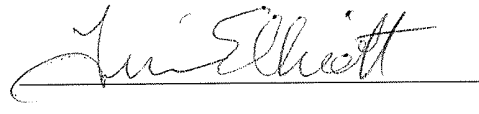
WHEREAS, the Castro County Commissioners Court wishes to adequately and clearly communicate to employees the policies and procedures of the County:

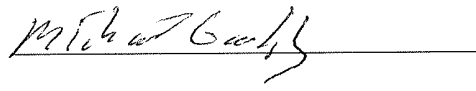
THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Castro County Commissioners Court does hereby approve and adopt the CASTRO COUNTY EMPLOYEE POLICY HANDBOOK, as modified and approved by the Court on this day.

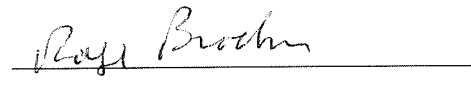
ADOPTED THIS, the 11th day of August, 2025.


Mandy Gfeller
County Judge



Commissioner, Pct. 1


Commissioner, Pct. 2


Commissioner, Pct. 3


Commissioner, Pct.

Witnessed and Attested by:


Amanda Fisher
Castro County Clerk

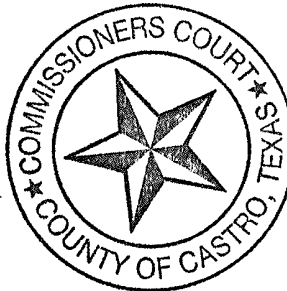


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EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I have received a copy of the Castro County Employee Handbook that outlines my benefits and obligations as a County employee. I understand that I am responsible for reading and familiarizing myself with the information in this handbook and understand that it contains general personnel policies of the County. If I need clarification on any of the information in this handbook, I will contact my immediate supervisor.

I further understand that the Castro County Employee Handbook is not a contract of employment. I understand that I am an at-will employee and that either the County or I may terminate my employment at any time, with or without cause, and with or without notice.

I understand that this employee handbook is intended to provide guidance in understanding Castro County's policies, practices and benefits. I understand that Castro County retains the right to change this handbook at any time, and to modify or cancel any of its employee benefits when the need for change is recognized.

I understand as a County employee, I shall have no expectation of privacy when using county computers, networks, or other county owned equipment. Improper use may result in discipline up to and including termination.

I further understand that as a Castro County employee, I am expected to provide quality service to the public; to work towards the highest degree of safety possible for my fellow workers', to continually make suggestions for improvements, and to display a spirit of teamwork and cooperation.

I understand that I may be subject to reasonable suspicion or post-accident drug and alcohol testing. If I am required to have a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) for my county position, I will be subject to random, reasonable suspicion, post-accident and follow-up drug and alcohol testing.

I have read these policies and understand these policies and I agree to abide by and adhere to these policies.

Printed Name of Employee

Signature of Employee

Date Signed

GENERAL AUTHORITY & RESPONSIBILITY

1.01 AUTHORITY

- A. These policies are established by the Commissioners Court, the governing body of Castro County. Any deletions, amendments, revisions, or additions to the policies must be approved by that body.
- B. These policies replace and supersede all Castro County general personnel policies previously adopted, individual or as a set of policies, by the Commissioners Court.
- C. Independently Elected or Appointed Officials may issue additional Departmental policies consistent with the policies of this Handbook.
- D. The County Treasurer is the designated Human Resources Director.

1.02 SEVERABILITY

The provisions of these personnel policies are severable, and if any provision or part of the provision is held invalid, illegal, or unenforceable, the validity of the remaining provisions or parts of provisions will remain in full force and effect.

1.03 IMPLEMENTATION AND RESPONSIBILITY OF POLICIES

- A. The Commissioners Court of Castro County, in coordination with Castro County Officials, is responsible for the formulation and administration of general personnel policies and procedures.
- B. County Departments may adopt, and issue to their employees, specific Departmental operations manuals. Departmental manuals shall be consistent with County policy and understanding and acceptance of each applicable Departmental policy will be acknowledged in writing by the employee.
- C. If an employee discovers an apparent inconsistency or unclear language in these policies, the employee is to immediately bring this to the attention of their Elected Official or Supervisor in writing.

1.04 SCOPE

- A. These personnel policies apply equally to all employees of the County. Elected and Appointed Officials are not considered employees of the County, except for administrative functions, such as payroll and benefits. Elected and Appointed Officials are encouraged to follow the general policies of the County.
- B. In cases where federal or state laws or regulations supersede local policy for specific groups of employees, such laws or regulations will substitute for these personnel policies only in so far as necessary for compliance.

1.05 POLICY DISSEMINATION

- A. The Commissioners Court maintains the official set of personnel policies with all revisions for reference for employees. Each employee will be given a copy of the most current Handbook on their first day of employment. Copies of amendments, revisions, or newly-issued policies will be provided to employees by the County Treasurer. In addition, each Department will maintain a current Handbook in its office. Notwithstanding any policy to the contrary, if a question arises about a particular policy, the official set of policies maintained by the Commissioners Court will control.

- B. Every employee is required to sign an Acknowledgment of Receipt of the Employee Handbook. Employees are responsible for reading and complying with all County and Departmental policies.
- C. Every employee is required to sign an Acknowledgment of Privacy and Confidentiality Policies. Employees are responsible for reading, educating themselves, and complying with applicable privacy/confidentiality rules, laws, guidelines, regulations, and policies of the Department for which the employee works.

1.06 POLICY REVISION

The Policy Handbook will be revised as needed. Revisions will be distributed through payroll inserts. The most current version of the Employee Handbook is available in the County Treasurer's Office and on the County website. The County Treasurer will be responsible for distributing the revisions to elected officials with the acknowledgment form for distribution to employees.

COUNTY EMPLOYMENT

2.01 EMPLOYMENT AT WILL

- A. All employment with Castro County shall be considered "at will" employment
- B. No contract of employment shall exist between any individual and Castro County for any duration, either specified or unspecified.
- C. Castro County shall have the right to terminate the employment of any employee for any legal reason, or no reason, at any time either with or without notice.
- D. Castro County shall also have the right to change any condition, benefit, policy, or privilege of employment at any time, with or without notice.
- E. Employees of Castro County shall have the right to leave their employment with the County at any time, with or without notice.

POLICY ON EMPLOYMENT STATUS

A. FULL-TIME

- 1. A regular full-time employee shall be any employee in a position which has a normal work schedule of at least 30 hours per week. They are eligible for county health insurance and retirement benefits.

B. PART TIME

- 1. A regular part-time employee shall be any employee in a position which has a normal work schedule of less than 30 hours per week. All regular part-time employees must be placed on TCDRS retirement regardless of number of work hours per week.

C. TEMPORARY

- 1. A temporary employee shall be any employee who is hired into a position which is expected to last for some specific duration or until a specific project is completed.
- 2. Temporary employees may be either full-time or part-time, but are not entitled to any county benefits.

D. REGULAR

- 1. A regular employee shall be any employee hired into a position which is not considered to be temporary.
- 2. Regular employees may be either full-time or part-time.

E. EMPLOYMENT AT WILL

1. All employees are considered “at will” employees as defined in the **POLICY ON EMPLOYMENT AT WILL (2.01)** and employee status shall not be considered a contract of employment.

2.03 POLICY ON EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

A. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

1. Castro County is an equal opportunity employer. The county will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, including lesbian, gay, bi-sexual or transgender status, age, genetic information, pregnancy, veteran status, disability, or any other condition or status, protected by law in hiring, promotion, demotion, raises, termination, training, discipline, use of employee facilities or programs, or any other benefit, condition, or privilege of employment except where required by state or federal law or where a bona fide occupational qualification exists. If an employee needs an accommodation as a result of a condition or status protected by law, please advise your elected official, appointed official, or depart

B. REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

1. The County shall make reasonable accommodation for the otherwise qualified disabled individuals to afford them the same opportunities for employment and all other benefits and privileges of employment afforded to non-disabled individuals.
2. Reasonable accommodation shall be determined through consultation with the disabled individual and, where deemed necessary, through consultation with outside resources.

2.04 AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT AMENDMENTS ACT

1. It is the policy of Castro County to prohibit any harassment of, or discriminatory treatment of employees based on a disability or because an employee has requested a reasonable accommodation. If an employee feels they have been subject to such treatment, or has witnessed such treatment, the situation should be reported to your elected official, appointed official, department head or the county attorney. All elected officials, appointed officials, department heads and employees with responsibilities requiring knowledge are instructed to treat the employee’s disability with confidentiality.
2. It is Castro County’s policy to reasonably accommodate qualified individuals with disabilities unless the accommodation would impose an undue hardship on the county. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended (ADAAA), reasonable accommodations may be provided to qualified individuals with disabilities when such accommodations are necessary to enable them to perform the essential functions of their jobs, or to enjoy the equal benefits and privileges of employment. This policy applies to all applicants for employment, and all employees. If you require accommodation, please contact your elected official, appointed official, or department head. Reasonable accommodation shall be determined through an interactive process of consultation.

2.05 PREGNANT WORKERS FAIRNESS ACT

1. It is the policy of Castro County to prohibit any harassment of, or discriminatory treatment of employees based on known limitations related to, affected by, or arising out of pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions or because an employee has

requested a reasonable accommodation. If an employee feels they have been subject to such treatment, or has witnessed such treatment, the situation should be reported to your elected official, appointed official, or department head. All elected officials, appointed officials, department heads, and employees with responsibilities requiring knowledge are instructed to treat the employee's limitation with confidentiality.

2. It is Castro County's policy to reasonably accommodate applicants and employees with known limitations related to, affected by, or arising out of pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions unless the accommodation would impose an undue hardship on the county. If you require an accommodation, please contact your elected official, appointed official, or department head. Reasonable accommodation shall be determined through an interactive process of consultation.

2.06 POLICY ON APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT

A. JOB ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Vacancies should be posted as soon as possible. Elected Officials should provide job descriptions and minimum qualifications required for each vacant position.
2. Each official having a job opening shall be responsible for determining the methods to be used to announce a job opening.

B. APPLICATION PROCEDURE

1. Before an individual can be considered to be an applicant for employment with Castro County, he/she shall be required to complete the steps outlined in the "Castro County Application Procedure".
2. Copies of the "Castro County Application Procedure" are available from the County Treasurer's Office and may be picked up at any time during the normal working hours for that office.

C. SELECTION

1. Each elected or appointed official, or his/her designee, shall be responsible for selecting the applicant whom he/she feels best meets the qualifications for an open position in his/her department.
2. After making a selection to fill an open position, the elected or appointed official in charge of the new employee's department shall present the new employee to the Commissioners Court for introduction.

D. DISQUALIFICATION

1. Reasons for which an applicant shall be disqualified for consideration for employment shall include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - A. The applicant does not meet the minimum qualifications necessary to perform the essential duties of the position for which he/she is applying;
 - B. The applicant has made a false statement on the application form or any other document related to or which has a bearing on the selection process;
 - C. The applicant has committed or attempted to commit a fraudulent act at any stage of the application process; or
 - D. The applicant is not legally permitted to hold the position.
 - E. The applicant was previously terminated for cause by any Castro County elected official, appointed official, or department head.

E. PERSONNEL FILES

1. The Castro County Treasurer will retain basic employee information in an individual personnel file. This file will include all pertinent employment documents such as

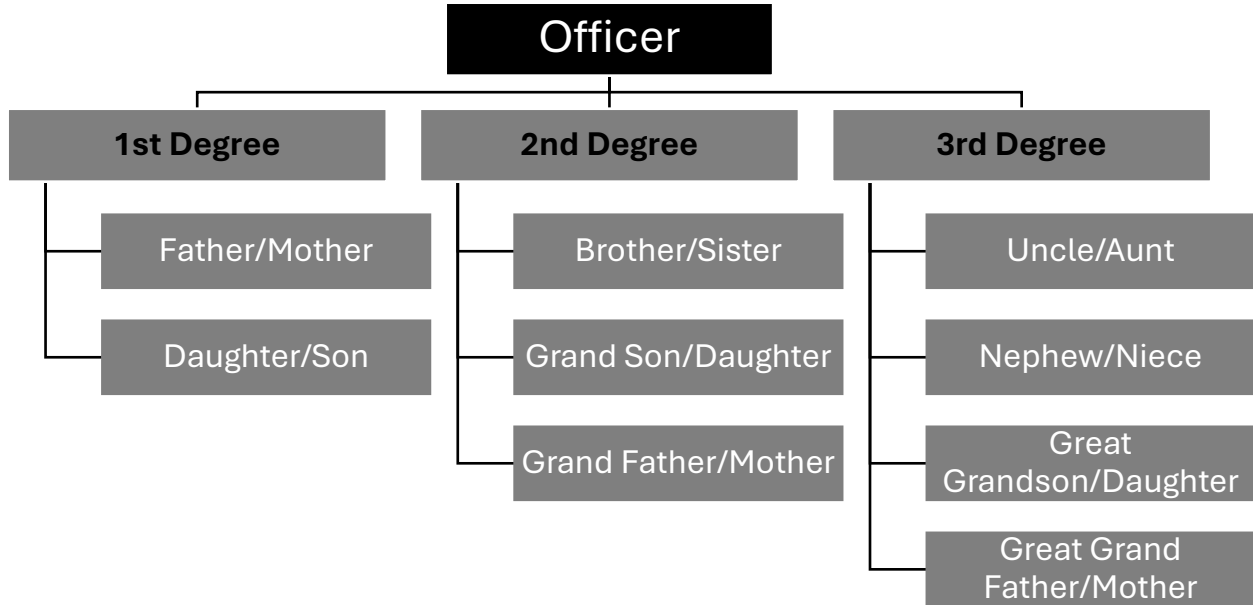
- resume, application, and cover letter as well as records concerning performance, discipline and compensation.
2. It is important that the personnel records of Castro County be accurate at all times. In order to avoid issues, compromising your benefit eligibility or having W2's returned, Castro County requests employees to promptly notify the appropriate personnel representative of any change in name, home address, telephone number, marital status, number of dependents, or of any other pertinent information.
 3. The Public Information Act allows county employees to keep their home addresses, home telephone numbers, social security numbers, emergency contact information, and information that reveals whether the employee has family members confidential. Employees may keep this information private by requesting in writing not to allow this information to be released to the public no later than 14 days after their first day of employment.

2.07 POLICY ON NEPOTISM

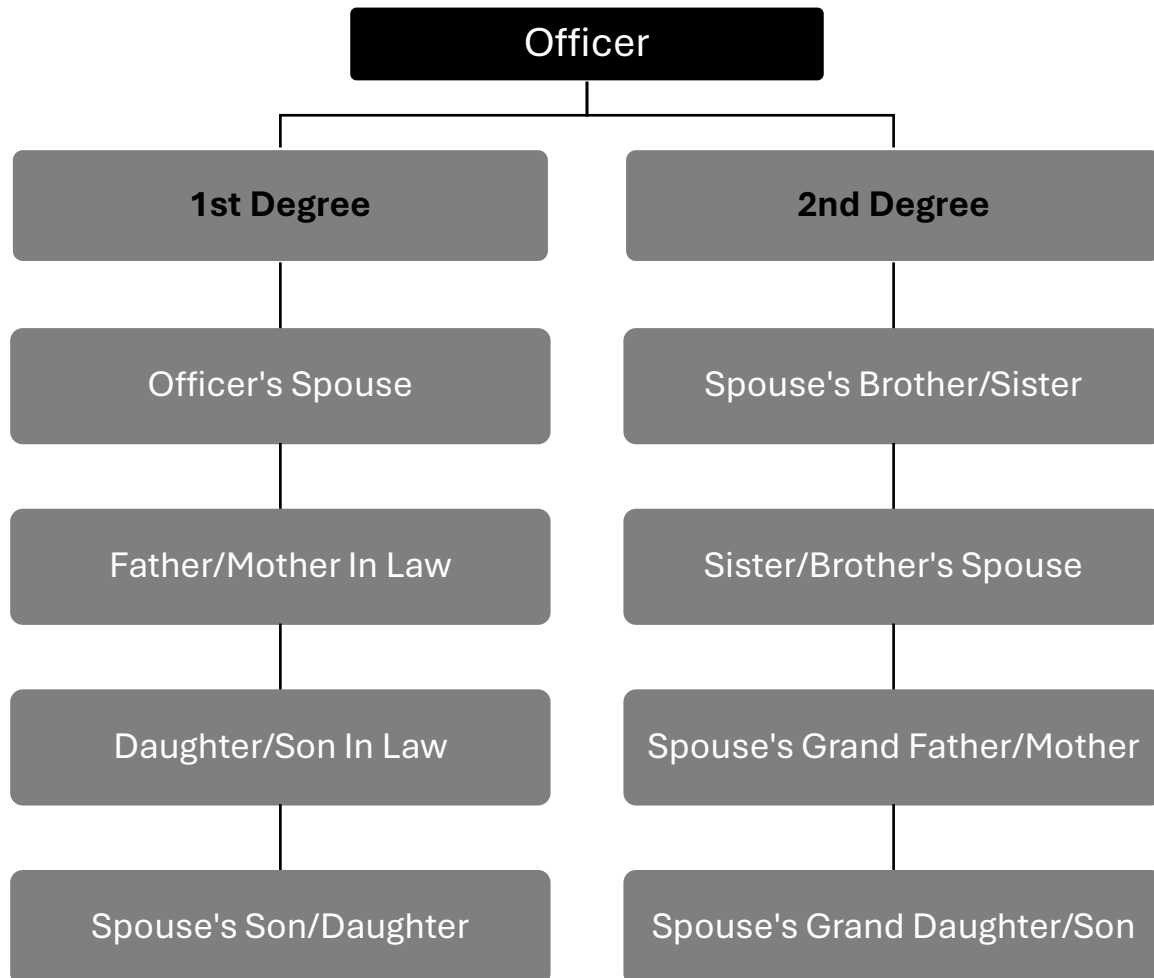
A. HIRING OF RELATIVES

1. In accordance with Texas Government Code Chapter 573, a Public Official of Castro County is prohibited from hiring a relative related within the third degree of consanguinity (blood) or within the second degree of affinity (marriage) to work in a department that they supervise or exercise control over.
2. Individuals related to a member of the Commissioners Court within the third degree of consanguinity, or the second degree of affinity are not eligible to be hired in any department of Castro County.
3. A degree of relationship is determined under Texas Government Code Chapter 573. (See the charts that follow.)

CONSANGUINITY KINSHIP CHART
(Relationship by Blood)



**AFFINITY KINSHIP CHART
(RELATIONSHIP BY MARRIAGE)**



WORK RULES AND EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITY

3.01 POLICY ON ATTENDANCE AND TIMELINES

A. ATTENDANCE

1. As a Castro County employee, you are expected to be punctual and demonstrate consistent attendance.
2. Each employee shall report to work on each day he or she is scheduled to work and at the starting time set by their supervisor unless prior approval for absence is given by the employee's supervisor or the employee is unable to report for work because of circumstances beyond the control of the employee.

B. TARDINESS

1. Each employee shall be at his or her place of work at the starting time set by his/her supervisor unless prior approval is given by the supervisor or the employee is unable to be at work on time for reasons beyond the control of the employee and the time is charged to the appropriate paid leave or to leave without pay.
2. Each employee shall remain on the job until the normal quitting time established by the supervisor unless permission to leave early is given by the supervisor and the time is charged to the appropriate paid leave or leave without pay.

C. NOTIFICATION

1. If an employee is unable to be at work at his/her normal reporting time, the employee shall be responsible for notifying his/her supervisor as soon as is reasonably practicable of the circumstances causing the tardiness or absence.

D. EXCUSED AND UNEXCUSED

1. Each supervisor shall be responsible for determining if an unscheduled absence or tardiness is to be classified as excused or unexcused, based on the circumstances causing the absence or tardiness.
2. Frequent unexcused absences or tardiness shall make an employee subject to disciplinary measures, up to and including termination of employment.

E. ABANDONMENT OF POSITION

1. An employee who does not report for work for three consecutive scheduled work days, and who fails to notify his or her supervisor, shall be considered to have resigned his/her position by abandonment.

3.02 DRESS CODE

Castro County expects all employees to be well groomed, clean, and neat at all times. Each official or department head will determine the type of attire that is acceptable. Employees are required to act in a professional manner at all times and extend the highest courtesy to co-workers and to the public being served. A cheerful and positive attitude is essential to our commitment to customer service.

3.03 TOBACCO/SMOKE FREE WORKPLACE

Castro County endeavors to provide a safe and healthy worksite and to promote the health and well-being of employees and visitors utilizing county facilities. Therefore, any form of tobacco or vaping consumed in all county-owned/leased facilities is strictly prohibited.

Additionally, no smoking is allowed within twenty-five (25) feet of the exterior entranceways of the Expo Building and the Castro County Courthouse.

Any employee who violates this policy shall be subject to disciplinary measures up to and including termination.

3.04 POLICY ON CONFLICT OF INTEREST

A. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

1. Employees of Castro County shall not engage in any employment, relationship, or activity which could be viewed as a conflict of interest because of the potential or appearance of affecting the employee's job efficiency, or which would reduce his/her ability to make objective decisions in regard to his/her work and responsibility as a County employee.
2. Employees involved in conflict of interest situations shall be subject to discipline, up to and including termination and these actions may have criminal consequences for employees.

B. PROHIBITED

1. Activities which constitute a conflict of interest shall include but not be limited to:
 - a. Soliciting, accepting, or agreeing to accept a financial benefit, gift, or favor, other than from the County, that might reasonably tend to influence the employee's performance of duties for the County or that the employee knows or should know is offered with the intent to influence the employee's performance;
 - b. Accepting employment, compensation, gifts, or favors that might reasonably tend to induce the employee to disclose confidential information acquired in the performance of official duties;
 - c. Accepting outside employment, compensation, gifts, or favors that might reasonably tend to impair independence of judgment in performance of duties for the County;
 - d. Making any personal investment that might reasonably be expected to create a substantial conflict between the employee's private interest and his or her duties for the County;
 - e. Soliciting, accepting, or agreeing to accept a financial benefit from another person in exchange for having performed duties as a County employee in favor of that person.

3.05 HARASSMENT

Castro County is committed to a workplace free of harassment. Harassment includes unlawful, unwelcome words, acts or displays based on sex, including lesbian, gay, bi-sexual or transgender status, sexual orientation or gender identity, race, color, religion, national origin, age, genetic information, pregnancy, disability, family or military leave status or veteran's status. Such conduct becomes harassment when (1) the submission to the conduct is made a condition of employment; (2) the submission to, or rejection of, the conduct is used as the basis for an employment decision; or (3) the conduct creates an offensive, intimidating or hostile working environment or interferes with work performance.

Harassment is strictly prohibited by Castro County whether committed by an elected official, appointed official, department head, co-worker or non-employee with whom the county does business.

Employees who feel they have been harassed should immediately report the situation to the elected official, appointed official or department head who is responsible for the department in which they work. If, for any reason, the employee feels that reporting the harassment to the official or department head may not be the best course of action, the report should be made to the County Judge or to the County Attorney.

Every reported complaint will be investigated promptly and thoroughly. While all claims of harassment shall be handled with discretion, there can be no complete assurance of full confidentiality. The official or department head to which a claim has been reported shall be responsible for seeing that prompt action is taken to investigate the claim.

Once the investigation is complete, the employee making the claim shall be notified of the result of the investigation and any actions which are to be taken.

Retaliation against an employee who reports harassment or who cooperates in the investigation is prohibited by law as well as this policy. Employees who feel they have been subjected to illegal retaliation should immediately report the situation to the elected official, appointed official, or department head who is responsible for the department in which they work. If, for any reason, the employee feels that reporting the retaliation to the official or department head may not be the best course of action, the report should be made to the County Judge or to the County Attorney.

Remedial action will be taken in accordance with the circumstances when the county determines unlawful harassment or retaliation has occurred, up to and including termination.

3.06 POLICY ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment is strictly prohibited by Castro County, whether committed by an elected official, an appointed official, a department head, a co-worker or a non-employee the county does business with.

A. POLICY

1. It shall be the policy of Castro County to provide a work place free from sexual harassment for all employees and to take active steps to eliminate any sexual harassment of which the County becomes aware.
2. Employees engaging in sexual harassment shall be subject to discipline, up to and including termination of employment.

B. DEFINITION

1. Sexual harassment shall include, but not be limited to, unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, which includes slurs, jokes, statements, gestures, touching, pictures, emails or cartoons, the creation of an unsolicited sexual atmosphere for subordinates or fellow employees due to the possession of or display of adult oriented material on county premises, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature where:
 - a. Submission to such conduct is either an expressed or implied condition of employment;
 - b. Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as a basis for an employment decision affecting the harassed person; or
 - c. The conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an affected person's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

C. CLAIMS

1. All claims of sexual harassment shall be taken seriously and investigated promptly and thoroughly.
2. While all claims of sexual harassment shall be handled with discretion, there can be no complete assurance of full confidentiality.
3. No retaliation or other adverse action shall be taken against an employee who, in good faith, files a claim of sexual harassment.

D. REPORTING

1. Employees who feel they have been sexually harassed should immediately report the situation to the elected, appointed official, or department head who is responsible for the department in which they work.
2. If, for any reason, the employee feels that reporting the harassment to the department head may not be the best course of action, the report should be made to the County Judge, or to the County Attorney.
3. The official or department head to whom a claim has been reported shall be responsible for seeing that prompt action is taken to investigate the claim.
4. Once the investigation is complete, the employee making the claim shall be notified of the result of the investigation and any actions which are to be taken.

E. RESOLUTION PROCEDURES

Use the following procedures so that your complaint may be resolved quickly and fairly.

1. When practical, confront the harasser and ask them to stop the unwanted behavior.
2. Record the time, place, and specifics of each incident, including any witnesses.
3. Report continuing sexual harassment to the elected or appointed official who is responsible for your department, or to the county judge or county attorney.
4. If a thorough investigation reveals that unlawful sexual harassment has occurred, Castro County will take effective remedial action in accordance with the circumstances, up to and including termination.

Retaliation against an employee who reports sexual harassment or who cooperates as a witness in the investigation is prohibited by law as well as by this policy.

Employees who feel they have been subjected to illegal retaliation should immediately report the situation to the elected official, appointed official or department head who is responsible for the department in which they work. If, for any reason, the employee feels that reporting the retaliation to the official or department head may not be the best course of action, the report should be made to the County Judge or to the County Attorney.

F. OTHER RIGHTS

1. Reporting or failing to report claims in accordance with the procedure given in this policy shall not limit other legal recourse an employee may have in regard to sexual harassment charges.

3.07 POLICY ON POLITICAL ACTIVITY

A. POLITICAL ACTIVITY

1. Employees of Castro County shall have the right to support candidates of their choice and to engage in political activity during their personal time.
2. County employees shall not:
 - a. Use their official authority or influence to interfere with or affect the result of any election or nomination for office;

- b. Directly or indirectly coerce, attempt to coerce, command, or advise another person to pay, lend, or contribute anything of value to a party, committee, organization, agency, or person for a political reason; or
- c. Use any equipment, property or material owned by the County for political activity or engage in political activity while on duty for the County.

3.08 CASTRO COUNTY BREAKS

A. REFERENCE

- 1. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act amended the Fair Labor Standards Act to require reasonable breaks for nursing mothers to express breast milk. The Texas Right to Express Breast Milk in the workplace Act also imposes duties on public employers and, under other state law, is applicable for the duration of a nursing mother's need to express breast milk. Castro County supports the practice of expressing breast milk.

B. LENGTH OF BREAKS

- 1. Castro County will provide reasonable breaks daily for a nursing mother to express breast milk. The nursing mother will be allowed whatever time is needed to express breast milk.

C. BREAKS LOCATION

- 1. The County will provide the nursing mother with a private location, other than a bathroom. The location will be shielded from view and free from intrusion and appropriate for expressing breast milk. The specific location will be determined on a case-by-case basis

D. RETALIATION

- 1. Castro County does not allow any retaliation against nursing mothers for asking for this break. Nursing mothers are entitled to this break for the duration of the time they are expressing breast milk. A reasonable accommodation will be given for the needs of employees who express breast milk. Any employees of the county who need to express breast milk may not be discriminated against.

E. OTHER BREAKS

- 1. All other employee breaks are determined by each official or department head and are not required to be given. If your department provides you with a break, they may not be accumulated or used for time off. The Fair Labor Standards Act does not require any breaks other than for nursing mothers; however, if paid breaks are provided for employees, nursing mothers must be given the same amount of paid break time.

3.09 POLICY ON GRIEVANCES

A. PROCEDURE

- 1. Any employee having a grievance related to his/her job should discuss the grievance with his/her immediate supervisor.
- 2. If the discussion with the immediate supervisor does not resolve the grievance, and, if the immediate supervisor is not the elected or appointed official with final responsibility for the employee's department, the employee shall have the right to discuss the grievance with that official.
- 3. The decision of the elected or appointed official with final responsibility for the employee's department shall be final in all grievances.

3.10 POLICY ON DISCIPLINE

A. DISCIPLINE

1. Each supervisor shall have the authority to administer discipline to employees in his/her department for poor performance, violation of policies, disruptive behavior, or any other behavior or activity which the supervisor feels is not acceptable as it relates to the employee's job or the best interest of the department or County

B. TYPES OF DISCIPLINE

1. Depending on the severity of the situation, discipline may range from informal counseling up to and including immediate termination.

C. AT WILL EMPLOYMENT

1. All County employees are "at will" employees and nothing in this policy gives an employee any contract of employment, guarantee of any duration of employment, or any other property interest in his/her job.
2. Castro County retains the right to terminate the employment of any individual at any time for any legal reason, or no reason, with or without notice. The County also retains the right to change any condition, benefit, privilege, or policy of employment at any time, with or without notice.

3.11 POLICY ON LICENSE AND CERTIFICATIONS

Castro County has many positions that require licenses and certifications. It is the responsibility of each employee to maintain all required licenses and certifications. If an employee is unable to renew or loses a license or certification, they must immediately notify their supervisor. If this license is a requirement for the position, the employee may be demoted, transferred or terminated. Under no circumstances will the employee be allowed to continue in the position where a license or certification is required if failure to have such license or certification is illegal under either Federal or State Law.

3.12 POLICY ON SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES COMPENSATION

A. WEATHER CLOSING AND EMERGENCIES

As a general practice, Castro County does not close its operations unless the health, safety, and security of county employees are seriously brought into question. When this happens, either because of severe weather conditions or other emergencies, the County Judge is responsible for initiating the closing.

The County Judge will notify the department heads/elected officials of any emergency closing. Announcements of an emergency closing will, to the extent possible, specify the starting and ending times of the closing. However, each elected official controls the working hours of their employees, even in an emergency situation.

Many county departments are continuous operating public safety and service departments. Many county personnel will be required to work during emergency closings. Each official or department head is responsible for designating their own employees and providing alternate information to personnel designated as essential during emergency closings. Public safety will be foremost in the development of departmental emergency action plans.

1. If an employee's department head instructs him/her to not report for work, or he/she is released from work early due to weather or another special emergency:
 - A. the employee will receive compensation for the regularly scheduled work hours at straight time after the time of release, up to the number of regularly scheduled hours, at the discretion of the department head/elected official.

2. If an employee was not scheduled to work at the location or at the time of the “grant for special circumstances,” he/she will receive no compensation under this provision.
3. Vacation carryover from the previous year
 - a. An employee may be required to work at the direction of his/her department head, due to special circumstances.
 - b. If the employee was scheduled for vacation at that time and cannot take it, he/she may be granted the missed vacation days at a later date, subject to approval of the department head.
 - c. These special granted vacation days will be reported on the timesheet as “grant for vacation missed,” followed by the year in which the days were earned.
4. Elected officials/department heads have final approval of the hours worked by employees. After he/she signs an employee’s timesheet, it cannot be altered in any way without the authorization of the elected official/department head.

B. SPECIAL POLICY FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT EMPLOYEES

1. The elected official/department head is the final approving authority on which employees will work or be released during a special circumstances (weather/special emergency) event.
2. Employees who work, despite the closure of offices in the courthouse, will receive compensation for regular straight time hours.
3. Law Enforcement Compensation for Special Circumstances
 - a. Law enforcement personnel are considered “essential personnel” and they must complete their assigned shifts for the efficient operation of the Sheriff’s Office.
 - b. Law enforcement personnel will receive pay for regular straight time hours worked during the special circumstances. Premium pay will be paid at one and one-half times from 80 to 86 hours. If they incur overtime, they will receive pay at one and one-half times the regular rate for time worked in excess of 86 hours in a two-week pay period.
 - c. Law enforcement personnel who are not scheduled for work during special circumstances will receive no pay.
 - d. Law enforcement personnel who are scheduled for vacation during special circumstances will receive only their vacation pay.

3.13 CONFIDENTIALITY

Castro County is a public entity; however, some county employees acquire confidential (confidential, non-public) information as a result of their position with the county. This information must be protected. Employees who reveal confidential (confidential, non-public) information they have received as a result of their position may be subject to discipline up to and including termination.

Regarding the personnel information on employees of Castro County; much of the information in an employee’s personnel file, including salary and job evaluations is subject to disclosure under the Public Information Act, however, highly personal matters are typically not subject to disclosure. The county will adhere to the Public Information Act requirements.

3.14 WHISTLEBLOWER

An employee may, in good faith, report an alleged violation of a Castro County Policy or federal or state law to their supervisor, department head, or County Treasurer, unless all of these persons are the alleged perpetrators of the alleged violation of policy or law. If all of the listed persons

are alleged to be involved in the violation, the employee may report the allegation to the County Attorney. The county will investigate the reported activity.

An official, supervisor, department director, or any other employee is prohibited from taking adverse employment action against an employee who, in good faith, reports an alleged violation of County policy or federal or state law to a designated person, pursuant to this policy.

An employee who intentionally makes a false report of wrongdoing may be subject to discipline up to and including termination.

An employee who, in good faith, believes they are being subjected to retaliation based on a report of alleged wrongdoing under this policy should immediately contact the County Treasurer, County Attorney and/or County Judge.

An employee with a question regarding this policy should contact the County Treasurer.

3.15 COUNTY PROPERTY

A. RESPONSIBILITY

1. Each County employee shall be responsible for the care, maintenance, proper use, and upkeep of any tool or other County equipment assigned to him/her.
2. County employees shall only use equipment, tools, and other County property that they are authorized to use.

B. PERSONAL USE

1. Personal use of County equipment, supplies, tools, and any other County property is not permitted and may result in discipline up to and including termination. Improper use may subject employees to criminal prosecution.

C. COUNTY VEHICLE USAGE

Some employees may be required to use county vehicles as part of their job. Employees who are assigned county vehicles shall be responsible for the care, maintenance, proper use and upkeep of these vehicles. Employees may only use the vehicles they are authorized to use. Employees may not allow other individuals to operate the vehicles they have been assigned.

1. A County employee who operates any County equipment or vehicle which requires a license shall be required to have a current active license for that vehicle or equipment any time he/she operates it.
2. Any employee who operates a vehicle or equipment which requires a license for legal operation shall notify his or her supervisor of any change in the status of that license.
3. An employee whose job involves operation of a vehicle or equipment requiring a license for its legal operation shall be subject to possible job change or termination if that license is suspended or revoked.
4. An employee whose job involves operation of a vehicle or equipment requiring a license for its legal operation, but who is deemed uninsurable by the County's vehicle insurance carrier even though the employee's license has not been revoked or suspended, shall be subject to possible job change or termination.

D. ACCIDENTS

1. Any employee involved in an accident while operating County equipment or vehicles shall immediately report the accident to his or her supervisor and to the proper law enforcement or other authority immediately.

2. A copy of all accident and incident reports prepared by the employee shall be sent to the supervisor and the County Judge.

3.16 POLICY ON ELECTRONIC FORMS OF COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA

A. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. Castro County provides access to electronic forms of communication and information exchange for the purposes of conducting county business.
2. The County encourages employees to use electronic forms of communications to be more efficient and effective because they are valuable sources of information for government related work.
3. This policy is intended as a guideline that expresses the county's philosophy. It sets forth general principles that can be used to govern the usage of county-owned electronic equipment.
4. Electronic equipment county-owned or leased:
 - a. Computers
 - b. Laptops
 - c. Tablets
 - d. Telephones
 - e. Printers/Copiers/Scanners
 - f. Email services
 - g. Fax machines
 - h. Internet access
5. This policy does not take precedence over state or federal laws or regulations.

B. PROHIBITED PRACTICES

1. County equipment must not knowingly be used for transmitting, retrieving, or storing any communications which are:
 - a. Discriminatory or harassing;
 - b. Derogatory toward any individual or group;
 - c. Obscene;
 - d. Defamatory or threatening;
 - e. For any other purpose which is illegal or against other county policies

C. PRIVACY

1. All use of electronic equipment by employees while at work is presumed to be work-related.
2. Employees have no expectation of privacy in their work-related conduct or the use of county-owned or county-provided equipment or supplies. Employees should not expect privacy in the use or content of electronic equipment.
3. As a general rule, electronic information created and/or communicated by employees using email, other computer applications, telephones, internet access, etc. are not monitored. However, the following conditions and exceptions apply:
 - a. County officials may routinely monitor usage patterns for voice and data communications for cost analysis, budget allocation, and traffic management to the extent allowed by law.
 - b. County officials are permitted to review an employee's electronic files, messages and usage to ensure that electronic equipment is being used in compliance with the law and the policy.

4. No email, fax or other electronic communication shall be sent which attempts to hide the identity of the sender or represent the sender as someone else.

D. UNACCEPTABLE

1. The following list is a non-exhaustive list of unacceptable uses of electronic equipment.
 - a. Use for personal profit.
 - b. Uses for purposes not directly related to the duties or responsibilities of the county before, during or after normal business hours except as approved in Commissioners Court.
 - c. Use to copy, retrieve, or forward copying with material (such as software, database files, documentation, music, etc.) unless the individual has the right to copy or distribute such material.
 - d. Attempt to penetrate, “hack” into other systems, and determine to “crack” logins or passwords, or otherwise breach computer or network security measures.
 - e. Development of software or programs to bypass computer security measures within the county systems or in other systems accessible to the county system.
 - f. Use of computers in a manner that is likely to cause network congestion or significantly hamper the ability
 - g. Intentionally seeking access to or copies of information, files or data that is confidential under federal, state or local laws, unless specifically authorized to do so.
 - h. Use of electronic equipment that violates federal, state or local laws.
 - i. Attachment or installation of private equipment or services for the express purpose of circumventing this policy.

E. SECURITY

1. It is the duty of each employee to secure all electronic equipment. Loss or theft of equipment should be reported to the responsible department head. When possible, information should be protected by passwords that are unique and not posted visibly. Employees must not seek others passwords or exchange passwords.

F. SOCIAL MEDIA

1. For purposes of this policy “social media” includes, but is not limited to, online forums, blogs and social networking sites, such as TikTok, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Instagram, etc. Castro County recognizes the importance of social media for its employees. However, use of social media by employees may become a problem if: it interferes with the employee’s work and/or position in the county; is used to harass supervisors, co-workers, customers or vendors; creates a hostile work environment; or harms the goodwill and reputation of Castro County among the community at large. Castro County encourages employees to use social media within the parameters of the following guidelines and in a way that does not produce the adverse consequences mentioned above.
2. Where no policy or guideline exists, employees are expected to use their best judgment and take the most prudent action possible. If you are uncertain about the appropriateness of a social media posting, check with your manager or supervisor.
 - a. If your posts on social media mention Castro County make clear that you are an employee of Castro County and that the views posted are yours alone and do not represent the views of Castro County.
 - b. Do not mention Castro County supervisors, employees, customers or vendors without their express consent.

- c. Do not pick fights. If you see a misrepresentation about Castro County, respond respectfully with factual information, not inflammatory comments.
- d. Remember, you are responsible for what you write or present on social media. You can be sued by other employees, supervisors, customers or vendors, and any individual that views your social media posts as defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing, libelous or creating a hostile work environment. Employees can be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination for what they post on social media platforms, even if the employee did not use a county computer or if the post did not occur during work hours or on county property.
- e. Employees may not use Castro County computer equipment for non-work-related activities without written permission. Social media activities should not interfere with your duties at work.
- f. You must comply with copyright laws and cite or reference sources accurately.
- g. Do not link to Castro County's website or post Castro County material on a social media site without written permission from your supervisor.
- h. All Castro County policies that regulate off-duty conduct apply to social media activity including, but not limited to, policies related to illegal harassment and code of conduct.
- i. Any confidential information that you obtained through your position at Castro County must be kept confidential and should not be discussed through in social media forum.
- j. Violation of this policy may lead to discipline up to and including the immediate termination of employment.

G. APPLICATIONS AND SERVICES PROHIBITED ON COUNTY DEVICES

Castro County prohibits the installation or use of the social media service TikTok or any successor application or service developed or provided by ByteDance Limited or an entity owned by ByteDance Limited; or a social media application or service specified by proclamation of the governor on any device owned or leased by Castro County and requires the removal of covered applications from those devices.

The installation and use of a covered application may be acceptable to the extent necessary for providing law enforcement; or developing or implementing information security measures. In order for the installation to be approved Castro County must require the use of measures to mitigate risks posed to this state during the use of the covered application, and the documentation of those measures.

3.17 CELLULAR TELEPHONE SAFETY/HANDHELD DEVICE USE

1. Castro County deeply values the safety and well-being of all employees. Due to the increasing number of crashes resulting from the use of cell phones while driving, the County strongly discourages the use of cellular telephones while employees are operating *any* vehicle. The use of handheld and hands-free cell phones and other electronic devices interferes with the safe performance of driving tasks.
2. Employees are prohibited from using handheld cell phones or electronic device to perform any action on the cell phone or electronic device that is not entirely hands-free, including, but not limited to, checking social media or emails, looking at websites, watching videos,

- reading, writing or sending text messages, or any other action that requires the use of the handheld device while operating a motor vehicle under any of the following circumstances:
- a. When an employee is operating a vehicle owned, leased, or rented by the County;
 - b. When the employee is operating a personal motor vehicle in connection with or while conducting County business; and
 - c. When the cellular telephone or mobile electronic device is County-owned or leased by the County, or when the County provides a stipend or other financial arrangement for the business use of a personal cell phone or mobile electronic device.
3. Employees should always do their best to plan to place and receive telephone calls either prior to traveling or while on rest breaks. If phone calls must be made or received while the employee is operating a motor vehicle, the employee must use hands-free technology.
 4. Federal law prohibits any holder of a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) who is operating any vehicle over 10,000 pounds GVWR from texting, with penalties and fines up to and including the loss of the person's CDL.
 5. Failure to abide by this policy may result in an employee being subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

3.18 POLICY ON WORKER'S COMPENSATION

A. ELIGIBILITY

1. All Castro County employees are covered by workers' compensation insurance while on duty for the county.

B. BENEFITS

1. Workers' compensation insurance pays for medical bills resulting from a covered injury or illness an employee incurs while carrying out the duties of his/her job.
2. Benefits will be paid to employees who are unable to work due to a covered job-related injury or illness specified in the county's current workers' compensation plan.
3. Workers' compensation also pays Temporary Income Benefits (TIBS) for time lost from work in excess of seven calendar days as the result of eligible work-related injuries or illnesses, with the exception of Law Enforcement employees who receive salary continuation.
4. Employees may use paid leave for all workers' compensation time off less than 8 days.
5. All employees who are placed on Worker's Compensation leave will fall under the Family Medical Leave Act. Castro County runs FMLA and Worker's Compensation concurrently.

C. ACCIDENT REPORTING

1. Any employee who suffers a job-related illness or injury shall be required to notify his/her supervisor immediately or as soon as practicable.
2. The supervisor shall be responsible for notifying the Treasurer's Office of any claims of a job-related injury or illness whether or not the supervisor feels the claim is valid.
3. Failure to promptly report job related injuries or illnesses may affect an employee's eligibility for benefits or delay benefit payments which.

D. PHYSICIAN'S RELEASE

1. An employee who has lost time because of a work-related accident or illness shall be required to provide a release from the attending physician before being allowed to return to work.

E. CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS

1. An employee's workers' compensation benefits may be adversely affected if the employee is injured while under the influence of alcohol or drugs or while the employee is engaging in horseplay.

3.19 RETURN TO WORK POLICY

A. POLICY OVERVIEW

1. This policy covers employees who are on leave due to a work-related injury or illness. Because employees are our most valuable resource, Castro County attempts to help employees return to work as soon as possible after their physician certifies their fitness to do so.

B. COORDINATION WITH ATTENDING PHYSICIAN

1. An employee on leave due to a work-related injury or illness can return to work only when Castro County receives the attending physician's written medical release authorizing such a return. The Castro County Treasurer's Office, in conjunction with the elected official, is responsible for providing the physician with a copy of the employee's job description, copies of job descriptions for potential modified duty assignments, and written information explaining Castro County's return-to-work program.

C. JOB DESCRIPTIONS

1. Each elected official is responsible for working with supervisors to ensure that job descriptions accurately and completely describe the essential functions of each position. Each elected official works with the Treasurer's Office and medical consultants to analyze any new modified duty position and develop a job description describing the essential functions of that position.

D. RETURN TO WORK OPTIONS

1. Arrangements to facilitate an employee's early return to work are made in consultation with the employee's attending physician and/or other qualified medical professionals retained by Castro County or its insurance carrier. The following options are explored:
 - a. **Return to prior position.** An employee is offered the opportunity to return to his or her prior position if the attending physician certifies that the employee can perform the essential functions of the job with or without reasonable accommodations. The Treasurer's Office is responsible for working with the employee's supervisor, the elected official and attending physician (and third-party consultants, as necessary) to provide any reasonable accommodation.
 - b. **Modified Duty.** Any employees who are not yet able to return to their former duties are offered (subject to the restrictions set out in Section 5 of this policy) a temporary modified duty assignment that has been approved by the employee's attending physician. The Treasurer's Office is responsible for working with the employee's supervisor, the elected officials, and the employee's attending physician to develop and implement the modified duty assignment. The assignment can consist of the employee's regular job with reduced working hours and/or activities, or an alternative modified duty position.

E. RESTRICTIONS ON MODIFIED DUTY ASSIGNMENTS

1. The following restrictions apply to modified duty assignments.
 - a. **No guarantee of work.** As provided in section 4 of this policy, Castro County must endeavor to return employees to gainful employment as soon as possible by

exploring possible modified duty assignments. However, Castro County does not guarantee the availability of modified duty work.

- b. **Pay rates and workers' compensation benefits.** Employees on modified duty are not guaranteed the rate of pay they received for the position they held at the time they sustained their work-related injury or illness. Employees receive temporary income benefits from workers' compensation to supplement this income to a pre-injury level. (Exception: Commissioned law enforcement officers are guaranteed 100% of salary by the State Constitution while incapacitated under Workers Compensation through the current term of the Sheriff, whether on modified duty assignment or not). The pay rate for a modified duty assignment is based on the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for the job as well as general market conditions. Employees who return to work in modified duty positions before they have reached maximum medical improvement are eligible for temporary partial disability benefits under Texas's workers compensation program if they earn less than they earned in the position held at the time they sustained the work-related accident or illness. Employees in modified duty positions are not permitted to supplement their workers compensation benefits by using their accrued vacation, sick leave or holidays.
- c. **Four (4) Week limit.** Modified duty assignments are temporary arrangements intended to complement and facilitate the healing process. Modified duty assignments may be initially offered for a period of four (4) weeks and then will be reviewed and evaluated by the supervisor based, in part, on the recommendation of the physician (unless FMLA time is still available).

F. EMPLOYEE REFUSAL OF WORK/TRAINING

1. In the event that an employee refuses to return to regular or modified duties in response to a written, bona fide offer of employment by Castro County, the employee may be separated from employment with Castro County subject to FMLA qualification and his/her position may be filled permanently. (NOTE: An exception to this rule applies in the case of employees who have not yet exhausted their FMLA leave entitlement. See Section 9). A written, bona fide offer of employment must clearly state:
 - a. The position offered and the duties of the position;
 - b. Castro County's agreement to meet the conditions set out by the treating doctor;
 - c. The job's wage, working hours, and location.

G. MEDICAL INFORMATION

1. All employee medical information is held in strict confidence in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA). Medical inquiries are limited to those permitted under Texas Workers' compensation statute and applicable federal law.

H. COORDINATION WITH FMLA (WHERE APPLICABLE)

1. Nothing in this policy should be construed as denying employees their rights under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) or any other federal or state law. It is Castro County's policy to designate an employee's leave due to a work related injury or illness as FMLA, if eligible. Castro County counts the period of any employee's modified-duty assignment toward the employee's FMLA entitlement.
2. Until employees have exhausted their twelve (12) week FMLA entitlement, they have the right to be reinstated to their original job or an equivalent job provided they are able to perform the essential functions of the job.

3.20 POLICY ON SAFETY

Castro County is committed to providing a safe workplace for our employees.

A. SAFETY STANDARDS

1. Each County employee shall be required to adhere to the general safety standards established for all employees and to all additional safety standards for their job or the department in which he/she works. Safety procedures may differ at each county department. Your supervisor will provide you with specific information pertaining to your position.

B. VIOLATIONS

1. Failure to follow the safety standards set by the County or your supervisor subjects an employee to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
2. An employee causing an accident resulting in major injury or death because of failure to follow safety standards shall be terminated.

C. REPORTING

1. Employees seeing unsafe working conditions shall either take steps to correct those conditions or report the unsafe conditions to the department head.

3.21 POLICY ON DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

A. PURPOSE

1. Castro County is a drug and alcohol-free workplace. A county employee may not be present at work during a period the employee's ability to perform their duties is impaired by drugs or alcohol.
2. The County believes that a drug and alcohol-free workplace to help ensure a safe and productive work setting for all employees.

B. APPLICABILITY

1. This policy shall apply to all employees of Castro County regardless of rank or position and shall include full-time, temporary, and part-time employees.
2. The only exception to this policy shall be the possession of controlled substances by law enforcement personnel as part of their law enforcement duties.

C. POLICY

1. The following shall be a violation of this policy:
 - a. The manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession, sale, purchase, or use of a controlled substance or drug paraphernalia on County property or while conducting County business not on County Property.
 - b. Being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while on County property or while on duty for the County.
 - c. The unauthorized possession or use of prescription or over-the-counter drugs while on County property or while on duty for the County.
 - d. The use of prescription or over-the-counter drugs, while on County property or while on duty for the County, in a manner other than that intended by the manufacturer or prescribed by a physician.

D. DEFINITIONS

1. **A controlled substance** shall include any substance listed in Schedules I-V of Section 202 of the Controlled Substance Act (21 U.S.C. S 812), as amended. (A copy of this information is available for review in the Treasurer's Office.)
2. **County property** shall include all County owned, rented, or leased real property such as buildings, land, parking lots etc. and property used by employees such as vehicles, lockers, desks, closets, storage areas, etc.

3. **Drugs** shall include any chemical substance that produces physical, mental, emotional, or behavioral change in the user.
4. **Drug paraphernalia** shall include equipment, a product, or material that is used or intended for use in concealing an illegal drug for use in injecting, ingesting, inhaling, or otherwise inducing into the human body an illegal drug or controlled substance.
5. **Illegal drug** shall include any drug or derivative thereof which the use, possession, sale, transfer, attempted sale or transfer, manufacture, or storage of is illegal or regulated under any federal, state, or local law or regulation and any other drug, including (but not limited to) a prescription drug, used for any other than a legitimate medical reason, and inhalants used illegally. Included is marijuana or cannabis in all forms.
6. **Under the influence** Castro County has a zero-tolerance policy.

E. POLICY VIOLATIONS

1. Any employee who violates this policy shall be subject to disciplinary measures up to and including termination.
2. Any employee who admits to illicit drug use may be terminated.

F. PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

1. Employees taking prescriptions medications shall be required to notify their supervisor of any possible effects the medication might have regarding their job performance and physical/mental capacity.
2. Any information concerning prescription medications being used by an employee, and any other medical information of which the supervisor becomes aware, shall be treated as confidential information.
3. Prescription medications used at work are to be kept in their original container.

G. TREATMENT

1. Employees having problems with drugs and alcohol are encouraged to seek treatment from qualified professionals.
2. Information on benefits provided for treatment of alcohol and drug problems through the County's medical insurance program is available in the employee's insurance coverage booklet or from the Treasurer's Office.
3. An employee who voluntarily asks for time off to get treatment and recover from a drug or alcohol abuse problem will be given protections as required by law. Upon returning to work from a bona fide inpatient treatment facility, the employee will be subjected to a volunteer drug testing program as often as monthly until there is evidence the employee no longer uses. Failure to comply with the requirements of the post rehabilitative program including refusing the volunteer testing program may result in termination. The post rehabilitative program will last for as long as two years. If at any time the employee tests positive or refuses the volunteer drug test during this post rehabilitative program the employee may be terminated.

H. SUSPICION-BASED TESTING (SUPERVISOR TRAINING REQUIRED)

1. Under the Influence of alcohol shall be defined as having a blood alcohol concentration of 0.04.
2. **Reasonable Suspicion** – If an employee is having work performance problems or displaying behavior that may be alcohol or drug related or is otherwise demonstrating conduct that may be in violation of this drug and alcohol policy where immediate action is necessary, the elected official or supervisor will require that employee to submit to alcohol or drug test. The following conditions might be signs of possible alcohol or drug use (not an all-inclusive list):
 - Abnormally dilated or constricted pupils

- Glazed stare – redness of eyes (sclera)
 - Flushed face
 - Change of speech (faster, slower, slurred)
 - Constant sniffing
 - Increased absences
 - Redness under nose
 - Sudden weight loss
 - Needle Marks
 - Change in personality (i.e. paranoia)
 - Increased appetite for sweets
 - Forgetfulness, performance faltering, poor concentration
 - Borrowing money from co-workers or seeking an advance of pay or other unusual display of need for money
 - Constant fatigue or hyperactivity
 - Smell of alcohol
 - Difficulty walking
 - Excessive, unexplained absences
 - Dulled mental processes
 - Slow reaction rate
3. Elected Officials or supervisors must take action if they have reason to believe one or more of the above listed conditions is indicated and that the substance abuse is affecting their employee's job performance or behavior. The following steps will be taken:
- a. Confront the employee involved and keep them under direct observation until the situation is resolved. Inform the employee of the problem with their job performance and specific violations of the County Policy.
 - b. If the supervisor believes, after observing or talking to the employee, that the conduct or performance problem could be due to substance abuse, the employee will be immediately required to submit to a drug or alcohol test. If the employee refuses to submit to testing for any reason, the employee may be terminated.
 - c. Employees will be asked to release any evidence, such as alcohol or drug paraphernalia, relating to the observation for further testing. Failure to comply may subject the employee to subsequent discipline, up to and including termination. All confiscated evidence will be receipted for with signatures of either the elected official or supervisor as well as the employee.
 - d. The elected official or supervisor will **remove** the employee from the county workstation and ensure that the employee is transported to an appropriate collection site and thereafter to the employee's residence. Under no circumstances will the employee be allowed to drive a vehicle until a confirmed negative test result is received.
 - e. The elected official or supervisor shall, within 24 hours or before the results of the controlled substance test are released, document the particular facts related to the behavior or performance problems and present such documentation to the Treasurer's Office for filing.

I. POST-ACCIDENT TESTING:

1. All employees directly involved in an on-the-job accident or incident resulting in property damage and/or medical treatment may be required to be tested. This will be at the discretion of their elected official or supervisor.
2. Testing Procedures –
 - a. The employee will be escorted and driven to the designated facility for specimen collection and/or testing.
 - b. The employee will be required to follow the drug testing protocol of the medical facility providing the testing.
 - c. If the employee desires another test to be given, they may do so within 2 hours of the specimen being collected and the same specimen will be used. The cost of this request will be paid for by the employee. All initial costs will be paid for by Castro County.
 - d. The employee will be placed on paid administrative leave until the results of the test are known. The elected official or supervisor will make arrangements to ensure that the employee is safely returned to their residence.
 - e. Under no circumstances, unless required or authorized by law, will alcohol or drug testing information be released without written consent from the employee.
3. Each employee is expected to cooperate and consent to a drug test when requested under the terms of this policy. Refusal to consent to a drug and/or alcohol test when requested is cause for termination.
4. Any employee who violates this drug and alcohol policy may be terminated.

3.22 DRUG AND ALCOHOL- CDL EMPLOYEES

CDL Drivers are an extremely valuable resource for Castro County's business. Their health and safety are a serious County concern. Drug or alcohol use may pose a serious threat to driver health and safety. It is, therefore, the policy of the County to prohibit CDL employees from being under the influence of or using illegal drugs or alcohol during working hours.

The Federal Highway Administration (“FHWA”) has issued regulations, which require the County to implement a controlled substance testing program. The County will comply with these. All CDL drivers are advised that remaining drug-free and medically qualified to drive are conditions of continued employment with the County.

Specifically, it is the policy of Castro County that the use, sale, purchase, transfer, possession or presence in one's system of any controlled substance (except medically prescribed drugs) or alcohol by any CDL driver while on County premises, engaged in County business, while operating County equipment, or while under the authority of the County is strictly prohibited. Mandatory testing must apply to every person who operates a commercial motor vehicle in interstate or intrastate commerce and is subject to the CDL licensing requirement. Castro County will conduct pre-employment, random, reasonable suspicion and post-accident drug testing in accordance with federal law.

It is the policy of Castro County to comply with the U.S. Department of Transportation, FMCSA Clearinghouse, a secure online database that provides employers with real-time information about CDL driver drug and alcohol program violations. Castro County will conduct electronic queries as required by FMCSA's drug and alcohol use testing program, for checking CDL driver violation histories. Drivers may view their own records. Employees will be required to provide a

consent form from the CDL holder to conduct both Limited and Specific inquiries. A detailed policy and procedure is available at the County Treasurer's office.

3.23 WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Castro County is committed to providing a workplace free of violence. Castro County will not tolerate or condone violence of any kind in the workplace. The county will also not tolerate or condone any threats of violence, direct or indirect, this includes jokes. All threats will be taken seriously and will be investigated. Employees must refrain from any conduct or comments that might make another employee suspicious or in fear for their safety. Employees are required to report all suspicious conduct or comments to their immediate supervisor. Employees should be aware of their surroundings at all times and report any suspicious behavior from the public, former employees or current employees to their immediate supervisor or the sheriff's department. No employee may possess a firearm or other weapon other than an authorized law enforcement official, with or without permits in all county offices and buildings owned or used by Castro County, this also includes county owned vehicles, unless prior permission has been provided. If employees believe that a person is violating this policy, they should immediately report to their immediate supervisor or the sheriff's department. Employees found in violation of this policy may be subject to discipline up to and including immediate termination.

3.24 POLICY ON USE OF SEAT BELTS

A. PURPOSE

1. This policy is intended to protect county employees operating or riding in motor vehicles, including construction equipment from the hazards of motor vehicle accidents.

B. APPLICABILITY

1. This policy is mandatory for all county employees operating motor vehicles and visitors riding on/in county owned vehicles. This includes all county employees operating county-owned vehicles, all employees operating personal vehicles while engaged in county business, and employees riding as a passenger in a vehicle while on county business.
2. Seat belts must be used in vehicles which come equipped with seat belts. Seat belts will not be removed from vehicles. All county-owned vehicles acquired after the effective date of this policy will be equipped with seat belts. This includes the vehicle cab or operator's compartment, passenger seating area and jump seats. Operators of tractors or other off-road vehicles with "Roll-Over Protection Structures" (ROPS) will use seat belts. Vehicle passengers will be permitted to ride only in areas of the vehicle designed for that purpose. Seat belts shall be used by all employees riding in a vehicle while the vehicle is in motion.

C. VIOLATIONS

1. Violation of this policy will result in disciplinary action by the department head.

D. DEVIATIONS

1. Employees who have a medical condition which may preclude wearing a seat belt may carry a physician's note indicating a waiver for medical reasons.

3.25 POLICY ON EMPLOYMENT PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS

1. Applicants and employees in all classifications (whether full time, part time, or temporary) may be required to successfully complete a physical examination. Each office will make necessary arrangements for the examination when required.

2. Where applicable, reasonable accommodations will be made for qualified persons with disabilities in accordance with the ADA.
3. Physical standards and requirements may vary in accordance with the duties and working conditions required for various employment positions. The recommendation of the examining medical provider shall determine the suitability of any persons for employment in a specific position.
4. The examining medical provider will complete an evaluation of the candidate/employee and forward a comprehensive report to the County Treasurer's Office, indicating a specific recommendation as to the suitability of the person for employment.

EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

4.01 FAIR LABOR STANDARDS ACT SAFE HARBOR

Castro County Commissioners Court annually sets the maximum compensation for each employee in accordance with Texas State Law. Castro County Commissioners Court has adopted a base pay schedule. Any new hire that qualifies for pay above base, the pay must be approved by the Commissioners Court

Castro County complies with the Fair Labor Standards Acts as outlined in the Fair Labor Standards Safe Harbor policy.

Law Enforcement personnel are treated in accordance with the 207(k) exemption under the Fair Labor Standards Act. The Commissioners Court has adopted this exemption. *(See 4.09 D)*

All non-exempt County employees shall be paid an hourly wage.

Temporary employees shall be paid an hourly rate at least the minimum wage established by the Fair Labor Standards Act, as amended.

In the event of a major disaster where the County Judge has issued a disaster declaration and it has been extended by the Commissioners Court, in order for the County to be reimbursed by FEMA, all salaried employees will be calculated in the same manner as hourly employees for the duration of the disaster incident and the disaster declaration is rescinded or allowed to expire.

Castro County makes every effort to pay its employees correctly. Occasionally, however, inadvertent mistakes can happen. When mistakes do happen and are called to the County Treasurers attention, Castro County will promptly make any corrections necessary. Please review your pay stub when you receive it to make sure it is correct. If you believe a mistake has occurred or if you have any questions, please use the reporting procedure outlined below. If you are overpaid the county will make the necessary corrections at the next payroll.

Employees who are classified as non-exempt employees must maintain an accurate record of the total hours you work each day. It is the responsibility of each employee to verify that their time clock reports are correct. Your time clock report must accurately reflect all regular and overtime hours worked; any absences, late arrivals, early departures, and meal breaks. Do not sign your time clock report if it is not accurate. When you receive each pay check, please verify immediately that you were paid correctly for all regular and overtime hours worked each work week.

Non-exempt employees, unless authorized by your supervisor, should not work any hours that are not authorized. Do not start work early, finish work late, work during a meal break, or perform any other extra or overtime work unless you are authorized to do so. Time worked is to be recorded in your time clock app. Employees are prohibited from performing any "off-the-clock" work. "Off-the-clock" work means work you may perform but fail to report on your time card. Any employee who fails to report or inaccurately reports any hours worked will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. If anyone directs you to work without documenting your time worked, you must report this to the County Treasurer.

It is a violation of Castro County policy for any employee to falsify a timecard, or to alter another employee's timecard. It is also a serious violation of County policy for any employee, supervisor, or official to instruct another employee to incorrectly or falsely report hours worked, or to alter another employee's timecard to under- or over-report hours worked. If anyone instructs you to (1) incorrectly or falsely report your hours worked, or (2) alter another employee's time records to inaccurately or falsely report that employee's hours worked, you should report it immediately to the County Treasurer, 114 S. Broadway, Dimmitt, Texas, (806) 647-5534.

If you are classified as an exempt salaried employee, you will receive a salary which is intended to compensate you for all hours worked for the County. This salary will be established at the time of hire or when you become classified as an exempt employee. While it may be subject to review and modification from time to time, the salary will be a pre-determined amount that will not be subject to deductions for variations in the quantity or quality of the work you perform. For exempt employees, your salary may also be reduced for certain types of deductions such as your portion of health, dental or life premiums; state, federal or local taxes, social security, retirement; or, voluntary contributions to a deferred compensation plan. In any workweek in which you performed any work, your wages may be reduced for any of the following reasons: 1) absence from work for one or more full days for personal reasons, other than sickness or disability; or 2) full day disciplinary suspensions for infractions of our written policies and procedures; or 3) full day for violating safety rules of a major significance; or 4) Family and Medical Leave or Military Leave absences; or 5) to offset amounts received as payment for jury and witness fees or military pay; or 6) the first or last week of employment in the event you work less than a full week.

If you are an exempt employee, in any workweek in which you performed any work, your salary will not be reduced for any of the following reasons: 1) partial day absences for personal reasons, sickness or disability; or 2) your absence because the facility is closed on a scheduled work day; or 3) your absence because of the County's operating requirements; or 4) absences for jury duty, attendance as a witness, or military leave in any week in which you have performed any work; or 5) any other deductions prohibited by state or federal law.

Please note: it is not an improper deduction to reduce an employee's accrued vacation, personal or other forms of paid time off for full or partial day absences for personal reasons, sickness or disability.

If you have questions about deductions from your pay, please immediately contact your supervisor. If you believe you have been subject to any improper deductions or your pay does not accurately reflect your hours worked, you should immediately report the matter to the County Treasurer, 114 S. Broadway, Dimmitt, Texas, (806) 647-5534. If you are unsure of who to contact or if you have not received a satisfactory response within five business days after reporting the incident, please immediately contact the County Attorney 100 E. Bedford, Dimmitt, Texas, (806) 647-4445. Every report will be fully investigated and corrective action will be taken where appropriate, up to and including discharge for any employee(s) who violates this policy. In addition, the County will not allow any form of retaliation against individuals who report alleged violations of this policy or who cooperate in the County's investigation of such reports. Retaliation is unacceptable, and any form of retaliation in violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

4.02 POLICY ON PAY PERIODS AND TIME CLOCK RECORDS in effect October 1, 2025

A. PAY PERIOD

1. Castro County pays employees bi-weekly with direct deposit payments being made every other Friday. In the event that a payday falls on a bank holiday then payroll will be made available on the preceding bank business day. A payroll schedule for each new calendar year will be distributed to employees prior to start of calendar year by the Treasurer's office.

B. TIME RECORDS

1. **Purpose:** This policy establishes the procedures for accurately tracking employee work hours and ensuring compliance with federal, state, and county timekeeping standards.
2. **Applicability:** This policy applies to all Castro County employees, including Sheriff Deputies, Office Staff, Custodial, and Road & Bridge personnel.
3. **Timekeeping Methods**
 - a. **Sheriff Deputies:** Deputies are required to clock in and out using their county-issued cell phones via the approved timekeeping application. Deputies must clock in when they begin their official duties and clock out at the conclusion of their shift. In emergency situations, deputies are permitted to record their time once the emergency has been resolved
 - b. **Road and Bridge Personnel:** Road and Bridge employees will complete **written time sheets**, which must be accurately completed each day and submitted to their supervisor at the end of each work week. The time sheets will be reviewed and approved by the supervisor prior to payroll processing.
 - c. **All Other Employees:** Office, Jail, Dispatch, Custodial, and all other staff will clock in and out using either a computer workstation, or the iPad stationed at the east entrance of the County Courthouse.
4. **Clock-In/Clock-Out Requirements**
 - a. Employees must **clock in when they begin their assigned duties and clock out when duties end.**
 - b. A **5-minute grace period** is allowed at the start and end of shifts.
 - c. Failure to clock in or out must be reported to a supervisor **as soon as possible** for correction.
5. **Time Off and Leave**
 - a. All paid and unpaid leave (vacation, sick leave, holidays, etc.) must be recorded in the timekeeping system. Leave entries will be reviewed and approved by the supervisor or official.
6. **Corrections and Missed Entries**
 - a. Employees are responsible for reporting any missed or incorrect clock-ins or clock-outs to their immediate supervisor. Supervisors must verify and make corrections.
7. **Enforcement and Discipline**
 - a. Accurate timekeeping is a condition of employment. **Repeated failure to comply** with clocking procedures, **falsification of time records**, or attempts to manipulate the system are **grounds for termination**. All disciplinary actions will follow county personnel policies.
8. **Oversight and Payroll Processing**

- a. The **County Treasurer** is responsible for overseeing and auditing time records for all departments. All payroll is processed using the county's authorized timekeeping and payroll software.
- b. The department head must approve and submit all time clock reports to the Treasurer's Office by 10:00am Monday

C. PAY ADVANCES

1. Advances in pay shall not be made to any employee for any reason.

4.03 POLICY ON COMPENSATION

A. APPLICATION

1. This policy shall apply to all County employees.

B. TEMPORARY

1. Temporary employees shall be paid on an hourly basis at the hourly rate established by the Commissioners Court for the position in which they are employed.

C. NEW EMPLOYEES

1. Castro County Commissioners Court annually sets the maximum compensation for each employee in accordance with Texas State Law. Castro County Commissioners Court has adopted a base pay schedule. Any new hire that qualifies for a pay rate that exceeds the base pay must have that pay approved by the Commissioners Court.
2. Newly hired employees have a six-month provisional period. The first few months of employment are a time of evaluation for both the employee and the employer. All employment with Castro County is considered "at will," this includes during the provisional period as well as after the provisional period is completed.

4.04 POLICY ON LONGEVITY PAY

A. ELIGIBILITY

1. All regular full-time employees shall be eligible for the Longevity pay benefit.

B. AMOUNT

1. Longevity pay shall equal \$10.00 per month for each complete full year of employment. (Example: After an employee completes the initial three years of employment in an eligible position, the longevity pay for the next 12 months shall be \$360.00 based on 36 months at \$10.00 per month). The

C. BREAK IN SERVICE

1. An individual returning to County employment after a break in service shall be considered a new employee in regard to longevity pay and will not receive longevity for past employment with Castro County.

D. PAYMENT

1. Longevity pay will be paid monthly after an employee has worked for three full years. Such payment will start at the beginning of the next fiscal year (October 1) after being a full-time employee for three full years.
2. Compensation for longevity pay will be in addition to employees' regular hourly pay.

4.05 POLICY ON PAYROLL DEDUCTIONS

A. REQUIRED DEDUCTIONS

1. Deductions shall be made from each employee's paycheck for federal withholding, Social, Security, Medicare, and any other deductions required by law.

B. RETIREMENT

1. Employees eligible for membership in the Texas County and District Retirement System shall have their contributions to that system deducted from the gross amount of each paycheck.

C. OPTIONAL DEDUCTIONS

1. Any optional deductions authorized by the Commissioners Court and approved by the employee shall also be made from the employee's paycheck.
2. No optional deduction shall be made from an employee's paycheck unless the employee turns in written authorization for the deduction to the Treasurer's Office.

D. PERSONAL DEDUCTIONS

1. No deduction shall be made from any employee's paycheck to pay for personal bills or any other personal obligation that is not specifically authorized by the Commissioners Court.

4.06 POLICY ON WORK SCHEDULE AND WORKWEEK

A. WORK SCHEDULE

1. The normal hours of work shall be determined by each department head.

B. EXCEPTIONS

1. To meet the needs of the County, certain departments or employees may be required to work a schedule that varies from a normal work schedule, or they may be subject to call back in case of emergency or special need.
2. The need for schedules that vary from the normal schedule shall be determined by each department head.

C. WORKDAY

1. The workday for the county shall begin at 12:01 a.m. each day and end 24 consecutive hours later.

D. WORKWEEK

1. For purposes of recordkeeping and to determine overtime in compliance with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), the workweek for Castro County shall begin 12:01 a.m. on each Sunday and end seven (7) consecutive workdays later (168 hours).

4.07 POLICY ON TRAVEL AND EDUCATION EXPENSES

Employees are expected to exercise the same care in incurring business expenses as any prudent person traveling for personal reasons.

Employees required to travel or use their own vehicles for county business, except for those who receive a mileage allowance, shall be reimbursed for authorized expenses only. Employees are responsible for submitting a Travel Advance/Reimbursement Form for travel advances or reimbursement.

A. OUT OF STATE

1. All out of state travel must be approved by the Commissioners Court in advance except where law enforcement personnel are transporting prisoners.

B. TRAVEL ADVANCE REQUESTS

1. If an employee requires a travel advance, the individual employee must submit a Travel Advance Form signed by the employee's Elected Official prior to the travel. Employees are responsible for attaching supporting documentation to each request.

2. Requests must be submitted to the County Treasurer's Office according to the accounts payable payment schedule to ensure payment advance prior to travel. The request must be submitted no later than 10:00am the Wednesday before the scheduled Commissioners Court meeting for approval.

C. REIMBURSEMENT

1. Employees shall receive reimbursement after completion of travel.
2. Advances will be made prior to beginning travel with submittal of proper application.
3. Within ten (10) working days of returning from travel, a Travel Report must be submitted to the County Treasurer. Employees must attach supporting documentation for the expenditures the employee seeks to have reimbursed to the form. The Treasurer will not approve expenditures determined to be unsupported or unreasonable. Proper documentation in support includes, but is not limited to brochures, fliers, etc.
4. Receipts are required on the following authorized expenses:
 - a. Lodging;
 - b. Registration and seminar fees; and
 - c. Commercial airline tickets, rental vehicles, transportation to and from airport(s) or other transporting terminal, parking, and taxi/uber fares.
5. Reimbursement requests will be presented for approval at the next Commissioners Court meeting after they are received by the County Treasurer.
6. Reimbursement will not be issued for travel that was not submitted for pre-approval.

D. MILEAGE ALLOWANCE

1. Employees who use their own vehicles for county business, except for those who receive a mileage allowance, shall be reimbursed at the current Internal Revenue Service (IRS) mileage reimbursement rate for all mileage driven in the service of the county. The mileage rate is subject to change during the fiscal year.
2. Mileage reimbursement will be calculated using either MapQuest or Google Maps websites.
3. Employees requesting mileage reimbursement must have a valid current Texas Driver's License.
4. Mileage reimbursement requests must be submitted monthly. An accurate listing of mileage, dates, times, odometer readings, and location is required.
5. Only one employee is eligible for mileage reimbursement in the event more than one County Employee travels in one personal vehicle.
6. Sharing mileage costs with a Texas County employee from another jurisdiction may be reimbursed up to one half (1/2) the total allowable mileage.
7. Auto rental is only authorized when used in conjunction with a related airline flight or when four or more County employees travel together in a single multi-passenger vehicle (e.g. vans or SUVs). Employees are encouraged to take advantage of governmental discounts or any other special rates offered by rental agencies. Rental vehicles are available for County-related business only. Employees are to share rental vehicles in lieu of renting separate vehicles.

E. HOTEL

1. Hotel costs incurred while on travel for the county will be limited to the actual cost of the lodging.
2. Before payment for lodging will be made, itemized statement or confirmation must be submitted to the Financial Administrator's Office.

3. Request for any additional lodging reimbursement will be submitted on Travel Preapproval Form and shall include reason for request. Commissioners Court will have sole discretion to approve or deny additional lodging costs.
4. Lodging upgrades or additions to accommodate family members will not be reimbursed by the County.

F. PER DIEM PAYMENT

1. Per Diem rates are based on current General Services Administration (GSA) rates, and are calculated based on the location/are to which the employee is traveling. Current rates can be found at www.gsa.gov/travel-resources.
 - a. Employees must be in travel status, away from Castro County, for the following length of time to qualify for per diem pay for meals:

At least four (4) hours	One meal
At least nine (9) hours	Two meals
At least twelve (12) hours	Three meals

- b. County-issued credit cards are not authorized for meal purchases, except by law enforcement officers who are conducting prisoner transportation.

G. EDUCATION EXPENSES

1. The county shall reimburse employees for fees for attendance at conferences, seminars, workshops, and schools provided that adequate funds are available in the departmental budget.
2. To receive reimbursement, an employee must turn in a copy of the receipt for the registration fee to the Treasurer's Office.
3. Training for an employee must be approved by the official who supervises the department in which the employee works.
4. The Commissioners Court provides each department a travel budget sufficient to meet the continuing education hours required for their office. If anticipated travel expenses will exceed the allotted budget, the official must appear before the Commissioners Court to request additional funding prior to incurring those expenses.

H. CONFERENCE AND AIRLINE PREPAYMENTS

1. Prepayment of conference registration and airline tickets may be made for approved travel and conference attendance under the conditions of this policy.
2. If an employee does not attend a conference or use airline tickets for which prepayment is made by the county, the employee shall be responsible for reimbursement to the county.

I. LEAST COST

1. Reimbursement will be made by the most cost-effective mode of transportation. Any additional costs will be at the officials/employees own expense.
2. Employee will be paid the lesser amount of airline ticket or mileage.

4.08 POLICY ON HOURS WORKED AND OVERTIME

A. HOURS WORKED

1. Hours worked shall include all time actually spent in the service of the County as defined in the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and its regulations.

B. OVERTIME APPLICATION

1. Overtime, as by this policy, shall apply to all employees eligible for overtime compensation under the FLSA.

C. OVERTIME DEFINITION

1. "Overtime" is defined as hours worked in excess of the allowable number of hours under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA): forty (40) hours per seven (7) day work period, or eighty-six (86) hours for employees in a fourteen (14) day work period; exceptions apply for law enforcement employees (see policies on law enforcement pay and overtime, found in Section 7).
2. Non-exempt employees accrue overtime at the forty-first (41st) hour worked during the seven-day work period, or the eighty-seventh (87th) hour worked during the fourteen-day work period for law enforcement.
3. Paid leave shall not be counted in determining if overtime has been worked on any workweek.
4. Except in emergency situations, an employee shall be required to have authorization from his/her supervisor before working overtime.
5. Unbudgeted overtime must be documented for Commissioners Court.

4.09 POLICY ON OVERTIME COMPENSATION

A. HOURS WORKED

Hours worked shall include all time actually spent in the service of the County as defined in the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and its regulations. The workday for the County shall begin at 12.01 a.m. each day and end 24 consecutive hours later.

B. POLICY APPLICATION

1. This policy shall apply to all County employees eligible for overtime compensation under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).
2. Paid leave shall not be counted in determining if overtime has been worked in any workweek. Except in emergency situations, an employee shall be required to have authorization from their supervisor before working overtime.

C. OVERTIME COMPENSATION FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

- a. Castro County Commissioners Court has adopted the 207(k) exemption under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) for law enforcement employees, which includes deputies and jailers. These employees have a work period of 14 days and overtime will be due after 86 hours actually worked. Law enforcement employees salary covers all hours up to 80 hours. For hours worked between 80.01 and 86 Law Enforcement employees will receive 1.5 times pay.
- b. Paid leave shall not be counted in determining if overtime has been worked in any workweek. Except in emergency situations, an employee shall be required to have authorization from their supervisor before working overtime.

D. OVERTIME COMPENSATION FOR ALL OTHER EMPLOYEES

The policy of Castro County is to keep overtime hours worked to a minimum. Occasionally, employees may be required to provide services in addition to normal work hours, on weekends, or on holidays. Unbudgeted overtime should only be used in emergencies and with documentation to Commissioners Court.

1. Under the FLSA, only non-exempt employees are eligible to accrue overtime pay.
2. Overtime compensation shall be paid in accordance with the provisions of the FLSA.
3. Overtime shall include all time actually worked for the county in excess of 40 hours in any workweek, with the exception of law enforcement (See policy on "Law Enforcement Pay and Overtime.")

4. Overtime compensation shall be paid at a rate of one and one-half (1 ½) times the amount of overtime worked.

4.10 POLICY ON SEPARATIONS

A. DEFINITION

1. A separation shall be defined as any situation in which the employer-employee relationship between the County and a County employee ends.

B. TYPES OF SEPARATION

1. All separations from Castro County shall be designated as one of the following types:
 - A. Resignation
 - B. Retirement
 - C. Dismissal
 - D. Reduction in force (layoff)
 - E. Death

C. RESIGNATION

1. A resignation shall be classified as any situation in which an employee voluntarily leaves his/her employment with Castro County and the separation does not fall into one of the other categories.
2. Employees who are resigning should submit a written notice of resignation to his/her supervisor.

D. RETIREMENT

1. A retirement shall be any situation in which an employee meets the requirements to collect benefits under the County's retirement program and voluntarily elects to leave employment with the County to do so.
2. An employee who is retiring should notify his/her supervisor of that intent at least 30 days prior to the actual retirement date to help prevent delays in starting the payment of retirement benefits.

E. DISMISSAL

1. A dismissal shall be any involuntary separation of employment that does not fall into one of the other categories of separation.
2. Castro County is an "at will" employer and a supervisor may dismiss an employee at any time for any legal reason, or no reason, with or without notice.

F. REDUCTION IN FORCE

1. An employee shall be separated from employment because of a reduction in force when his/her position is abolished or when there is a lack of funds to support the position or there is a lack of work to justify the position.

G. DEATH

1. A separation by death shall occur when an individual dies while currently employed by the County.
2. If an employee dies while still employed by the County, his/her designated beneficiary or estate shall receive all earned pay and payable benefits.

H. NOTIFICATION

1. As soon as a supervisor becomes aware of separation from employment, or the intent to separate employment by an employee, the supervisor shall be responsible for immediately notifying the County Judge and the County Treasurer.
2. Employees who are leaving the employment of the County must contact the Treasurer in order to complete all necessary paperwork and collect final paycheck.

4.11 RETIREE REHIRES

1. Retired employees shall be eligible to apply for open positions with Castro County as long as the following provisions are met: 1) The retiree has been retired for at least one (1) calendar month, 2) No prior arrangement or agreement was made between Castro County and the retiree for re-employment, and 3) strict adherence to normal leaving employment procedures were followed at the time of the employee's retirement.
2. The retiree must have a bona fide separation of employment and have been retired for a minimum of one (1) calendar month. A bona fide separation means there is no prior agreement or understanding between Castro County and the retiree that the retiree would be rehired after retirement. According to Rule 107.4 adopted by the TCDRS Board of Trustees, restrictions apply to elected officials, people employed for the same or different position in the same or different department, employee status changes, and independent contractors.
3. Newly elected officials who have recently retired from the county cannot draw their retirement because they have an arrangement to return to work for the county. Employees also cannot retire with an agreement to go work in a different department or different position. Changing employee status does not matter when determining if someone is still working for the county. Also, an employee cannot retire from the county with an arrangement to begin work as an independent contractor either.
4. Rehired retirees who did not have a bona fide separation of employment may owe a 10 percent excise tax and be required to repay all of their monthly retirement payments. Abusing the retirement provisions in such a manner would violate a qualification requirement for retirement plans under Section 401(a) of the Internal Revenue Code, potentially resulting in significant tax consequences for the employer, its participating members and those retired employees.
5. Any retiree who meets all other TCDRS requirements, who is rehired consistent with this policy, must establish a new membership with TCDRS and will be considered to be a new member for the purposes of beneficiary determination and benefit selections.

4.12 POLICY ON MEDICAL INSURANCE

A. ELIGIBILITY

1. All regular full-time employees of Castro County (who work a normal schedule of 30 or more hours per week) shall be eligible for the group medical insurance benefit. Part-time employees are not eligible for group medical insurance.
2. Premium for the coverage of eligible employees shall be paid by the county.

B. WAITING PERIOD

1. Employees shall be required to work in a position eligible for the medical insurance benefit for 60 days following the first of the month after their employment commences before coverage becomes effective for the employee or any eligible dependents the employee elects to cover.

C. DEPENDENT COVERAGE

1. Eligible employees may cover their qualified dependents by paying the full premium for the dependents.

2. Deductions for dependent coverage shall be made through payroll deduction from the employee's paycheck each pay period.

D. EXTENSION OF COVERAGE

1. Employees who leave the employment of Castro County may be eligible for an extension of the medical coverage for themselves and their eligible dependents under the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA).
2. Information on extension of benefits under COBRA is available in the County Treasurer's Office and may be obtained during the normal working hours for that office.

E. INFORMATION

1. Details of coverage under the group medical insurance plan are available in the County Treasurer's Office and may be obtained during the normal working hours for that office.

4.13 POLICY ON VACATION

A. ELIGIBILITY

1. All regular full-time employees shall be eligible for vacation benefits.
2. Elected and Appointed Officials, part -time employees and temporary employees shall not be eligible for vacation benefits.

B. ACCRUAL RATE

1. Eligible employees who have worked for less than 10 years in a position eligible to receive vacation shall earn vacation at the rate of 3.077 hours per pay period, which is equivalent to 80 hours per year. Eligible employees who have worked for 10 or more years in a position eligible to receive vacation shall accrue vacation at the rate of 4.616 hours per pay period, which is equivalent to 120 hours per year.
2. Vacation shall not be accrued while an employee is on leave without pay. Accrual of vacation shall begin at the time an employee begins work in a position eligible to accrue vacation, but an employee must work for a minimum of two weeks in such a position before being eligible to take any vacation.
3. The maximum amount of unused vacation an employee shall be allowed to have at one time is 120. When an employee reaches the maximum accrual, they shall not be allowed to accrue additional vacation time until the employee takes vacation hours to reduce the balance below the maximum allowed under this policy or participates in the vacation buyback program.
4. Employees shall only be able to use vacation which has already been accrued and shall not be allowed to borrow vacation against possible future accruals.

C. UNUSED VACATION

1. Unused vacation time may be carried over into the next fiscal year up to the maximum hours allowed. Elected Officials may require employees to take leave during the fiscal year to prevent accumulations greater than the maximum allowed carryover.

D. PAY FOR UNUSED VACATION

1. Employees who resign from their employment with Castro County or are terminated without cause will receive pay for **earned** unused vacation. Employees who are discharged, dismissed, separated, or terminated for policy misconduct or criminal conduct are **not entitled** to be paid for vacation not taken.

E. BREAK IN SERVICE

1. Any employee who leaves Castro County employment for more than sixty (60) consecutive days (except for military leave) will lose credit for all prior years of service for purpose of calculating earned vacation days.

F. SCHEDULING

1. Scheduling of vacations shall be at the discretion of the individual department heads.

G. HOLIDAY DURING VACATION

1. If a holiday falls during an employee's vacation, the holiday shall be charged in accordance with the **POLICY ON HOLIDAYS** and shall not be charged against the employee's vacation balance.

H. RECORD KEEPING

1. Each employee shall be responsible for accurately recording all vacation time used on his or her time sheet.
2. Only the appropriate amount of vacation hours will be used to account for the minimum number of hours needed for the designated work week/work period.

I. VACATION BUY BACK

1. The County may, buy back all or any part of accrued and unused vacation leave from employees.
2. Any eligible employee can participate in the Vacation Buy Back by submitting a request in writing to the county treasurer by November 1st of each calendar year. The maximum amount of hours that will be bought back by the County is 40 hours of vacation leave.
3. The request must be on the form provided by the County Treasurer's office.

4.14 POLICY ON SICK LEAVE

A. ELIGIBILITY

1. All regular full-time employees shall be eligible for the paid sick leave benefit.

B. ACCRUAL RATE

1. Regular full-time employees shall accrue sick leave at the rate of 3.08 hours per pay period (26 per year), which is approximately 80 hours per year.
2. Eligible regular part-time employees shall earn sick leave at the rate of 1.54 hours per pay period (26 per year), which is approximately 40 hours per year.
3. Accrual of sick leave will begin at time of hire in a position eligible to accrue sick leave.

C. MAXIMUM ACCRUAL

1. The maximum amount of unused sick leave an employee shall be allowed at any time is 480 hours for a regular full-time employee.
2. When an employee has reached the maximum allowable balance, no additional sick leave will be accrued until time has been used to bring the balance below the maximum.

D. USE OF SICK LEAVE

1. Sick leave may be used for the following purposes:
 - a. Illness or injury of the employee;
 - b. Appointment with physicians, optometrist, dentist, and other qualified medical professionals; or
 - c. To attend to the illness or injury of a member of the employee's immediate family.

2. For purposes of this policy, immediate family shall be defined as spouse, child, parent, or other relative living in the employee's home who is dependent on the employee for care.
3. Sick leave may not be used as vacation or any other reason not addressed in this policy.

E. NOTIFICATION

1. Where sick leave is to be used for medical appointments, an employee shall be required to notify his/her supervisor of the intent to use sick leave as soon as the employee knows of the appointment.
2. Where use of sick leave is not known in advance, an employee shall notify his/her supervisor of the intent to use sick leave within 15 minutes of the employee's normal time to begin work, when practicable.
3. Where it is not practicable to notify the supervisor within 15 minutes of the normal starting time, the employee should notify his/her supervisor as soon as is reasonably practicable.
4. If the employee feels that the situation will cause him/her to miss more than one day of work, the employee should notify his/her supervisor of the anticipated length of absence.

F. DOCUMENTATION

1. If an employee uses three (3) or more consecutive days of sick leave, the supervisor shall have the right to require a physician's statement or some other acceptable documentation of injury or illness.
2. Documentation requirements under Section 14 of this policy shall also apply in situations where the absence is for the care of a member of the immediate family.
3. Documentation of illness or injury shall be required for any sick leave used during the two (2) weeks prior to resignation of employment with the County.

G. BORROWING

1. Employees shall not be allowed to borrow sick leave against future accruals.

H. PAY AT TERMINATION

1. Employees shall not be paid for unused sick leave at the termination of employment.

4.15 POLICY ON HOLIDAYS

A. ELIGIBILITY

1. All regular full-time employees and regular part-time employees shall be eligible for the paid holiday benefit. Full-time employees will receive 8 hours holiday pay; part-time employees will receive the number of hours they would normally work on that day of the week.

B. HOLIDAYS

1. The County holidays for each calendar year (January 1 through December 31) shall be determined by the Castro County Commissioners Court before June 1 of the preceding year.

C. HOLIDAY DURING VACATION

1. If a paid holiday occurs during other paid leave of an eligible employee, that day shall be paid as a holiday and not be charged against the employee's leave balance.

4.16 POLICY ON JURY DUTY LEAVE

A. JURY DUTY

1. Employees of Castro County who are called for jury duty shall receive their regular pay for the period they are called for jury duty which includes both the jury selection process and, if selected, the time they actually serve on the jury.
2. Pay for serving on a jury shall only include the time the employee would have normally been scheduled to work and will not include extra pay if jury service involves time outside the employee's normal work schedule.
3. Any fees paid for jury service may be kept by the employee.

B. OFFICIAL COURT ATTENDANCE

1. Employees who are subpoenaed or ordered to attend court to appear as a witness or to testify in some official capacity on behalf of the County shall be entitled to leave with pay for such period as his/her court attendance may require.

C. PRIVATE LITIGATION

1. If an employee is absent from work to appear in private litigation in which he/she is a principal party, the time shall be charged to vacation, other eligible paid leave, or leave without pay.

4.17 POLICY ON FUNERAL LEAVE

FAMILY FUNERAL LEAVE

1. Full-time employees shall be allowed up to three days leave with pay for a death in the immediate family. For purposes of this policy, immediate family shall include the employee's spouse and the child, foster child, parent, sibling, grandparent, or grandchild of the employee or the employee's spouse. If leave is needed beyond the limits set in this policy it may be charged to available vacation time or to leave without pay.

4.18 POLICY ON MILITARY LEAVE

A. GUARD AND RESERVE

1. County employees who are members of the National Guard or active reserve components of the United States Armed Forces shall be allowed up to fifteen (15) days off per year with pay to attend authorized training sessions and exercises.
2. The fifteen (15) day paid military leave shall apply to the calendar year and any unused balance at the end of the year shall not be carried forward into the next calendar year.
3. Pay for attendance at Reserve or National Guard training sessions or exercises shall be authorized only for periods which fall within the employee's normal work schedule.
4. An employee shall use annual leave or leave without pay if he/she must attend Reserve or National Guard training sessions or exercises in excess of the fifteen day maximum.

B. DISASTER LEAVE

Any employee who is a member of the Texas military forces, a reserve component of the armed forces, or a member of a state or federally authorized urban search and rescue team called to state active duty by the governor or another appropriate authority in response to a disaster is entitled up to seven (7) days of paid disaster leave per fiscal year.

This leave is in addition to the paid leave provided for authorized training or duty otherwise authorized or ordered.

During disaster leave under these provisions, the person may not be subjected to loss of time, efficiency rating, personal time, sick leave, or vacation time.

C. ORDERS

An employee going on military leave shall provide his or her supervisor with a set of orders within two (2) business days after receiving them.

D. ACTIVE MILITARY

County employees who leave their positions as the result of a call to active military service, or who voluntarily enter the Armed Forces of the United States, shall be eligible for re-employment in accordance with the state and federal regulations in effect at the time of their release from duty.

4.19 PAID QUARANTINE LEAVE

Castro County shall provide paid quarantine leave for fire fighters, peace officers, detention officers, and emergency medical technicians employed by Castro County and ordered by a supervisor or the health authority to quarantine or isolate due to a possible or known exposure to a communicable disease while on duty. This includes fire fighters, peace officers, detention officers and emergency medical technicians, as defined by this policy, who are employed by, appointed to, or elected to their position.

- "Detention officer" means an individual appointed or employed by a county as a county jailer or other individual responsible for the care and custody of individuals incarcerated in a county jail.
- "Emergency medical technician" means an individual who is certified as an emergency medical technician under Chapter 773, Health and Safety Code; and employed by the county.
- "Fire fighter" means a paid employee of a municipal fire department or emergency services district who holds a position that requires substantial knowledge of firefighting; has met the requirements for certification by the Texas Commission on Fire Protection under Chapter 419, Government Code; and performs a function listed in Section 143.003(4)(A).
- "Health authority" has the meaning assigned by Section 121.021, Health and Safety Code. A health authority is a physician appointed under the provisions of Chapter 121 to administer state and local laws relating to public health within the appointing body's jurisdiction. A health authority must be a competent physician with a reputable professional standing who is legally qualified to practice medicine in the state and a resident of the state. They must take an official oath and file with the department.
 - o For counties that do not establish a local health department or public health district, they may appoint a physician as health authority to administer state and local laws relating to public health in the county's jurisdiction.
- "Peace officer" means an individual described by Article 2.12, Code of Criminal Procedure, who is elected for, employed by, or appointed by the county.

Eligible employees who are on qualifying paid quarantine leave shall receive all employment benefits and compensation, including leave accrual, retirement, and health benefits for the

duration of the leave; and, if applicable, shall be reimbursed for reasonable costs related to the quarantine, including lodging, medical, and transportation. An employee on qualifying paid quarantine leave will not have their leave balances reduced.

Off duty exposures will not be covered under this policy.

4.20 MENTAL HEALTH LEAVE FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

Definitions

1. Traumatic event – an event which occurs in the peace officer(s) or full-time telecommunicator(s) scope of employment when they are involved in the response to, or investigation of, an event that causes them to experience unusually strong emotional reactions or feelings which have the potential to interfere with their ability to function during or after the incident. Traumatic events may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a. Major disasters which may include response to weather-related events involving multiple casualties; or explosions with multiple casualties; or search and recovery missions involving multiple casualties;
- b. Incidents involving multiple casualties which may include shootings or traffic accidents;
- c. Line of duty death or suicide of a department member;
- d. Death of a child resulting from violence or neglect;
- e. Officer(s) involved shooting of a person.

2. Mental health leave – administrative leave with pay granted in response to a traumatic event that occurred in the scope of the peace officer or full time telecommunicator's employment.

3. Mental Health Professional – a licensed social or mental health worker, counselor, psychotherapist, psychologist or psychiatrist.

Requesting Mental Health Leave

A peace officer or telecommunicator directly involved in a traumatic event may request the use of mental health leave. The request shall be made in writing through the chain of command. The request shall be treated as a priority matter and a decision on the granting of the leave shall be made no later than 24 hours following the submission of the request. The request shall be granted unless the chain of command can articulate specific compelling reasons to deny granting the leave.

A supervisor or coworker who becomes aware of behavioral changes in a peace officer or telecommunicator directly involved in a traumatic event should suggest to the employee that they seek mental health leave and the assistance of a mental health professional.

Confidentiality of Request

Any request for mental health leave shall be treated as strictly confidential by all parties involved and shall not be discussed or disclosed outside the employee's immediate chain of command, and only as necessary to facilitate the use of the leave. Any peace officer, telecommunicator or supervisor who becomes aware of behavioral changes and suggests the employee seek mental health leave shall not discuss that matter with any third party. Any breach of this confidentiality shall be grounds for discipline. Confidentiality may be waived by the

employee seeking mental health leave. Confidentiality may be waived under circumstances which indicate the employee is a danger to themselves or others, and department personnel must confer with mental health professionals.

Duration of Mental Health Leave

A peace officer or telecommunicator directly involved in a traumatic event may request up to three working days of mental health leave. Extensions of mental health leave may be available under certain circumstances. Any request for an extension shall be accompanied by documentation from a mental health professional who is counseling the officer. The request may extend the leave by three working days. Each peace officer or telecommunicator may request no more than two extensions, each supported by sufficient documentation by the mental health professional. The Sheriff shall grant the extension(s) upon the receipt of sufficient documentation explain the need for the extension.

4.21 POLICY ON RETIREMENT

A. ELIGIBILITY

1. Regular employees who work a normal schedule shall be eligible for the retirement benefit through the Texas County and District Retirement System.

B. CONTRIBUTIONS

1. Eligible employees shall make contributions to the retirement program through a system of payroll deduction.
2. Castro County shall make a contribution to each eligible employees retirement account in accordance with the provisions set forth by the Texas County and District Retirement System.

C. INFORMATION

1. Information on the retirement program may be obtained at the County Treasurer's Office during the normal working hours for that office.

4.22 POLICY ON SOCIAL SECURITY

A. SOCIAL SECURITY

1. All county employees shall participate in the Federal Social Security program which provides certain retirement, disability and other benefits.

B. CONTRIBUTIONS

1. Contributions to this program shall be made by deductions from each employee's paycheck in accordance with the requirements of this program.
2. The county shall contribute an amount equal to the employee's contribution in accordance with the requirements of this program.

4.23 POLICY ON FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE

The federal Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA) requires an employer to provide eligible employees with unpaid leave under certain circumstances. There are two types of leave available:

- 1) the basic 12-week FMLA entitlement; and
- 2) the Military Family Leave (MFL) entitlement described in this policy.

A. ELIGIBILITY

1. To be eligible for benefits under this policy, an employee must:
 - A. Have worked for Castro County at least 12 months (it is not required that these 12 months be consecutive; however, a continuous break in service of 7 years or more will not be counted toward the 12 months); and
 - B. Have worked at least 1250 hours during the previous 12 months; and
 - C. are employed at a work site that has 50 or more employees within a 75-mile radius.

Any employees with any questions about their eligibility for FMLA leave should contact the County Treasurer for more information.

B. QUALIFYING EVENTS

1. Family or medical leave under this policy may be taken for the following situations:
 - A. The birth of a child and to care for that child;
 - B. The placement of a child in the employee's home for adoption or foster care;
 - C. To care for a spouse, child (under the age of 18 or if over 18 incapable of self-care due to a disability), or parent with a serious health condition; or
 - D. The serious health condition of the employee that make the employee unable to perform the essential functions of their job;
 - E. a qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that an employee's spouse, child or parent is a covered military member of the Armed Forces (Regular, Reserve or National Guard), deployed to a foreign country or has been notified of an impending call or order to active duty in a foreign country;
 - F. to care for a covered service member (Regular, Reserve or National Guard) with a serious injury or illness if the employee is the spouse, child, parent or next of kin (nearest blood relative) of the service member; or
 - G. to care for a covered veteran who is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation or therapy, for a serious injury or illness and who was a member of the Armed Forces (Regular, Reserve or National Guard) at any time during the period of 5 years preceding the date on which the veteran began that medical treatment, recuperation or therapy.

C. SERIOUS HEALTH CONDITION

Serious health condition is defined as a health condition that requires overnight inpatient care at a hospital, hospice, or residential care medical facility or continuing treatment by a health care provider.

A serious health condition involving continuing treatment by a health care provider includes any one or more of the following:

1. a period of incapacity of more than three consecutive, full calendar days, and any subsequent treatment or period of incapacity relating to the same condition, that also involves:
 - a) Treatment two or more times within 30 days of incapacity; or
 - b) Treatment by a health care provider on at least one occasion within first seven days of incapacity that results in a regimen of continuing treatment by a health care provider.
2. Any period of incapacity due to pregnancy or pre-natal care.
3. Any period of incapacity or treatment due to a chronic serious health condition that requires periodic visits to a health care provider and continues over an extended period of time.

4. Any period of incapacity that is permanent or long term due to a condition for which treatment is not effective.
5. Any period of incapacity or absence to receive multiple treatments by a health care provider.

D. QUALIFYING EXIGENCY LEAVE:

An eligible employee may be entitled to use up to 12 weeks of their FMLA leave entitlement to address certain qualifying exigencies. Leave may be used if the employee's spouse, child of any age or parent in the Armed Forces (Regular, Reserves or National Guard) is on active duty or called to active duty status in a foreign country.

Qualifying exigencies may include:

1. short-notice deployment (up to seven days of leave);
2. attending certain military events and related activities;
3. arranging for alternative childcare;
4. addressing certain financial and legal arrangements;
5. periods of rest and recuperation for the covered military member (up to fifteen days of leave);
6. attending certain counseling sessions;
7. attending post-deployment activities (available for up to 90 days after the termination of the covered military member's active duty status);
8. other activities arising out of the covered military member's active duty or call to active duty in a foreign country and agreed upon by the county and the employee;
9. attending family support or assistance programs and informational briefings;
10. acting as the covered military member's representative before a governmental agency;
11. addressing issues that arise from the death of a covered military member while on active duty status in a foreign country; and
12. other activities arising out of the covered military member's active duty or call to active duty in a foreign country and agreed upon by the county and employee.

E. LENGTH OF LEAVE

1. An employee may use up to 12 weeks leave per 12 month period under this policy.
2. Castro County sets the 12 month period used under this policy as the 12-month period measured forward from the date an employee's first FMLA leave begins).
3. A married couple who both work for the County is entitled to a maximum combined leave of 12 weeks in any 12-month period for the birth of healthy newborn child (i.e., bonding time) or placement of a child, or care for a parent with a serious health condition. The combined limit for a married couple employed by the county is 26 weeks in a single 12-month period if leave is to care for a covered service member or veteran with a serious injury or illness.

F. MILITARY CAREGIVER LEAVE

An eligible employee may take up to 26 weeks of leave to care for a covered service member during a single 12-month period. A covered service member is either a current member or veteran of the Armed Forces (Regular, Reserve or National Guard).

An eligible employee may take up to 26 weeks of leave to care for a covered service member of the Armed Forces (Regular, Reserve, or National Guard) who has been rendered medically unfit to perform their duties due to a serious injury or illness incurred in the line of duty while on active duty for which the service member is undergoing

medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy; or is in outpatient status; or is on the temporary disability retired list.

An eligible employee may take up to 26 weeks of leave to care for a veteran (Regular, Reserve, or National Guard) who is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy for a serious injury or illness and who was a member of the Armed Forces (Regular, Reserve or National Guard) at any time during the period of five years preceding the date on which the veteran undergoes that medical treatment, recuperation or therapy.

The MFL entitlement is applied on a per-injury basis and an eligible employee may be entitled to take more than one period of 26 weeks of leave if the leave is to care for different covered service members or covered veteran with a subsequent serious illness or injury, except that no more than 26 weeks may be taken within any single 12-month period.

An eligible employee may begin taking military caregiver leave up to five years after their family member was discharged or released from the military. The eligible employee's first date of leave must be within the five-year period; however, the employee may continue to take such leave throughout the single 12-month period that is applicable to military caregiver leave, even if the leave extends beyond the five-year period.

An employee does not need to use this leave entitlement in one block. Leave can be taken intermittently or on a reduced leave schedule when medically necessary. Employees must make reasonable efforts to schedule leave for planned medical treatment so as not to unduly disrupt the county's operations.

G. WORK RELATED INJURY

Castro County will always designate qualifying work-related injuries with lost time as FMLA qualifying.

H. PAID AND UNPAID LEAVE

Castro County requires substitution of paid leave for all FMLA and MFL events. An employee must follow the vacation and sick leave policy guidelines. The balance of FMLA is unpaid leave. FMLA and MFL run concurrently with all substituted paid leave, including Workers' Compensation leave.

The maximum amount of paid and unpaid leave that may be used under this policy in a 12-month period is 12 weeks, except for qualifying leave to care for a covered military member with a serious injury or illness which is a maximum of 26-weeks in a 12-month period.

1. If an employee has accrued leave, the employee shall be required to use appropriate paid leave first with the remainder of the 12 weeks as unpaid leave.
2. An employee who is taking leave because of the employee's own serious health condition or the serious health condition of an eligible family member, shall be required to first use all paid vacation, sick leave, and any other paid leave, , with the rest of the 12 week leave period being without pay.
3. An employee taking leave for the birth of a child shall be required to take paid sick leave, and/ or other paid leave for the recovery period, after the birth of the child prior to going on leave without pay.

4. After the recovery period from giving birth to a child, the employee shall be required to use vacation and other available paid leave, , prior to going on leave without pay.
5. An employee who is taking leave for the placement of a child in the employee's home for adoption or foster care shall be required to use all paid leave due, , prior to going on leave without pay.
6. The maximum amount of paid and unpaid leave that may be used under this policy in any 12-month period is 12 weeks.

I. INSURANCE

1. While on leave under this policy, the county shall continue to pay the employee's medical insurance premium at the same rate as if the employee had been actively at work.
2. The employee shall be required to pay for dependent coverage, and for any other insurance coverage for which the employee would normally pay, or the coverage will be discontinued.
3. An employee's obligation to pay for coverage will be made through regular payroll deduction while the employee is on paid leave status.
4. While on unpaid leave, the employee is required to pay for premiums due to the county under Section 12 of this policy no later than 30 days after the due date which the county sets or the coverage shall be discontinued. The county may cancel unpaid coverage by providing the employee advance written notice, not less than 15 days before the coverage will be cancelled for non-payment.
5. At the end of the 12-week leave period or the 26-week leave period in a single 12-month period to care for an injured covered military member, an eligible employee will be:
 - a. Offered COBRA if they are unable to return to work

J. INTERMITTENT LEAVE AND REDUCED SCHEDULE

1. An employee may take intermittent leave under this policy if it is necessary for the care and treatment of the serious health condition of the employee, the employee's eligible family member, or the care of a covered military member or veteran.
2. An employee may work a reduced schedule under this policy if it is necessary for the care and treatment of the serious health condition of the employee, the employee's eligible family member, or the care of a covered military member or veteran.
3. All work time missed as the result of intermittent leave or a reduced work schedule under this policy will be deducted from the employee's 12 week or 26-week leave eligibility in a single 12-month period.

K. PHYSICIAN'S STATEMENT

1. The county has the right to ask for certification of the serious health condition of the employee or the employee's eligible family member when the employee requests or is using leave under this policy.
2. The county may send a request for medical certification to an employee who has been out of work for three or more days to determine the employee's FMLA eligibility. The employee is requested to have their physician complete and return the medical certification or provide appropriate documentation within 15 days of the employee's failure to return the medical certification may result in denial of FMLA by the county.
3. The employee must respond to the county's request for certification within 15 days of receipt of the request or provide a reasonable explanation for the delay in writing

- before the 15th day after receipt of the request. If an employee does not provide certification or otherwise respond, the county may deny leave under this policy.
4. Certification of the serious health condition shall include:
 - a. The date the condition began;
 - b. Its expected duration;
 - c. The diagnosis of the condition;
 - d. A brief statement of the treatment; and
 - e. A statement that the employee is unable to perform work of any kind or statement that the employee is unable to perform the essential functions of the employee's job.
 5. Certification of the serious health condition of an eligible family member shall include:
 - a. The date the condition began;
 - b. Its expected duration;
 - c. The diagnosis of the condition;
 - d. A brief statement of treatment; and
 - e. A statement that the patient requires assistance and that the employee's presence would be beneficial or desirable.
 6. If the employee requests intermittent leave or a reduced work schedule, the certification shall also include dates and the duration of treatment and a statement of medical necessity for taking intermittent leave or working a reduced schedule. The county may request re-certification for intermittent or reduced schedule leave every six months in connection with an eligible absence.
 7. The county shall have the right to ask for a second opinion from a health care provider of the county's choice, at the expense of the county, if the county has reason to question the certification, unless the leave is necessary to care for a seriously injured or ill covered service member supported by an invitational travel order (ITO) or invitational travel authorization (ITA) to join an injured or ill service member at their bedside.
 8. If there is a conflict between the certification submitted by the employee and the second certification obtained by the count, the county may require a third certification, at the expense of the county, from a health care provider agreed upon by both the employee and the county. The third opinion is final and binding on the county and the employee.

L. REQUESTING LEAVE

1. Except where leave is unforeseeable, an employee shall be required to submit, in writing, a request for leave under this policy to his or her immediate supervisor.
2. Where practicable, an employee should give his or her immediate supervisor at least 30 days notice before beginning leave under this policy.
3. Where it is not reasonably practicable to give 30 days notice before beginning leave, the employee shall be required to give as much notice as is reasonably practicable.

M. REINSTATEMENT

1. An employee returning from leave under this policy, and who has not exceeded the 12-week maximum allowed under this policy, will be returned to the same job or a job equivalent to that the employee held prior to going on FMLA leave. An employee who has not exceeded the 16-week maximum leave period in a single 12-month period, allowed to care for a seriously ill or injured covered military member, will be

- returned to the same job or a job equivalent to the job the employee held before going on leave.
2. If an employee is placed in a different position, it will be one with equivalent status, pay, benefits, and other employment terms and one which entails substantially equivalent skill, effort, responsibility, and authority.
 3. The County has no obligation to reinstate an employee who takes more than the 12 weeks of leave allowed under this policy, or who elects not to return to work after using the maximum leave allowed, including an employee with available sick or vacation leave

N. REPAYMENT OF BENEFITS

Unless an employee is unable to return to work because of the serious medical condition of the employee or an eligible family member, or another situation beyond the control of the employee, an employee who does not return to work after using the maximum leave allowed under this policy will be required to reimburse the county for all medical premiums and other benefits paid by the county while the employee was on leave without pay related to their FMLA leave.

O. OTHER BENEFITS

1. While on leave without pay under this policy, an employee shall not earn vacation, sick leave, be eligible for holidays, or earn other benefits afforded to employees actively at work, except for those stated in this policy.
2. An employee who is out on approved FMLA leave may not take trips outside of the country unless the travel is related to the employee's own serious health condition, the serious health condition of the child, spouse or parent of the employee or to attend qualifying military events. An employee may ask their immediate supervisor for written permission to take other trips outside of the country which may be granted at the supervisor's sole discretion.
3. Employees are forbidden from working another job while on approved FMLA leave from the county.
4. Any area or issue regarding family and medical leave which is not addressed in this policy shall be subject to the basic requirements of the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and the regulations issued to implement it.

4.24 POLICY ON DEBIT CARDS

It is by the authority of the Castro County Commissioners Court that debit cards may or may not be issued to officials and employees of this Department. It is at the discretion of the Castro County Commissioners Court to add or remove debit card privileges to or from Castro County bank accounts at any given time.

A. DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

It is the responsibility of the department head to maintain control of and responsibility for debit cards if they are issued to the department. The department head shall distribute debit cards to employees for authorized county use only. For departments other than Sheriff's Department contact the County Treasurer or County Judge.

B. AUTHORIZED POSSESSION OF DEBIT CARD

Only the department head and employees under the department head shall be authorized possession of a county debit card. Authorized possession means possession authorized by the department head.

C. AUTHORIZED USE OF DEBIT CARD

Castro County officials and employees are the only authorized users of debit cards issued on county bank accounts. Any large purchases, such as specific purchases involving hotel reservations, may need to be charged on a daily basis to prevent surpassing the daily limit of the card account.

D. UNAUTHORIZED POSSESSION AND USE OF DEBIT CARD

Any transactions not authorized by the department head for expenses incurred will be subject to reimbursement to Castro County by the employee. Unauthorized possession or use of a county debit card will initiate discipline up to and including termination.

E. LOST RECEIPT FORM

A Lost Receipt Form must be signed by the employee, certified by the Department Head, and notarized if a receipt for a debit card transaction has been lost and the department is seeking to be reimbursed for expenses. The Lost Receipt Form can be obtained from the department head or the Treasurer.

APPENDIX A: FORMS

LOST RECIEPT FORM
TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT
MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT
TRAVEL ADVANCE
PRE TRIP AUTHORIZATION
VACATION BUY BACK

CREDIT/DEBIT CARD LOST RECEIPT FORM

Name: _____

Department: _____

Date of Lost Receipt: _____

Amount of Lost Receipt: _____

Activity of Lost Receipt: _____

Repeated reporting of lost receipts may subject the employee to be responsible for reimbursing Castro County for any activity submitted without receipts.

Signature of Employee: _____

Printed Name: _____

Certification by Department Head: _____

Printed Name: _____

Sworn and subscribed to me on the _____ day of _____ 20____

My commission expires on _____

Notary Public, State of Texas

TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT FORM

CASTRO COUNTY, TEXAS					TRAVEL EXPENSE FORM		
Name of Person Submitting Report:							
Name of Department:							
Purpose of Travel: (Include Title of Conference, Location and Dates)							
Meals:						Daily Total	
Meals: Per Diem \$55.00		Day Trips \$20.00 Maximum				Due Person	Paid Co. Check
Meals: If per meal option used attach receipts. Maximum \$55.00/day							or Debit Card
Date	Per Diem	Morning	Noon	Evening			
Total Meals	-	-	-	-		-	\$ -
Lodging:							
Attach receipt							
Date	Cost	City					
Total Lodging	-					\$ -	\$ -
Travel & Transportation:							
Must have receipts for reimbursement							
Airline							
Taxi / Shuttle / Rental Car							
Airport Parking							
Hotel Parking							
Mileage	0	Miles @	\$0.60			-	
Miscellaneous							
Registration Fee							
Total Cost of Travel						\$ -	\$ -
Name(s) of other person(s) traveling with you.							
"I certify that the expenses as shown are true and correct statements of expense incurred by me while traveling out-of-county on official county business."							
Signature				Supervisor Signature			
Account Number				Reviewed by			
County Judge Approval				Date Reimbursed			

MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT FORM

Mileage For the month of: _____							
Print name _____				Department _____			
	Date	Origination	Destination	Purpose	Begin Miles	End Miles	Total Miles
1							0
2							0
3							0
4							0
5							0
6							0
7							0
8							0
9							0
10							0
11							0
12							0
13							0
14							0
15							0
16							0
17							0
18							0
19							0
20							0
21							0
22							0
23							0
24							0
25							0
					Total Miles for Month		0
							@ .60/mile
					Total Due		0.00
I certify this is a true and correct report of mileage incurred by me in the performance of my official duties for the month shown.							
					Signature		Date

TRAVEL ADVANCE REQUEST FORM

[illegible]

PRE TRIP AUTHORIZATION FORM

CASTRO COUNTY, TEXAS PRE-TRIP AUTHORIZATION APPROVAL FORM

This form must be completed prior to making travel arrangements. This form does not guarantee travel reimbursement.

1. TRAVEL INFORMATION

Name:		Date:		Office:	
Event:				Location:	
Start Date:		Time:		End Date:	

2. ESTIMATED TRIP RELATED EXPENSES

FLY			DRIVE		
	Lodging			Lodging	
0	Mileage to Airport (.60/mile)	-	0	Mileage (.60/mile)	-
	Airline / Airfare				
	Airport Parking			Hotel Parking	
	Shuttle / Taxi Service				
	Rental Car				
0	Per Diem (\$55.00/day)	-	0	Per Diem (\$55.00/day)	-
	Registration Fee			Registration Fee	
	Other Costs			Other Costs	
	Total	\$ -		Total	\$ -

EXPLANATION OF REQUEST:

3. SIGNATURES

If I fail to attend the conference or school, I will be accountable to reimburse Castro County for the price of airline ticket, registration fee or cancellation fees lodging. It will be my responsibility to cancel all reservations and ask for the registration fees from the conference and/or school.

Signature:		Date:	
Reviewed:	Treasurer	Date:	

Account Number:

Approved by:
Castro County Commissioner's Court
Date:

County Judge

All items listed below ***MUST*** accompany this form.

- ☒ Airline ticket Invoice
- ☒ Registration Form
- ☒ Hotel Estimate w/confirmation #
- ☒ Conference/School Agenda
- ☒ Google Maps/Map Quest Mileage

VACATION BUY BACK REQUEST FORM

CASTRO COUNTY VACATION BUY BACK REQUEST

Policy

1. The County **may** buy back all or any part of accrued and unused vacation leave from employees.
2. Any eligible employee can participate in the Vacation Buy Back by submitting a request in writing to the county treasurer by November 1st of each calendar year. The maximum number of hours that will be bought back by the County is 40 hours of vacation leave.
3. The request must be on the form provided by the County Treasurer's office.
4. Employees who resign from their employment with Castro County or are terminated without cause will receive pay for **earned** unused vacation. Employees who are discharged, dismissed, separated, or terminated for policy misconduct or criminal conduct are **not entitled** to be paid for vacation not taken

.....

Employee Name: _____

Date:

Total Hours Requested: _____ (40 Hours Maximum)

Employee Signature

To be completed by Treasurer's Office

Accrued Vacation hours available at time of request: _____ (80hr/yr > 10yr; 120hr/yr < 10yr)

Vacation hours taken at day of request: _____

Vacation hours being paid out through this buy back request: _____

Vacation hours remaining after this buy back request: _____

